

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR F-1 STUDENT VISA HOLDERS

A publication of the ISSO at Brandeis University, Kutz 215, (781) 736-3480, isso@brandeis.edu 11/2011

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a benefit of F-1 Status. CPT is a type of employment authorization for an F-1 Visa Holder that enables a student to pursue work in his/her major (not minor) field of study under certain circumstances. The work experience must either be ***integral*** to the degree program (earns academic credit for all students in that major) or ***required*** (fulfills a degree requirement). [Legal Citation 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)] The work experience must be part of the established curriculum at Brandeis and noted in the *Brandeis University Bulletin*. The student must meet all academic requirements, university requirements for enrollment, and secure the CPT authorization from ISSO ***prior to*** beginning the internship/work/practicum/experience.

Please note: Employment that offers “excellent” or “relevant” experience to a student’s field of study, but does not meet the requirements stated above, does not qualify for CPT. Please refer to the Optional Practical Training information on the ISSO web site for an alternative for work authorization.

DEFINITION OF EMPLOYMENT – when do you need authorization to work off-campus?

Employment is defined by the Department of Homeland Security as providing a service for which you receive anything in return, or would normally receive in return. (Others are paid or receive benefits for providing the same service that you are providing). **Thus, both paid and non-paid positions are considered “employment” by the Department of Homeland Security and will need authorization before the start date of the work experience.** Curricular Practical Training is appropriate for required field projects, internships, practicum experiences, work experience with for-profit corporations, or work experience with non-profit organizations.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- You must be in F-1 Status for at least one full academic year. The only exception to this regulation is for graduate students only, and is only allowed if the internship is *required* in your first or second semester.
- You must be enrolled as a full-time student for the duration of your program – you must register as a full-time student each semester (or over the summer term, if applicable).
- You must have health insurance for the duration of your program. It is a Commonwealth of Massachusetts law that all full-time students must have health insurance.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON CPT

Timing:

- CPT may be done either part-time or full-time depending on the requirement for your project. Except for the SID Second Year Project and the Coexistence Program Internship, all CPT authorizations must be no more than 20 hours per week while school is in session. During the summer months, work can be authorized for more than 20 hours per week.

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Number of Hours:

- If you are combining two part-time positions (in the summer or for the SID program), each project/employer will need a separate authorization and each should not exceed the total maximum hours allowed (20 hours per week during the academic year, full-time during the summer is acceptable).
- **CPT authorization must be received from the ISSO BEFORE your first day at work.**

Money Matters:

- CPT can be authorization for paid or non-paid work experiences. If you are being paid, within three days of your start date, you and your employer will complete an Employment Eligibility Verification form (I-9), which the employer keeps. You must show your passport and your I-20 with the CPT authorization on page 3 at the time you complete the I-9. You will also need a Social Security Number (SSN). Once you have your CPT authorization, consult with the ISSO if you have not applied for the SSN already.
- CPT authorization does not require a fee, however enrolling in a course over the summer or other registration requirements for the university may require a university tuition fee.

Taxes:

While you are authorized to engage in CPT, since you are in F-1 status, the income you derive from practical training is exempt from social security taxes and withholding for social security purposes if you have been in the United States in F visa status **for less than five years**. If you have been in the U.S. **for more than five years** you will be required to pay social security taxes. Most F-1 students who earn income from practical training will pay federal and state income taxes. We advise that you seek the resources of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for particulars. You should consult the IRS Publication 519: *U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens and* Publication 515: *Withholding of Tax on Non-Resident Aliens & Foreign Corporations* for clarification of your tax status. These can be found on-line at www.irs.gov.

Relationship to OPT:

Time spent doing Curricular Practical Training does not subtract from your available twelve months of Optional Practical Training, UNLESS you have worked for one year or more in full-time Curricular Practical Training in one degree level. Any student who works for one year or more in full-time CPT is not eligible for any Optional Practical Training. Part-time CPT does not have these timing restrictions.

CPT is date specific and employer specific.

If you decide to extend your internship, you must receive a new authorization for CPT from the ISSO. If you decide to change employers for your internship, you must also obtain a new authorization. Both would entail the same process as your initial authorization. ***If you fail to obtain proper authorization prior to beginning or extending your work experience, you will violate your student status.***

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Examples of CPT-type courses / program requirements in the *Brandeis University Bulletin*

- *IBS students: the 297A “Field Project”*
- *Heller MBA students: HS 231*
- *Genetic Counseling required field work or clinical internships*
- *The second year project for SID*
- *For undergraduate students: INT92g credit internship course in the summer [also see <http://www.brandeis.edu/programs/internships/>] for more undergraduate opportunities]*
- *Coexistence Program required internship.*
- *MA SID Program required internship*

** Please see current listing in the *Bulletin* of courses within your major field of study **

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I’m working outside the U.S.; do I need CPT work authorization?

