

## F-1 CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is work authorization for F-1 international students to receive further training that is designed to achieve an established academic objective and is directly related to the student's degree level and major. CPT includes employment, internship, practicum, or cooperative education that is an integral part of the student's curriculum. The employment must either be required by the F-1 student's degree program or the student must earn academic credit for the employment. F-1 students must obtain authorization for CPT through the Center for Global Health prior to engaging in the employment activities. CPT authorization is dependent upon the student being academically eligible and the employment/training meeting the federal regulations.

### Eligibility and Requirements

- Students must be in valid F-1 status
- Student must be enrolled for a full course of study during participation in CPT
- Undergraduate students must have been enrolled in the academic program for a full academic year. Graduate-level students are exempt from this requirement but only if CPT is required during the first year of studies
- Practical training must be an integral part of the curriculum
- Training must be directly related to the student's major or area of study

The training opportunity must either be required by the student's degree program, or the student must be earning academic credit for the training:

- **Non-credit CPT**—Federal regulations allow employment for non-credit curricular practical training involving internships or practica which are required for graduation for all students in a particular educational program (major). The requirement must be listed in the university course catalog or other official university publication.
- **For-credit CPT**—Federal regulations also allow employment for **credit-bearing training programs**, either required or elective, only if the course is listed in the university course catalog and contains the following:
  - The assigned number of credits being earned during participation in the course
  - The name of the faculty member teaching the course
  - A description of the course with the clearly defined learning objectives (Independent Study does not qualify for CPT)

If an employment opportunity is sought solely because it would be beneficial, relevant, or an excellent professional experience, this employment would not qualify for CPT. CPT has to serve the curriculum, rather than the curriculum serving the CPT.

CPT can be either part-time (20 hours per week or less) or full-time. There is no restriction on the number of hours a student can work per week while participating in CPT. However, if you are participating in on-campus employment authorization, you cannot simultaneously participate in full-time CPT. Once a student has completed 12 months of full-time CPT, that student becomes ineligible for optional practical training (OPT) at that educational level.

There is no restriction on compensation during CPT. Compensation is not a consideration when determining whether an opportunity qualifies as CPT.

A student authorized for CPT may only be employed by a specific employer, at a specific location and for specific dates. Any changes in employment require a new CPT application. The student must re-submit a new CPT application to the Center for Global Health and obtain a new I-20 in order to continue the employment.

## CPT Application

DHS adjudication is not required for CPT, and there is no need for an EAD (employment authorization document) card. A Designated School Official (DSO) in the Center for Global Health has the authority to authorize an F-1 student to participate in CPT. You may apply for CPT authorization by completing the *CPT Request Form* (your academic advisor/program coordinator must complete the second part of this form) and obtaining the necessary supporting documentation.

### *Supporting Documentation*

- Signed cooperative agreement between MUSC and employer *or* CPT offer letter from employer (see below for CPT offer letter requirements)
- Non-credit CPT—copy of the requirement from the university catalog or other university publication
- For-credit CPT (elective or required)—copy of the pages in the course catalog showing the course name, number of credits given, name of the faculty member teaching the course, and the course description with learning objectives clearly defined
- For-credit CPT (elective only)—Letter from your academic advisor/program coordinator in your college explaining how the employment/training opportunity is directly related to your area of study

### *CPT Employment Offer Letter*

The CPT employment offer letter should be on company letterhead and must contain the following information:

- Your name
- Name of company
- Detailed description of your duties
- Hours of work per week
- Starting and ending dates
- Statement/explanation verifying that the employment is directly related to your area of study

This information is meant to be additional documentation to protect your visa status by validating the fact that you are working legally. In addition to submitting a copy to CGH for the purposes of your CPT application, you should also keep this letter for your records.

### *CPT Application Submission and Approval*

To submit your CPT application, e-mail the completed the CPT Request Form and the necessary supporting documentation to [fowled@musc.edu](mailto:fowled@musc.edu). You must submit your completed CPT application to CGH at least 2 weeks in advance of your requested CPT start date.

If your CPT is approved, a new I-20 will be created for you showing CPT authorization on page 3. You will be notified via email as to when you can pick up the new form.

## Frequently Asked Questions

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

Students are required to maintain status which includes being enrolled in a full course of study while completing CPT. If you seek authorization for full-time CPT, the opportunity has to be considered full-time enrollment by MUSC.

### **Do I need to apply for CPT for on-campus employment?**

Yes, if the on-campus employment is required for your degree program.

**Does CPT impact on the amount of allowed OPT?**

If you qualify for CPT, you may use up to eleven months of full-time CPT without it affecting Optional Practical Training (OPT). However, if you use 12 months or more of full-time CPT, you will no longer be eligible for OPT. Part-time CPT does not count towards this limit.

**What is considered part-time CPT?**

Employment for 20 hours or less per week while you are enrolled for classes is considered part-time curricular practical training. The employment authorization written on the back of your I-20 copy will specify permission to engage in part-time training and you must limit your work to no more than 20 hours per week. You must be simultaneously enrolled as a full-time student in order to maintain lawful F-1 status.

**What is considered full-time training?**

Employment for more than 20 hours per week is considered full-time curricular practical training, regardless of whether you are enrolled full-time or part-time for classes. The employment authorization on your I-20 copy will specify permission to participate in full-time training. There is no limitation upon the length of time you may participate in full-time curricular practical training. However, if you participate in twelve months or more of curricular practical training you will not be eligible for post-completion practical training.

**Do I have to pay U.S. taxes on my salary?**

In general F-1 students who have been in the U.S. for five years or less are exempt from social security taxes (also known as F.I.C.A. tax). You should be sure to bring this to the attention of your employer because many employers are not familiar with this provision of the tax laws. Students in F-1 status are subject to all other taxes that may apply, including federal, state and local. If you have any questions concerning this, please contact Andrew Rider at [riderand@musc.edu](mailto:riderand@musc.edu).

**What proof of employment authorization can I give my employer?**

The I-20 form authorized for CPT is the document which indicated employment authorization. You should bring your I-20 form, passport and I-94 card to your employer. These documents will allow your employer to complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9. All employers are required to complete an I-9 form for every employee.

**Does a job opportunity have to be paid in order for it to qualify as CPT?**

No—unpaid work opportunities can qualify as CPT as long as the other eligibility criteria are met.