



---

## Curricular Practical Training

### What is Curricular Practical Training?

There are two types of practical training available to F-1 students: **curricular practical training (CPT)** and optional practical training (OPT). CPT is an alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education or other type of required internship or practicum that a sponsoring employer offers through agreements with a student's school.

Here's what students and school officials need to know about CPT:

- Occurs *before* a student's program end date on the [Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status."](#)
- Must relate directly to the student's major area of study and **be an integral part of the school's established curriculum**. Can be full-time (more than 20 hours per week) or part-time.
- A student's designated school official (DSO) authorizes CPT in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). A DSO may not backdate the authorization and accordingly, SEVIS will not allow backdating.
- Students must secure the training opportunity *before* CPT can be authorized.
- A student may begin curricular practical training only after receiving his or her Form I-20 with the DSO endorsement and not before the CPT start date indicated on the form.
- One year or more of full-time CPT **eliminates students' OPT eligibility** at the same educational level.
- Students can have more than one CPT authorization at the same time. However, a separate CPT authorization is needed for each employer and each CPT segment.
- CPT requires a signed cooperative agreement or letter from the employer.

For more information on the rules and regulations applicable to CPT, visit the [Practical Training](#) page on ICE.gov. For case-specific questions, please contact the [Student and Exchange Visitor Program Response Center](#) (SRC).

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### **Q: May a school authorize a student to participate in CPT instead of OPT?**

A: No, CPT and OPT are not interchangeable. CPT accommodates individuals enrolled in a program of study that requires participation in an internship or practicum. It is not a supplemental training experience but rather an "integral part of an established curriculum" meaning it is a required part of the degree or program of study. The regulation makes this clear by defining CPT as an "internship, cooperative education or any other type of **required internship or practicum....**" In contrast, OPT accommodates students who have fulfilled the requirements of an academic or vocational program and provides an opportunity to augment the student's learning with real-world experience.



**Q: May a student participate in CPT related to the student's minor or general graduation requirements?**

A: Federal regulations require CPT to be directly related to a student's *major* area of study. This means CPT cannot be authorized based on a student's minor or general graduation credits. CPT participation may only be approved if the training opportunity is directly related to the major program of study.

**Q: Does a student need to receive authorization from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to participate in CPT?**

A: No; however, a student's DSO must authorize CPT in SEVIS. Please note that SEVIS will not allow DSOs to backdate the authorization.

**Q: Can a student begin participating in CPT while waiting on their school official to authorize the training in SEVIS?**

A: No; a student's DSO **must** authorize the student's CPT in SEVIS before the student can participate. Participating in practical training without the necessary authorization could violate the student's status.

**Q: Can a student have more than one CPT authorization at the same time?**

A: Yes; however, a separate CPT authorization is needed for each employer and each CPT segment.

**Q: Whom do I contact to ask further questions about my CPT participation?**

A: Students may contact the SRC, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, except holidays, by calling 703-603-3400 or 1-800-892-4829.