

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING

Definition of Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) defines "curricular practical training" 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 USCIS, the word "required" does not always limit this type of practical training 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, the work must not only be related to your major field of study but also must 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, 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 if you receive academic credit for the employment experience. Training must be an important part of your studies. If you have a training opportunity which involves employment, check with the International Center (IC) to determine if it qualifies as curricular practical training.

"In practical terms, 'integral part of an established curriculum' means an opportunity must be required by the curriculum or, if not required, the student must receive credit for the training."

Student Eligibility Requirements

Employment Which Is a Required Part of Your Degree Program. Undergraduate students must have completed one academic year of full-time study in order to be eligible for curricular practical training. If (1) you completed one academic year of full-time study, (2) you are maintaining lawful F-1 status, and (3) the proposed employment is a required part of your studies, you may apply for permission to engage in curricular practical training.

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, (2) have been a full-time student for at least one academic year and (3) receive academic credit.

English Language Students. Students enrolled in English language training programs are not eligible for curricular practical training.

Part-Time vs. Full-Time Curricular Practical Training

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. In this case, the employment authorization on your *Form I-20* will 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 on the length of time you may participate in part-time curricular practical training but you must be enrolled full-time in school (unless it is summer or winter term) during your training in order to maintain lawful F-1 status.

Full-Time Training. Employment for more than 20 hours per week is considered "full-time" curricular practical training. The employment authorization on your *Form I-20* will, in this case, specify permission to participate in "full-time" training. While in full-time training, you need not be enrolled full-time for classes in order to maintain lawful F-1 status. However, you must still receive academic credit for each semester of this work experience. There is no limitation upon the length of time you may participate in full-time curricular practical training (see next paragraph).

Curricular Practical Training and Eligibility for Optional Practical Training

It is important to understand that if you participate in twelve months or more of "full-time" curricular training, you lose eligibility to apply for twelve months of optional practical training. Participation in "part-time" training does not affect your eligibility for optional practical training.

Application and Authorization Procedures

To apply for curricular practical training, you must

1. Obtain offer letter from prospective internship/coop employer;
2. Meet with a counselor from the Career Services office or Social Sciences Division to determine your eligibility; and, if eligible
3. Obtain the *Experiential Learning Contract* or *Social Sciences contract* and submit a copy to the International Education Center.

IC Staff will:

1. Verify your eligibility to apply for CPT, and
2. Authorize CPT employment on page 3 of your form I-20.

YOU MUST NOT BEGIN EMPLOYMENT UNTIL YOUR CPT HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED

Extending Permission Work under Curricular Practical Training

In order to continue CPT work authorization, you must apply for an extension at least thirty (30) days prior to the end of your current authorization. Failure to do so may cause you to violate your immigration status.

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 IC staff before taking up any employment. It is your responsibility to comply with all immigration regulations that apply to F-1 students. The IC is responsible for advising and counseling you regarding your responsibilities. If you fail to meet your responsibilities, you may not be eligible for benefits normally granted to F-1 students.