MAYBE. Some organizations have a home base in the United States and field offices across the world. You may be based overseas, but the income or employee status may come from the U.S. office. If this is the case, we recommend getting CPT work authorization. This would cover you for tax purposes. It would also cover you if you had to receive training or work in the U.S. office for any period of time (provided that the CPT authorization dates are active). If there are absolutely no ties to the U.S. and you are absolutely sure of this, then you do not need CPT work authorization. Please check with ISSO if you have any questions.

I’m just doing research; do I need CPT work authorization?

YES. Research is considered employment in the eyes of the USCIS if you are providing a service or receiving any compensation from your employer (whether it is a company, college/university, or research institute). You would therefore need authorization to pursue research. ***If your work / research is being paid by Brandeis University and is under 20 hours per week while school is in session or full-time over the summer term, this authorization is covered under “on-campus” employment regulations. If a faculty member has an outside grant, you would need either Curricular Practical Training or Optional Practical Training to conduct the research. Please consult ISSO with any questions.

I’d like to do some translating (or something else) on the side; can I get CPT work authorization?

MOST LIKELY, NO. Unless the employment is an integral part of your internship or field project course, you are not authorized to do additional work.

If I don’t like my current internship but I found another one and I want to change to the new employer. I let the professor of my internship class know I am changing internships. Do I need to do anything else? YES, YOU DO. Since CPT is employer specific, you would need to get an offer letter from the new employer, get permission from the faculty member overseeing the internship course, and bring the new letter to the ISSO. You will need the new I-20 BEFORE you start the new internship. Please note that the internship needs to be a certain number of weeks and work hours so that you will get academic credit for the internship class.

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APPLYING FOR CPT

There are four steps in this process: **your employer, your internship course advisor, Brandeis's Registrar, and your ISSO advisor.** Failure to secure these four steps would lead to a violation of your student status.

PLEASE ALLOW TEN DAYS FOR THE ISSO TO PROCESS YOUR CPT REQUEST.
YOU MUST HAVE THE NEW FORM I-20 WITH CPT AUTHORIZATION
BEFORE BEGINNING WORK.

1. The first step is to secure an internship. **Show your employer our sample offer letter on the web site: http://www.brandeis.edu/acserv/isso/current/employment/cpt/Sample_offer.pdf**
2. Your employer will then create an offer letter stating the terms of your internship. This letter must include the following details:
 - Your job title
 - A brief description of your duties
 - The **specific** beginning **and** ending dates of the employment (see semester dates below)
 - The number of hours you will work per week (up to 20 hours is considered part-time and 21+ is full-time)
 - The name and address of your direct supervisor

**** The offer letter must be on company letterhead, it must be signed by your supervisor, and it must state specific dates of employment. An unsigned email is not an acceptable format for this requirement.**

**** Your internship dates need to correspond to the dates of your internship course and/or project. CPT cannot be authorized for dates beyond the given semester. CPT in another semester would require a new authorization.**

INTERNSHIP DATES:

Fall 2011 internship dates: 8/30/11 - 12/21/11

Spring 2012 internship dates: 1/17/2012 – 5/10/2012

Summer 2012 internship dates: 5/21/2012 – 8/24/2012 (INT92g course for undergrads: dates TBD)

3. Show your offer letter and discuss the job training with your academic advisor. **Complete the student section of the advisor's recommendation form (you can print this form from the web site: http://www.brandeis.edu/acserv/isso/current/employment/cpt/Advisor_rec_CPT.pdf)** and ask your advisor to review and sign accordingly.
4. Complete registration requirements for the course (enroll in the course or enroll as "continuation full-time" if applicable). ISSO will verify your enrollment at the time of your meeting.

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5. Bring the following to the ISSO:
 - Your employer's offer letter
 - Completed and signed advisor's recommendation form:
(http://www.brandeis.edu/acserv/isso/current/employment/cpt/Advisor_rec_CPT.pdf)
 - Current I-20 and any previous I-20s
 - Passport and I-94 Card (do not bring copies)

The ISSO Advisor will then determine if your request complies with the immigration regulations related to CPT. If the ISSO Advisor approves your CPT application, you will receive a new I-20 with the CPT work authorization. You will be eligible to work after you receive this new I-20.

If your offer of employment does not meet requirements for CPT, you are free to explore applying for pre-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT). Please note that it can take 2 ½ - 3 months to receive the OPT card, so please plan accordingly.

A NOTE OF CAUTION: You may not begin your Curricular Practical Training until the ISSO has given you the authorization. Working improperly or without authorization is a serious violation of your status and would result in the loss of benefits normally granted to F-1 students.