

Definition. Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a type of employment authorization for F-I students to participate in paid positions off-campus. It is defined as any required or optional internship that is an integral part of the established curriculum for a program of study. Only internships that are directly related to the course curriculum qualify as CPT and can be either an optional or required part of the program. Unpaid or volunteer positions do not require work authorization.

Degree Requirement. CPT may be authorized when an internship is a requirement of the degree program (i.e. all students in the program must complete the internship to be eligible for the degree.) Internships that are a required part of the degree program do not have to be taken for credit units.

Course Credit Requirement. CPT may be authorized for students who are registered in a course for which employment is a requirement for the course. Authorization is granted on a semester-by-semester basis and cannot exceed the dates of the term in which the employment will occur. Internships that are not a required part of the degree program must be taken for credit units.

Part-time CPT is for 20 hours of work or less per week. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) does not set a limit on the length of time you can have part-time CPT.

Full-time CPT is for more than 20 hours of work per week. If you use full-time CPT for a total of 12 months, you will lose Optional Practical Training for that degree level.

CPT Requirements

- You must have been in F-I status for a minimum of one full academic year unless your academic advisor can verify that your program requires immediate participation in a paid internship.
- The training must be an integral part of the curriculum.
- The training is only authorized during a course of study. It cannot be used after completing your program.
- The training must be authorized for a specific job at a specific company.
- Date of employment must be within the dates of the semester. Summer session CPT employment dates must be between the end of the spring semester and the beginning of the fall semester.
- Students must be enrolled full-time during the academic year while participating in CPT.

Application Instructions. Make an appointment with the Designated School Official and bring the following materials:

- Current I-20 form
- Completed Advisor Recommendation form
- Proof of registration if the internship is part of a course requirement
- A copy of the job offer letter from the employer. The letter must:
 - Be prepared on the company's letterhead
 - Have a statement of the job offer
 - Contain your name
 - Specify the employment address (street, city, state, and zip code)
 - Specify the number of hours to be worked
 - Specify the dates of CPT employment (keep in mind that CPT can only be authorized one term at a time)

Plan ahead. CPT cannot be backdated. It must be authorized on your I-20 before you begin working. Even if the employment is required for your degree, you must have the authorization on your I-20 first to avoid being in violation of your F-I status by USCIS.

Changes to Employer or Dates of Employment. Any changes in the CPT authorization require a new appointment with the Designated School Official. Changes to the employer will also require completion of a new Academic/Faculty Advisor Recommendation form.

Taxes. Students in F-I status are generally exempt from Social Security tax (FICA). They are subject to federal and state income taxes. Tax forms are available from February through April of each year. Check the Internal Revenue Service website at www.irs.gov for federal tax information and the California Franchise Tax Board website at www.ftb.ca.gov for state tax information