# Curricular Practical Training (CPT) 
## Frequently Asked Questions

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I. The Basics of CPT

What is CPT?
Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is work authorization that is granted to eligible F-1 students so that they may complete the requirements of a course or the Cooperative Education Program.

What is the difference between CPT and OPT?
In short, CPT is employment that is directly related to the student’s major and required to successfully complete a course. OPT is employment that is directly related to the student’s major but not part of the student’s curriculum.

When does CPT work authorization begin and end?
As CPT work authorization is related to the requirements for a course, the earliest a student may be approved for CPT work authorization is the first day of class for the term. The last day a student may be approved for CPT work authorization is the last day of the final exam period for the term.

How many hours can I work on CPT?
Students can be approved for either part-time or full-time CPT. Part-time CPT allows you to work 20 hours or less per week, while full-time CPT is required for any work that will be more than 20 hours per week.

How many credits of CPT may I take?
Stevens’ academic policies indicate that students may earn no more than three CPT course credits per degree program. Most academic departments will allow students to divide the three total credits between multiple semesters. Please check with your department if you have questions concerning its policy on the number of CPT credits you may take per semester.

Does CPT-related coursework have to be credit-bearing?
Yes, you must be enrolled in at least one credit of a course requiring CPT work authorization to be eligible. The only exception is for students participating in the Cooperative Education Program. Students in this program must be enrolled in the appropriate Co-Op course for their major, which is worth zero credits.

Could a student link any class to CPT employment?
No. A CPT course is one that requires employment in order for a student to successfully complete the course, so all students in the class will also be employed.

What if my course-related work opportunity is unpaid? Should I still apply for CPT?
Yes, CPT is for any work done as an integral part of the curriculum and directly related to your major. It doesn’t matter if the work is paid or unpaid.
II. CPT Eligibility Requirements

How does an F-1 student become eligible for CPT?
1. Be a full-time student in F-1 status for at least one academic year (one fall and one spring semester)
2. Be in lawful F-1 status at the time of the CPT application
3. Get approval from academic advisor
4. Be enrolled in a course necessitating CPT employment or the Cooperative Education Program (Co-op)
5. Have a job offer
6. Have a GPA of 3.0 or above (graduate students) or 2.0 or above (undergraduate students)

When am I eligible for CPT if I am an F-1 student who transferred from another institution or has recently changed my level to pursue another degree at Stevens?
You will be eligible for CPT after one semester in your new degree program.

Are there any eligibility requirements for my job offer?
In order to be eligible for CPT work authorization, your position must be directly related to your major area of study. Additionally, if you are applying for CPT work authorization during the fall or spring semesters, your job must be located within a reasonable commuting distance from Stevens’ campus.

May I do CPT if I am a graduate student who has completed all required credits and am just working on my thesis/dissertation?
Yes, but only if participating in CPT does not delay completion of your studies and the proposed CPT employment is integral to your thesis or dissertation research. Your academic advisor will need to explain to ISSS how the CPT work will contribute to your thesis/dissertation. Failure to make normal progress on your dissertation/thesis as a result of CPT work may result in the cancellation of your CPT or the denial of a future program extension request.
III. CPT Application Process

How do I start the process of applying for CPT work authorization?

1. Reach out to your Academic Advisor to find out if a CPT course is available in your major. If you are interested in the Cooperative Education Program (Co-Op), reach out to the Stevens Career Center or visit their website here.
2. Register for the CPT course with the Office of the Registrar or the Co-Op course with the assistance of the Stevens Career Center.
3. Submit the CPT Request Form and your offer letter to the ISSS office at least two weeks prior to your intended start date.

Are there any requirements for my CPT offer letter?
Yes, your offer letter must contain the following items: the student’s name, the company's name, the company’s address, a statement of the job offer, the number of hours per week to be worked, and start and end dates of the employment. The letter must be on the company's letterhead and signed by its author.

What happens after I submit my CPT application to ISSS?
An ISSS staff member will process your application. If your application is approved, you will be issued a new Form I-20 with CPT work authorization on the second page. The CPT authorization will indicate a specific employer, a start date, and an end date. You may only work for the employer listed on the Form I-20 and only during the dates indicated on the Form I-20.

