

# **CPT Frequently Asked Questions**

## **What is the difference between Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT)?**

CPT is employment that is an integral part of your major curriculum and allows you to participate in an internship, practicum or cooperative education program. CPT must be required or, if not required, you must receive course credit. CPT is employer specific and must be done before you graduate. OPT is optional for any student who meets the eligibility requirements and you do not need to earn credit. OPT is not employer specific and may be done before or after you graduate. Please refer to our handout regarding the differences.

## **Do I have to be registered while on CPT?**

You must maintain F-1 student status, which generally requires full-time registration. Most students are required to register as full-time students while on CPT.

## **Does usage of CPT affect OPT eligibility?**

You may use as much CPT as is required for your degree program. However, if you use a total of 12 months or more of full-time CPT, you are not eligible for OPT. Part-time CPT does not affect OPT in any way.

## **Do I need to have a job to apply for CPT?**

You must have an offer of employment to apply for CPT since the authorization is for a specific employer.

## **Can I change the number of hours I work?**

You can change within the limits of part-time or full-time. For example, you may change from 10 hours per week to 15 hours per week without a new authorization. However, if you change from part-time to full-time (or vice versa) you must request a new authorization.

## **Can I change employers?**

Since CPT is employer specific you must apply for a new CPT authorization before you work for the new employer.

## **Can I extend my CPT?**

You are authorized for specific dates of employment on your I-20. You may not begin before the start date or continue after the end date. You must apply for an extension in sufficient time to allow your ISS adviser to issue a new CPT authorization before you can continue beyond the end date of your current CPT.

## **Do I need a Social Security number?**

Yes, you will need a Social Security number in order to receive payment from your employer.

## **Will I be required to pay Social Security and other taxes?**

In general, as an F-1 student you will be exempt from Social Security (FICA) taxes for your first five years in the U.S. as long as you continue to declare nonresident status for tax purposes.

Unless you qualify under a tax treaty between the U.S. and your home government, your earnings as an F-1 student will be subject to applicable federal, state and local taxes, and employers are required to withhold those taxes from your paychecks. For more information on taxes, consult the Internal Revenue Service.

## **Will I receive an Employment Authorization Document (EAD)?**

No. The CPT authorization on page 3 of your I-20 is your proof of employment eligibility and together with your I-94 card may be used to complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 required by your employer.

As an F-1 student your employment cannot begin until you receive your SEVIS I-20 with the curricular practical training endorsement.

Any internship, paid or unpaid, must be authorized before you begin the placement!

**Beginning curricular practical training without proper authorization is a violation of immigration regulations and will have serious consequences.**

If you are an F-1 student, you have the option of working in the United States by engaging in practical training during your program or after it ends. Practical training can provide valuable work experience by sharpening and adding to the skills you are learning in school. There are two types of practical training available for F-1 students: curricular practical training (CPT) and optional practical training (OPT).