

# Information on Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for Students in F-1 Status



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## Definition of Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

The U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services - USCIS defines "Curricular Practical Training (CPT)" as employment which is an integral or important part of your curriculum, including:

...alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school.

According to the USCIS, the word "required" does not always limit this type of practical training only to work experiences which are required parts of the curriculum. This clarification is discussed below in more detail.

## Job Eligibility Requirements

To be considered Curricular Practical Training (CPT), the work must not only be related to your major field of study but must also be an integral or important part of your studies. Training which is required by your degree program always meets the requirements for Curricular Practical Training (CPT), regardless of whether or not you receive academic credit for your work. Training which is not required by your degree program may meet the requirements for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) if you receive academic credit for the employment experience and if it is an important part of your studies. **In other words, you must receive units for your involvement** (only exception is for students in doctoral studies/continuous registration). If you have a training opportunity which involves employment, check with the Assistant Director of International Services and/or department Program Advisor to determine if it qualifies as Curricular Practical Training (CPT).

## Student Eligibility Requirements

- **Employment Which Is a Required Part of Your Degree Program.** If (1) you are maintaining lawful F-1 status, and (2) the proposed employment is a required part of your studies, you may apply for permission to engage in Curricular Practical Training (CPT) whenever your program requires your participation, even if it is immediately upon beginning your studies.
- **Employment Which Is Not a Required Part of Your Degree Program.** In order to be eligible to apply for permission to work in a job which is not a required part of your study program, you must (1) be in lawful F-1 status and (2) have been a full-time student for at least nine (9) months. **You must earn units for your involvement** (only exception is for students in doctoral studies/continuous registration).

## Part-Time vs. Full-Time Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

- **Part-Time Training.** Employment for 20 hours or less per week while you are also enrolled for classes is considered "part-time" Curricular Practical Training (CPT). The employment authorization printed on the back of your Form I-20 should therefore specify permission to engage in "part-time" training and you must be careful to limit your work to no more than 20 hours per week. There is no limitation upon the length of time you may participate in part-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) but you must be simultaneously enrolled in order to maintain lawful F-1 status, and you will only be able to get permission on a **semester by semester** basis.
- **Full-Time Training.** Employment for more than 20 hours per week is considered "full-time" Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and the employment authorization on your I-20 should, in this case, specify permission to participate in "full-time" training. You may only use full-time training after

all coursework is completed (doctoral studies/continuous registration students; students in Teacher Education are excepted), or during school breaks (i.e. summer semester or spring break). There is no limitation upon the length of time you may participate in full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) but if you participate for twelve (12) months or more, you will not be eligible for post-completion practical training – Optional Practical Training (OPT).

## **Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Eligibility for Optional Practical Training**

It is important that you understand that if you participate in twelve (12) months or more of "full-time" Curricular Practical Training (CPT), you lose eligibility to apply for twelve (12) months of Optional Practical Training (OPT) after you complete your studies. Participation in "part-time" training programs does not effect your eligibility for Optional Practical Training (OPT).

## **Application and Authorization Procedures**

You must make an appointment with the Assistant Director of International Services after you have your department complete the "Curricular Practical Training (CPT) form" (form I-8), available on-line at <http://www.cgu.edu/pages/411.asp>, in order to be given the final approval on your Curricular Practical Training (CPT). You will then be reissued a new I-20 that will include your Curricular Practical Training (CPT) permission that you will show your employer as permission to work. You must be careful not to continue employment beyond the date authorized on your I-20 unless you apply for and are granted an extension of your permission to work (this is done the same way you originally applied). **DO NOT WORK WITHOUT PROPER AUTHORIZATION.**

## **Employment Eligibility Verification**

When you begin work, you and your employer must complete a form entitled "Employment Eligibility Verification" (Form I-9), which the employer retains. The I-9 must be updated each time you receive a renewal of your work permission.

## **Social Security and Other Taxes**

In general, F-1 students who have been in the U. S. less than five years are exempt from Social Security (F.I.C.A.) taxes. Your earnings are subject to applicable federal, state and local taxes. Students must file a tax return on or before April 15 each year, which will determine if any of the withheld taxes can be refunded. If you have questions regarding taxes, please contact International Place, as they have tax advisors come to campus to assist students with their taxes.

