

PRACTICAL TRAINING

Curricular Practical Training for F-1 Visa Students

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is temporary, paid employment for an academic objective and generally requires enrollment in an internship class. USCIS regulations state that CPT must be “an integral part of an established curriculum” in your course of study.

CPT General Information

- CPT must be authorized on your I-20 by an International Student Advisor before employment begins or continues
- The type of internship employment must be directly related to and commensurate with your current degree objective
- CPT requires enrollment in an internship course in your major (unless your major requires all students to complete a minimum number of hours of work experience as a degree requirement without unit credit) the quarter you participate in CPT
- If your major does not have an internship class you may be able to enroll through Cooperative Education (Bldg. 8, Rm. 333)
- CPT is authorized one quarter at a time to verify continued eligibility
- CPT may be renewable for consecutive quarters if it is integral to your academic program and strongly recommended by your academic advisor
- CPT is authorized, part-time work (20 hours or less per week) for specific dates of paid employment for a specific employer.
- CPT can be full time during summer quarter; However, if 12 or more months of full-time CPT is authorized, you will not be eligible to apply for Optional Practical Training
- CPT will not be authorized if it will delay normal progress towards degree completion
- Unpaid internships do not require CPT authorization
- Enrollment in an internship class for the primary purpose of obtaining employment authorization does not qualify for CPT

CPT Eligibility Requirements

- Completion of three quarters of full-time undergraduate or graduate coursework towards your current degree objective at Cal Poly Pomona
- Have been in valid F-1 status for nine consecutive months
- Good academic standing and making normal satisfactory progress toward degree completion
- Undergraduate students must be in junior class standing
- Recommendation by your academic advisor in writing
- Enrollment in an internship course in your major (unless your major requires all students to complete a minimum number of hours of work experience as a degree requirement without unit credit) or Cooperative Education (if your major does not offer an internship class) the quarter you participate in CPT
- You have found a paid internship opportunity in your current major field of study

Optional Practical Training

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is the term used by USCIS to refer to a temporary off-campus employment option available to F-1 students. OPT provides F-1 students an opportunity to gain practical work experience in their chosen field of study so that they can make a more professional contribution upon return to their home country. OPT employment authorization is granted by the USCIS upon application from the student and recommendation from an International Student Advisor in the International Center. OPT can be used before and/or after completion of study under the following circumstances:

- During your annual vacation and at other times when school is not in session, it may be full or part time
- When school is in session as long as the employment does not exceed 20 hours per week (part time only)
- After completion of your coursework, but before completion of all program requirements (EXAMPLE: While writing a thesis), it may be full or part time
- After completion of all program requirements (full time only)

OPT Eligibility Requirements

- You must have been in lawful student status for nine consecutive months
- You must have completed all degree requirements to graduate, including satisfying the Graduation Writing Test (GWT) before your final term
- The type of employment you are seeking must be directly related to your major and commensurate with your level of education
- You have not used all 12 months of OPT, per higher degree
- You must submit a complete application on appropriate USCIS forms, available from the International Center
- You must make an appointment to meet with the International Student Advisor in the International Center

OPT General Information

- OPT is limited to the equivalent of a maximum of 12 months of full-time employment, per higher degree; There are no extension options
- You do not need to have a job offer to apply for OPT, but once approved, time spent unemployed cannot be redeemed and will count towards the 12-month limit
- Employment may occur anywhere within the United States of America, and students may change employers during authorized employment
- Students may apply for OPT up to 120 days before completion of studies; However, your application must be received by USCIS by the last day of your final quarter of classes or it will be denied
- Full-time English Language Institute students (ELI) are ineligible to apply for OPT

Importance of the Actual Date of Completion for OPT

According to USCIS definition, the date of completion of studies is the date that all program requirements are met (EXAMPLE: final exams or submission of thesis), and not the date of the commencement ceremony. This is true regardless of the completion date indicated on your I-20. The USCIS must receive the application by the last day of the final quarter of classes or it will be denied. It is the student's responsibility to ensure their legal status in the U.S. at all times.

OPT Application Procedures

- Pick up an OPT application package from the International Center
- Make an appointment to meet with the International Student Advisor
- Fill out the USCIS Form (I-765) before your appointment with the advisor who will answer any questions you may have
- Prepare all other requirements in the application package (i.e. copies of documents, photos etc.)
- Bring your current I-20 and completed USCIS form to your appointment with the advisor
- Mail completed application as specified in the application package to USCIS

Travel Outside the United States and OPT

Before you travel, contact the International Center for the most recent updates regarding reentry into the U.S.

Students who travel overseas and wish to reenter the U.S. while on OPT are required to present a valid F-1 visa, their I-20 endorsed for travel within the last six months, an unexpired Employment Authorization Document (EAD) Card, and a letter from their employer verifying that they are employed, to the Immigration Inspector at the port of entry. Without these valid documents, students will not be granted reentry into the U.S. It is therefore advisable that students plan their travel arrangements carefully and wisely while on OPT.