Curricular Practical Training (CPT): Frequently Asked Questions
Students in F-1 Status

Reminder:
All students must complete a CPT workshop before ISSO will process a CPT request. The workshop information is available here: https://www.isso.iastate.edu.

What is Curricular Practical Training (CPT)?
- An academic experience which allows a student to apply theoretical knowledge and skills gained through coursework in a work environment
- Period of practical training authorized by ISSO that is:
  - Directly related to student’s current level and major field of study
  - An academic component of student’s degree program
  - Student must enroll in a CPT-related course to be authorized for CPT

What are the general eligibility criteria for CPT?
- Student is in valid F-1 status
- Student is enrolled in a Bachelor’s, Master’s, or Doctoral degree program
- Student who has completed a full academic year
  - Academic year is defined as a fall and spring semester
- Student is making normal progress toward degree completion

When is a student not eligible for CPT?
- Student has completed all degree requirements
  - A graduate student defending any time during a semester is eligible to do CPT during that same semester
  - Student has officially graduated from Iowa State University
- Student has requested CPT based solely on a minor
- CPT is primarily for the purpose of facilitating employment rather than for an academic purpose

What if I need to request an extension of my I-20 in order to request CPT?
- I-20 cannot be extended for the sole purpose of CPT employment

When can I use CPT?
- During the fall or spring semester or during the summer session

When can I use CPT after beginning another degree program?
- If student has completed a previous degree in the US and now doing a higher degree in the same major (or MBA if internship is related to undergrad degree):
  - They can do part-time CPT during the first term (not able to do RCL with it)
  - Can do full-time CPT beginning second semester
- If student has completed a previous degree in the US and now doing a higher degree in a different major:
  - First semester, no CPT
- Second semester, part-time CPT
- Third semester and beyond, full-time CPT
- Summer, full-time CPT ok as long as not first semester
- Concurrent students in same major or MBA are always eligible for full-time CPT (as long as they meet 9-month requirement)
- Concurrent students in a different major: first term, part-time only; second term and beyond, full-time allowed.
- You are allowed a maximum of 364 days of full-time CPT at any one level (bachelor’s, master’s, doctorate) if you have been granted Optional Practical Training (OPT) at that same level
  - 365 or more days of full-time CPT at an educational level eliminates eligibility for OPT at that same level.

**Are there any restrictions on how many hours I can work for CPT?**
- For part-time CPT, you can work up to 20 hours a week
- For full-time CPT, you must work more than 20 hours a week

**What are the enrollment requirements while on CPT?**
- **Full-time CPT:**
  - If full-time CPT will last 3 months or more during a Fall or Spring semester, the student can enroll for the required CPT-related course only. No additional registration is required.
  - If full-time CPT lasts less than 3 months of a Fall or Spring semester, the student is required to be enrolled in a full-time course load* (including the CPT course)
  - During summer, students on full-time CPT need to be enrolled only in the CPT-related course
- **Part-time CPT:**
  - Students authorized for part-time CPT during a Fall or Spring semester must be enrolled in full-time course load* (including the CPT course) no matter the duration of the CPT experience.
  - During summer, students on part-time CPT need to be enrolled only in the CPT-related course

*Full-time enrollment requirements for students are as follows:
- Undergraduate: 12 credit hours
- Graduate: 9 credit hours
- Graduate with assistantship: Requirements are determined by the academic departments
- Reduced Course Load, authorized by ISSO, counts as full-time enrollment

**Does CPT have to start the first day of the semester?**
- No, CPT can start earlier than the first day of the semester during which you want to engage in CPT
  - CPT can start any day after the end date of the previous semester. For example, if Fall semester ends on December 18, your Spring CPT can start as early as December 19.
  - CPT can also start after the semester start date. It can begin any day during the semester, but must be authorized before you start working.
When must my CPT end?

- If you will be continuing your degree after the CPT experience:
  - CPT may extend until the day before the start of the following semester. (Summer begins the first summer session in May). For example, if Spring semester starts on January 11, your Fall CPT can end as late as January 10.
  - If you are completing your degree during the semester you are engaging in CPT, the CPT must end on or before the last day of the semester.

Can I request more than one period of CPT?

- Yes, but 365 days of full-time CPT will eliminate eligibility for OPT at that same level following completion of your degree program.
- CPT will generally be granted for one semester at a time.

Can I request CPT for off-campus work and still work on campus?

- Yes, students are eligible to work up to 20 hours each week on campus in addition to their CPT. However, it may not be advisable to attempt over 20 hours of employment while enrolled full time.

Can I request CPT to work more than 20 hours on campus?

