

Curricular Practical Training for F-1 Students

This handout is designed to help USC students in F-1 status understand and properly complete their curricular practical training applications. **Please read it carefully. Any errors or blanks on your application will delay the approval of your application.**

Definition of Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) defines curricular practical training as employment which is an integral or important part of your academic curriculum.

Eligibility Requirements

Employment Which Is a Required Part of Your Degree Program (This option is only available to specific majors.)

For permission to work in a job that is a required part of your program of study you must:

- (1) be a graduate student
- (2) be maintaining lawful F-1 status
- (3) be required to be employed in an internship program to meet degree requirements
- (4) have an offer of employment in your academic field of study

You may apply for curricular practical training whenever your program requires your participation in the internship, even if it is immediately upon beginning your studies.

Employment Which Is Not a Required Part of Your Degree Program

For permission to work in an internship that is not a required part of your program of study, you must:

- (1) have maintained full-time student status for at least one academic year (9 months)
- (2) have an offer of employment in your academic field of study
- (3) be registered for an **internship class** in your academic department or through the Graduate School which requires you to work off-campus.

Undergraduate students: Undergraduate students have the option to register for MDA 250 (offered by the Career Planning and Placement Center) or an internship course within the student's major department.

Graduate students: *Graduate engineering students* must register for ENGR 596 and complete a project proposal contract with your supervising professor or dean. *All other graduate majors* must register for GRSC 596 which requires "D" (departmental) clearance from the Graduate School **-or-** an internship course offered by the academic department.

Note: A student must be registered for the course unit(s) and must submit a completed application packet to OIS each semester for which CPT is requested. In the spring and fall semester, the student must also be registered as a full-time student.

***Note: English Language Academy Students** are not eligible for curricular practical training.

Part-Time vs. Full-Time Curricular Practical Training

Part-Time CPT

Employment for 20 hours or less per week while you are also enrolled (full-time) for classes is considered "part-time" curricular practical training. You must be careful to limit your work to no more than 20 hours per week. Participation in "part-time" CPT does not affect your eligibility for optional practical training. Thus, there is no limitation on the length of time you may participate in part-time curricular practical training. Part-time CPT is allowed during the fall and spring semesters and during summer vacation.

Full-Time CPT

Employment for more than 20 hours per week is considered "full-time" curricular practical training. There is no limitation on the length of time you may participate in full-time CPT, but if you participate for twelve months or more you will not be eligible for optional practical training.

Full-time CPT is only allowed during summer vacation, or after you have completed all course requirements and you are at your thesis or dissertation stage (only possible for graduate students), or if it is your final semester and only have 4 units required for graduation (for graduate students) or 6 units required for graduation (for undergraduate students) with one of those units being the internship class.

Dates of Employment

The start and end date of employment cannot exceed the beginning and ending dates of each semester (fall, spring, or summer) you are applying for CPT. In addition, **the start date will either be the date you request CPT to begin or the date the application is processed at OIS, whichever date is later.**

Documents Required:

- Application for Curricular Practical Training for F-1 Students
- Curricular Practical Training Advisor Form (reverse side of application)
- Copy of I-20
- Project Proposal Contract for Graduate engineering students or the Graduate School's GRSC 596 Form if you are registered for GRSC 596.

Note: Graduate engineering students must get their Project Proposal Contracts from OHE 330G (for Ph.D. students) or OHE 106 (for Masters degree students) after they have submitted their offer letter and proposal to either office. **NOTE: for more information about the Viterbi School of Engineering's CPT requirements please go to <http://viterbi.usc.edu/students/graduate/>**

CPT Authorization

The processing time for CPT by OIS is currently 4 business days.

Employment is authorized by the Office of International Services. If you are required to be registered in order to apply for CPT, you must supply proof of registration in the applicable academic unit. **Students who have not registered for a required internship course upon submission of the CPT application to OIS, will experience delays in receiving employment authorization. Students may not begin employment until they have received their I-20 from OIS properly authorized for CPT.**

Employment authorization is employer-specific and is therefore only valid for the student's current employer. If the student changes jobs, s/he will need to re-apply. ****You must be careful not to continue employment beyond the date authorized on your SEVIS I-20.**

Employment Eligibility Verification

When you begin work, you and your employer must complete a form entitled "Employment Eligibility Verification" (*INS Form I-9*), which the employer retains. This form must be updated every time you receive a renewal of 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 paying Social Security (F.I.C.A.) taxes. However, your earnings are subject to federal, state and local income taxes. Students must file a tax form on or before April 15 each year, which will determine if any withheld taxes can be refunded.

A Note of Caution

While INS 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 an OIS counselor or immigration adviser before taking up **any** employment.