May I work while my application is pending with ISSS?
No, you may not work until you have been approved for CPT and you have the new Form I-20 with CPT work authorization in hand. Please note that CPT work authorization is for both paid and unpaid work, so you may not begin working for your employer, even on an unpaid basis, until you have been approved and have the new Form I-20.

When is the earliest I may apply for CPT?
You may apply for CPT once you’ve enrolled in the CPT course for semester you’d like to work. To see when course registration begins for any semester, please contact the Office of the Registrar.

When is the latest I may apply for CPT?
If you will be taking 2 or more credits of CPT for the semester, you must register in the CPT course for your major and submit your application materials to ISSS before the end of the add/drop period. Students applying for CPT during the summer must apply by July 15th.

If you are taking only 1 credit of CPT for the semester, you must register in the CPT course and submit your application materials to ISSS by the following deadlines:

- Fall semester: October 15th
- Spring semester: March 15th
IV. Extension of CPT Employment

My employer has extended my offer for this semester. How do I extend my CPT work authorization?
If you have already been approved for CPT work authorization, you will need to obtain an extension letter from your employer. The letter must indicate that you've received an extension of the original terms of your offer and indicate your new end date. Please be reminded that the latest end date possible is the last day of the final exam period for the term.

If your application is still pending with ISSS, please submit an updated offer letter with an updated end date to your ISSS Immigration Advisor.

If you are applying for an extension of CPT for the same semester, you do not need to re-register for the CPT course.

My employer would like for me to continue working with them next semester. How do I continue working for my employer?
To apply for CPT in a following semester, you will need to enroll in the CPT course for the next semester and submit a new CPT application. The application process is the same as your original application, so please be sure to submit your application materials at least 2 weeks prior to your intended start date.

As a reminder, the earliest you may begin working is the first day of class for the semester. If there is a gap between the end of the current semester and the beginning of the following semester, and you’d like to continue working without interruption, you will need to apply for pre-completion OPT. Guidance for pre-completion OPT can be found on the ISSS website.

My employer would like for me to continue working with them after I graduate. What do I need to do?
Students who would like to continue working for their employer after they've completed their program must apply for post-completion OPT. Please visit the ISSS website for more details regarding OPT eligibility and the application process.
If my application is pending with ISSS, but not yet approved, may I change the employer on my application?

If you have been offered an alternate position while your CPT application is pending with ISSS, please reach out to your CPT Course Instructor to confirm that the position meets the requirements for CPT. If so, please email your ISSS Immigration Advisor immediately to cancel your current CPT application. At the same time, you will need to complete a new CPT Request Form and submit the completed form, along with your new offer letter to ISSS. The ISSS office will review the application, and if approved, will issue a new Form I-20 with CPT authorization on the second page.

It is imperative that you cancel your current CPT application prior to ISSS approval. Once your application has been approved and the start date on the CPT segment has begun, the process to cancel the application is much more complicated and requires adjudication from Immigration and Customs Enforcement. This may cause substantial delays in ISSS ability to process your new application for the alternate position.

May I change my employer after my CPT has been approved by ISSS and I have begun working?

Yes, but only under certain circumstances and with your Academic Advisor’s recommendation. In order to change jobs, you must submit a new completed CPT Request Form along with your new job offer letter. You will also need to email your ISSS Immigration Advisor with the end date of your current employment. The ISSS office will review your application and if approved, you will be issued a new Form I-20 with CPT authorization on the second page. This CPT authorization will reflect your new employer and new start and end dates. You may only begin working for your new employer once your request has been approved, you have your new Form I-20 in hand, and the start date on the CPT authorization has been reached.

Please note that you do not need to re-register for the CPT course.

What if I change my mind and decide not to do CPT work after ISSS authorizes me?

If you decide not to participate in CPT before the authorized employment start date listed on your I-20, please contact your ISSS Immigration Advisor to request cancellation of your CPT authorization in SEVIS.

