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

Overview
What is Curricular Practical Training?
CPT is an academic learning experience which allows a student to apply theoretical knowledge and skills gained through coursework in a business environment. A student must register for a CPT-related course and be authorized by the ISSO prior to any start of the internship or academic learning experience. CPT experiences must be directly related to a student’s level and major field of study. CPT can be used during the fall, spring, or summer sessions. Students must reapply for each semester they wish to participate in CPT.

What steps must I take in order to complete the CPT application process?
1. Receive internship/job offer
2. Attend CPT workshop in Cystart
3. Register for CPT related course
4. Apply for CPT in Cystart
5. Advisor processing (Wait up to 10 working days)
6. Receive e-mail from ISSO to pick up CPT authorization I-20
7. Start employment only after receiving CPT authorization I-20 and reaching the listed CPT start date

Eligibility
When is a student eligible for CPT?
- Student must be in valid F-1 status
- Student is enrolled in a Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral degree program
- Student must have been enrolled for one academic year in current program at ISU
  - Academic year is defined as a fall and spring semester
- Student must be making normal progress toward degree completion

When is a student ineligible for CPT?
- Student has completed all degree requirements
- A graduate student is not eligible for CPT after applying for Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- Student has officially graduated from Iowa State University
- Student who has not been enrolled at ISU for a consecutive, full academic year following a transfer to ISU, return from OPT, or change of level
- Student has requested CPT based solely on a minor
- CPT is primarily for the purpose of facilitating employment rather than for an academic learning purpose

Restrictions
Is there a limit of how much CPT I can have?
- 365 days of full-time CPT at an educational level eliminates eligibility for OPT at that same educational level.

Are there any restrictions on how many hours I can work while on CPT?
- Part-time CPT: 20 hours or fewer per week
- Full-time CPT: 21 hours or more per week
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. There must be an academic reason to request a program extension.

**Enrollment Requirements**

What are the enrollment requirements?

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
- 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 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 (RCL), authorized by ISSO, counts as full-time enrollment

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

What courses are not acceptable for CPT authorization?
- GR ST 601
- GR ST 680
- GR ST 681 A, B, C, and D

Can I drop a course on which my CPT is based?
No, students may not drop the CPT-related course. The student will be considered in violation of their F-1 immigration status if they fail to maintain registration in the CPT related course. In this case, the student's CPT will be cancelled and the student must file for reinstatement with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

**CPT Duration**

Does CPT have to start the first day of the semester?
No, CPT does not have to start on the first day of the semester. CPT can start any day after the end date of the previous semester. CPT can also be authorized after the semester start date, but must be authorized before starting work.
- Example: If Fall Semester ends on December 18, Spring CPT can start as early as December 19.
**When must my CPT end?**

If the student will be continuing their degree after the CPT experience, CPT may extend until the day before the start of the following semester.

- Example: If Spring Semester starts on January 11, Fall CPT can extend as late as January 10.

If the student is completing their degree during the semester they are engaging in CPT, CPT must end on or before the last day of the semester.

- Example: If graduating during the Fall Semester and the Fall Semester ends on December 18, CPT must end on or before December 18.

**Can I request more than one period of CPT?**

CPT is generally granted for one semester at a time. To extend CPT for another semester, students must reapply in Cystart. Remember, 365 days of **full-time** CPT eliminates eligibility for OPT at that same educational level following completion of degree program.

**CPT and On-Campus Employment**

**Can I request CPT 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 on-campus employment, CPT activity, and full-time enrollment.

**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 hours meet the eligibility criteria for CPT. ISSO cannot authorize CPT simply to allow another 10 hours of on-campus employment.

**CPT Workshop**

**Do I need to complete a CPT workshop before I submit a CPT request?**

Yes, students must first complete a CPT workshop before the ISSO will issue CPT authorizations. Find details for the CPT workshop [here](#).

**Cystart Request**

**When do I submit the CPT request?**

Students must submit CPT requests at least 10 working days prior to the CPT learning experience. If applying late, the CPT start date may be later than the date requested on the Cystart CPT request.

**How do I submit the CPT request?**

CPT requests can be submitted through an electronic process in Cystart. Students may log in to Cystart using their ISU NetID and password. Complete and submit the *Curricular Practical Training* request found under F-1 Student Services tab.
What must be included in the offer letter?
Students must upload the CPT learning experience offer letter at the time of submission. The offer letter must include the following:

- Name and address of the company or institution providing the CPT learning experience
- Name and address of the company or institution where the CPT learning experience will take place, if different from the address of the company
- Brief description of responsibilities and learning objectives
- Specific start (month/day/year) and end dates (month/day/year)
- Number of hours of CPT activity each week

Students must enter the name and contact information for academic/faculty adviser. An electronic notification will then be sent to the adviser verifying one of the following:

- **CPT optional** for current degree program, attaching copy of internship/cooperative education agreement from Career Services Office, if applicable
- **CPT required** for graduate study per his or her Program of Study, including copy of Program of Study
- **CPT required** for completion of thesis, dissertation, or creative component, including explanation from academic/faculty adviser of how CPT is necessary for completion of thesis, dissertation, or creative component
- **CPT required** for all students in this academic program to earn a degree, including section from Iowa State University Catalog which documents this requirement
- **CPT required** for completion of course requirement for a specific course, including copy of syllabus from course detailing required CPT experience

What is the timeline for processing the CPT request?
10 working days after there is a check mark in all boxes on the Cystart Curricular Practical Training request page. ISSO will not start processing a CPT request until the following steps have been completed:

- Student completed the CPT workshop
- Student registered for the 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 advisers

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

Must I register for my CPT course before I submit my CPT request?
Yes. Students must consult with academic/faculty advisers for the information what courses are appropriate for CPT prior to submitting the CPT request in Cystart.

How will I know if this request has been approved and my new I-20 is ready?
When CPT request is approved, a new I-20 with CPT authorization will be produced. ISSO will send an e-mail to the ISU e-mail address when the CPT I-20 is ready to be picked up. Students are asked to e-mail ISSO at isso@iastate.edu to check on CPT request if they have not received the e-mail from ISSO after 10 working days, as noted above.
CPT Experience

When can I begin my CPT?
Students may begin CPT experience only after receiving the new I-20 with CPT authorization.

Can I change employers during my CPT?
Yes, but the new training 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 company or institution's information on it before participating in a CPT learning experience at that location.

Do I need to update my address if I will be living at a new address during my CPT?
Yes, students are required to update their address within 10 days of moving. Students can update their address in Accessplus to fulfill this requirement.

Immigration Consequences

What will happen if I work off-campus without CPT authorization?
- Violation of F-1 nonimmigrant status
- Must apply for reinstatement or travel and reenter for new F-1 status
- Must immediately stop working on campus
- Any authorized off-campus work will be terminated automatically
- Lose eligibility for all other benefits of F-1 nonimmigrant status
- Lose eligibility to change status, for example from F-1 to F-2, F-1 to H-1B, etc.

Disclaimer: This Frequently Asked Questions is intended for general information and guidance. Please consult with an International Student and Scholar Advisor in the International Students and Scholars Office regarding your individual request.