- Only students with graduate assistantships are eligible to use CPT to work up to 30 hours on campus and only if the additional employment meets the eligibility criteria for CPT. ISSO cannot authorize CPT simply to allow another 10 hours of on-campus employment.

Can I change employers during my CPT?

- Yes, but the new employment must meet the eligibility requirements for CPT.
  - Student must complete a new CPT request through CyStart and must receive a new I-20 with the new employer’s information on it before starting work there.

What are some sample courses acceptable for the CPT authorization?

- Internship course
- Cooperative education course
- Independent study or special topics course for a shorter, part-time opportunity
- Research credits if the CPT experience is related to student’s research

Can I drop the course on which my CPT is based?

- No, you may not drop the CPT-related course.
  - If you fail to maintain registration in the course on which your CPT is based, you will be considered in violation of your F-1 status, your CPT will be cancelled, and you must file for reinstatement with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.
  - If you do not want to continue your CPT, you would need to add other courses to make your semester registration full time.
  - If other courses are not added, you will be considered in violation of your F-1 status and you must file for reinstatement with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.
  - Remember that adding classes past the first few weeks of a semester is not always feasible.
• If you never started your CPT, you would need to obtain a letter from the employer which confirms this fact, submit it to ISSO, and then add other courses to make your semester registration full time.
  • Remember that adding classes past the first few weeks of a semester is not always feasible.

Do I need to complete a CPT workshop before I submit a CPT request?
• Yes, you must complete a CPT workshop. Find details here: www.isso.iastate.edu.

How do I submit the CPT request?
• You will submit your CPT request through an electronic process in CyStart.
  • Login to CyStart using your ISU NetID and password.
  • Complete and submit Curricular Practical Training request found under F-1 Undergraduate or F-1 Graduate Student Services tabs. Submit the following:
    ▪ Curricular Practical Training: Student Request e-form
    ▪ Verification of Academic Status e-form
    ▪ Verification of Academic Purpose e-form

Job offer letter must be uploaded in your student request. It must include:
• Name and address of the company or institution which hired you
• Name and address of the company or institution where the CPT will take place, if different than the address of the company
• Position offered including a brief description of the experience
• Specific employment start (month/day/year) and end dates (month/day/year)
• Number of hours of CPT activity each week

Documentation providing verification that CPT is for academic purposes (one of the following):
• CPT optional for current degree program: student registered for internship, or cooperative education course.
  ▪ Academic basis detailed on Curricular Practical Training: Academic/Faculty Advisor Recommendation form
  ▪ Attach copy of internship/cooperative education agreement from Career Services Office, if applicable
• CPT required for graduate student per his or her Program of Study
  ▪ Include copy of Program of Study

• CPT required for completion of thesis, dissertation, or creative component
  ▪ Include explanation from academic/faculty advisor explaining why thesis, dissertation or creative component cannot be completed without the CPT.

• CPT required for all students in this academic program to earn a degree
  ▪ Include section from Iowa State University Catalog which documents this requirement

• CPT required for completion of course requirement for a specific course
  ▪ Include copy of syllabus from course detailing the required CPT experience
When do I submit the CPT request?
- At least 10 working days prior to beginning your CPT experience
- If you do not allow ISSO 10 days to process your request, your CPT start date may be later than the date you requested on your CyStart CPT request

What is the timeline for processing the CPT request?
- 10 working days after there is a check mark in all boxes on your CyStart Curricular Practical Training request page.
- ISSO will not start processing your CPT request until the following steps have been completed:
  - Student completed the CPT workshop
  - Student registered for a CPT course
  - Student submitted the CPT request through CyStart, including job offer letter
  - Verification of academic status and purpose e-forms have been approved by advisors

Can I submit just one request if I plan to do CPT for more than one semester?
- No, you must submit a new request for each semester of CPT.

Must I register for my CPT course before I submit my CPT request?
- Yes. Please consult your academic/faculty advisor for the information on what courses you can enroll in for CPT

How will I know if this request has been approved and my new I-20 is ready?
- When your CPT request is approved, a new I-20 with CPT authorization will be prepared for you
- ISSO will send an e-mail to your ISU e-mail address when your new CPT I-20 is ready for pick-up.
- If you do not receive this e-mail after 10 working days as noted above, please send an e-mail to isso@iastate.edu to check on your request.

When can I begin my CPT employment?
- After you receive your new I-20 with the CPT authorization

Do I need to update my address if I will be living at a new address during my CPT?
- Yes, you must update your address within 10 days of moving.
- Update your address on AccessPlus to fulfill this requirement