## **A Note of Caution**

While USCIS regulations provide a variety of opportunities for you to be employed during your time in F-1 status, working improperly or without authorization is a serious violation of your status. You should therefore consult with the Assistant Director of International Services before taking up any employment. It is your responsibility to comply with all USCIS regulations which apply to F-1 students. The Assistant Director of International Services has responsibility for advising and counseling you regarding your responsibilities. If you fail to comply with your responsibilities, you may not be eligible for benefits normally granted to F-1 students.

## **Further Information**

Additional information on F-1 employment is available from the Assistant Director of International Services.

More handouts and forms can be printed at [www.cgu.edu/pages/411.asp](http://www.cgu.edu/pages/411.asp)

## Helpful Hints/Common Errors When Completing CPT Forms

Below are the common areas on the CPT Request Form where mistakes are made. Please read all sections of this handout carefully to ensure that your CPT is granted:

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED TRAINING

Address of the Company – I will need the complete street address, including postal zip code.

### NUMBER OF HOURS PER WEEK

Part time is any employment at 20 hours a week or less. You *must* include in this time any on-campus positions or any other CPT position you may have. If the total time between all employment is more than 20 hours a week your CPT must be entered as full-time; remember, if you use one year of full-time CPT you will become ineligible for Optional Practical Training (OPT).

### BEGINNING AND ENDING DATE:

Please make sure to include an appropriate start and end date. **DO NOT BEGIN TO WORK WITHOUT BEING PROPERLY AUTHORIZED FIRST.**

- If you are currently enrolled in courses (working on your degree requirements), CPT can be granted on a **semester by semester basis ONLY**
- Doctoral Studies/Continuous Registration students – you may be authorized for CPT up to one year at a time

### UNIT ENROLLMENT SECTION:

This is the area where I notice the most mistakes and confusion, and it is perhaps the most important area to make sure that we comply with immigration rules. Please read the information below **CAREFULLY**.

CPT requests will fall into 2 categories:

1. CPT that is required for graduation – this is rare for CGU and most students would not fall into this category. An example of a student falling into this category would be Teacher Education students whose employment is required by course curriculum).
2. CPT that is not required for graduation – most students will fall into this category.

Students currently earning units (working on course work) who do not fall into category 1 **must earn units for CPT involvement**. There are no exceptions. To do this you have 2 options:

1. You may build this CPT into a current class *if your employment closely aligns with the curriculum of one of your current courses* (i.e. if you are taking an Ethics in Business course and will be conducting research for a company whose focus is on ethical conduction of business, this would be considered to be related. You could write a paper on your findings at the end of the semester, earn a grade for this paper, and in this way "build" the CPT into your current course).
  - a. You will need to speak with your academic advisor to see if this is appropriate and can be done in your case. If this is the case, please indicate the number of units and **course number** for which you will be incorporating the CPT and have your academic advisor sign the form where it says "under the supervision of \_\_\_\_".
  - b. Your enrollment in this course must be verified before I can issue the CPT. The CPT will not be authorized until you register for the course you have specified. **Remember, you must be authorized for CPT before you begin employment.**
2. In all other cases, you will need to earn units for your involvement by enrolling in *at least* one unit of Independent Study (again, all employment must specifically relate to your major and be at your level of study).
  - a. If this is the case, indicate the number of independent study units you will earn and have your academic advisor sign the form where it says "under the supervision of \_\_\_\_".
  - b. The CPT will not be authorized until you register for the units specified. **Remember, you must be authorized for CPT before you begin employment.**

**Doctoral Studies/Continuous Registration Students** – you should indicate that you will earn "0 units of \_\_\_\_\_ under the supervision of your academic advisor's signature." Remember, **your CPT involvement must directly further your dissertation/thesis progress.**

### SUMMER SEMESTER EXCEPTIONS

In the summer semester **only** your CPT work may be applied towards the next Fall term. In other words, you may complete an internship in the summer and earn the units in the Fall by building it into a course you will be taking in the Fall semester. To do this, you must be registered for the Fall course at the time the CPT request is received. This practice will **only** apply to students building the CPT into a course for the Fall. If you will be enrolling in internship units to complete your CPT, this is not an option – you **must** take your internship units during the summer (at the time the internship is being completed). This also only applies to people who will not graduate in the summer term (if you will be completing your program in the summer, your CPT units must be registered in the summer).

### STUDENT FOLLOW UP

Please remember that I will need a copy of your work contract or job offer letter, preferably *at the time of your CPT request*. If you are unable to provide this at the time of your request, please ensure that you submit a copy to me as soon as it becomes available.