



## CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR F-1 STUDENTS

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) offers the opportunity for F-1 students to apply classroom study to a structured work experience that is monitored by the school. To be considered CPT, the work must be an integral part of the established curriculum and directly related to your major field of study.

**\*\*IMPORTANT: You may engage in practical training only if you have received written approval on your I-20 from an ISO advisor. Any employment prior to receiving written authorization or beyond the authorized dates would be considered illegal and will put you immediately out of valid F-1 status.**

### WHAT QUALIFIES AS CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING?

An employment experience which is required for all students in the degree program always meets the requirement for curricular practical training. An employment experience which is not required by the degree program may meet the requirements if students receive academic credit or there is transcript documentation. Examples of Curricular Practical Training include internships, practicums, and Cooperative Education (Co-op).

*Please Note: Most opportunities to participate in CPT are coordinated through the academic departments as part of the curriculum. For students in certain fields, however, there may be opportunities through the following career centers:*

Career Center- <http://gwired.gwu.edu/career>

Fowler Graduate Career Center (School of Business)- <http://www.gwu.edu/~business/careercenter/index.htm>

Graduate Student Career Development (ESIA)- <http://www.gwu.edu/~elliott/careerdevelopment/ocd.html>

Career Development Office (Law School)- <http://www.law.gwu.edu/CDO>

Some guidelines to determine if the work you are considering qualifies as CPT:

- The work must be “an integral part of an established curriculum.”
- The employment must be directly related to the field of study on the I-20 and appropriate for the level of study
- The training program should be listed in the school’s catalogue. This listing should contain:
  - The number of credits awarded for the training (this may be reflected as 0 credits for certain programs)
  - Who or how the school is monitoring the experience
  - A description of the course or program that clearly identifies the training objectives

### AM I ELIGIBLE FOR CPT?

To be eligible to apply for CPT authorization, you must:

- Be in valid F-1 status
- Have been enrolled full time at a U.S. college/university for one full academic year as an F-1 student
  - Graduate students in programs that require an internship within the first year should see an ISO advisor about a possible exception.
  - Students who have been enrolled full time at a U.S. college/university as a J-1 student or A, E, G, H, J, L, or N dependent immediately before changing status to F-1 should see an ISO advisor about a possible exception.

**Note: If you do twelve or more months of full-time CPT at your current program level you will not be eligible for Optional Practical Training when you complete your studies.**

### **MUST I HAVE A SPECIFIC JOB BEFORE I APPLY FOR PERMISSION FOR PRACTICAL TRAINING?**

YES. CPT work authorization requires that a specific job, employer, and employment dates be identified. Prior to being granted work authorization for curricular practical training, you must have a specific job assigned through a curricular program with a sponsoring employer. You must also be registered for the appropriate course (e.g. internship, practicum, or Co-op) for the semester that you intend to participate in curricular practical training. It is important to meet with a staff member from the relevant academic department or career center about their program eligibility criteria.

### **WHAT WILL BE MY STATUS WHILE I AM IN PRACTICAL TRAINING?**

You will maintain your F-1 status with the George Washington University during the period of authorized curricular practical training. You must continue to be registered as a full time GW student during the academic year making normal progress towards the degree.

Employment of *20 hours or less per week* is considered *part-time curricular practical training* and requires concurrent full-time enrollment if CPT is pursued during the academic year (Fall and Spring semesters). Employment of *more than 20 hours per week* is considered *full-time curricular practical training*. A full time practical experience that is not required for the degree is only permitted during official summer vacations.

### **WILL MY APPLICATION BE AUTOMATICALLY APPROVED?**

NO. This office will do everything possible to assist you with the process. However, each application is examined on its own merit. Applications for CPT should be submitted early enough to allow two weeks to review and grant authorization. In addition, timely submission is important in order to fulfill the specified training period as indicated in the course description (e.g. Co-op requires a minimum of ten weeks of training before the end of the semester). CPT is authorized on a semester-by-semester basis, and therefore you need to apply for CPT authorization each semester.

### **WHAT DATE WILL EMPLOYMENT BEGIN?**

**You can only begin working after receiving your ISO Advisor's work authorization endorsement on your I-20 for specific employment for each semester. Your I-20 will indicate the date you are allowed to begin and end employment. You must be simultaneously registered for the appropriate curricular course (i.e., internship, practicum, or Co-op).**

#### **Important!**

To maintain your F-1 status:

- Limit your employment to the specified employer, location and position authorized on your I-20
- Do not work beyond the dates authorized on your I-20
- For part-time training, you must be careful to limit your work to no more than 20 hours per week.
- Notify the GW registrar and The Department of Homeland Security within 10 days of any change in local address or telephone number as required by law.

## HOW DO I APPLY?

All of the following items must be submitted at the same time. Allow a minimum 10 business days for processing after submission of a complete application.

**NOTE:** Employment may not begin before, nor extend beyond, the authorized dates on your I-20.

1. Your **original I-20** and copies of all prior forms I-20;
2. Legible photocopy of your **Form I-94** (front and back);
3. Legible photocopy of the **biographic (identification) page, expiration date page** and U.S. **visa pages** from your **passport**
4. A **cover letter** from you describing the type of training employment you propose to do and the specific curricular course in which you will register. Describe how the proposed employment is directly related to your field of study.
5. A **letter from your employer** (on their letterhead) addressed to the ISO clearly indicating that the employer understands that your employment is to be under the terms of Curricular Practical Training as described in this document. The employer should include the following information:
  - a. **Name of the employer** issuing the paycheck and the **location of the employment**. The entity issuing the paycheck should be clearly identified. (**Note:** If the location involves a **second employer**, identify that employer by name.)
  - b. Your proposed occupation including: the **title of your position**, a detailed **description of your duties**, the **number hours** you will be working per week.
  - c. The **exact dates** when your **employment** is expected to **begin** and **end**.
6. A **letter of certification** (on letterhead) addressed to the ISO from your **academic advisor**. Please **show** your **proposal letter** and **employer's letter** to your academic department as a basis for their letter. The following information should be included:
  - a. Indication that your proposal letter and employment letter have been reviewed.
  - b. A brief description of your degree program and how the proposed practical training is **directly related** to your academic program.
  - c. An explanation of how the proposed CPT experience is an integral part of your curriculum of study. This explanation should also include the curricular course in which the student will be enrolled.
  - d. **Estimated date of graduation**. Indication that you are **making normal progress** toward completing your degree and that participation in practical training will not interfere with continued satisfactory progress toward graduation by the deadline indicated on your I-20.
7. **Evidence of enrollment** in the appropriate curricular course and indication that a job placement has been assigned.

For CPT through Cooperative Education: A **memorandum** from the Co-op office stating the location of employment, number of hours per week, and the dates of the proposed employment. *Please note: You must meet with a Co-op staff member before collecting the documents for the application package to ensure that the position meets the requirements of the Cooperative Education program.*

It is important that you submit a complete application according to the outlined requirements above. If an application does not meet the requirements, the processing of your paperwork may be delayed. Please follow the instructions carefully. If you have any difficulty meeting any of the requirements, please come to speak with an ISO advisor either during afternoon walk-in advising or by morning appointment.