If you decide not to participate in CPT after the employment start date on your I-20 but before you have actually begun your work, you must contact your ISSS Immigration Advisor immediately so that ISSS can contact Immigration and Customs Enforcement on your behalf to request removal of the CPT authorization. This can be a lengthy process, so please be sure to inform ISSS as quickly as possible so you may be advised as to the documentation that is required.

CPT employment authorization cannot be cancelled once you have begun working—even if you work only a few days—so consider this carefully if you have concerns about your ability to work and handle your academic responsibilities at the same time.
VI. CPT and Course Enrollment

I want to work full-time (over twenty hours per week) and take a full-time course load. Is this allowed?
Yes, but ISSS advises you to take extreme caution when making this decision as it could be very stressful to balance a full-time course load with a full-time job. Please talk with your academic advisor about this. If s/he thinks you can handle this load, s/he may sign your CPT Request Form recommending this. If full-time CPT is approved, your academic advisor, professor, and ISSS will monitor you throughout the semester. If you are not attending your classes or your academic work is suffering because of your job, your CPT work authorization may be canceled by ISSS. Please keep in mind that having your CPT canceled could adversely affect your ability to maintain F-1 status. Additionally, you may not be able to participate in CPT in the future if your GPA slips below the required minimum.

I want to devote myself fully to my CPT work. May I reduce my course load in order to do CPT?
No, students must maintain a full-time course load alongside CPT.

Can I count the CPT course towards my full course load requirement?
This depends on how many other courses you are taking and for how many credits you will take the CPT course. The CPT course is considered distance learning, which means it cannot count as one of your on-campus courses. In a semester in which you must be enrolled full-time (minimum 9 credits for graduates, 12 credits for undergraduates), a CPT course may count towards the full-time minimum as long as the course is required for your degree (as either elective or core credits) and the other remaining credits you take are on-campus.

If you require less than a full course load in your last semester in order to graduate, a CPT course may count toward your full course load requirement as long as the rest of your required courses are taken on-campus. Please contact your ISSS Immigration Advisor if you have any questions.

May I only take CPT in my final semester, if that is all I need to complete my program?
Since the CPT course is considered distance learning, it is not an on-campus course and therefore cannot be the only course you take in your last semester.

If you require just one course to graduate, you must take this course on campus your last semester. You may take the CPT course in addition to this course if you like.

Please note that if you are in your final semester and taking less than a full-time course load (9 credits for graduates and 12 credits for undergraduates), then you must also submit a Reduced Course Load (RCL) form with your CPT application.

How does CPT affect my course enrollment if I will be graduating in the summer?
If you will be completing during the Summer Session, you must abide by the on-campus requirements for the final semester. As CPT is considered a distance learning course, all your other courses must be on-campus to maintain your status and retain eligibility for OPT. If you only have one course left and will be completing
during the Summer Session, then that course must be on-campus. You may take CPT in addition to this course, if you like.

I am going to finish my degree one semester early, but my I-20 has an end date in a future semester. Can I stay on-campus taking courses in order to use more CPT time until my I-20 ends?
No. Once you can or have completed all degree requirements, you must do so and move on to the next phase of your F-1 status (apply for OPT, change degree levels, etc.) regardless of when your I-20 end date is. You may not continue taking courses that are not required to complete your program; to do so would negatively affect your status.

Could I extend my I-20 in order to do a CPT-related class?
No, not if you do not need any more credits to graduate. CPT is not extracurricular. Even if you do require an extra semester(s) to complete your degree, you would have to take on-campus courses in order to maintain your status; you could not just take a CPT course.

Can I drop a CPT course?
Not if you have already begun your CPT employment. Since CPT employment requires registration in a Practical Training course or Co-op, dropping the course would render that past employment illegal and would result in the loss of your immigration status. A student may take an incomplete in a Practical Training course, but he or she is still required to complete the CPT course assignments and receive a grade prior to graduation. Students should keep in mind that failure to receive a grade in a CPT course before graduating will be reflected on their academic transcripts, which may be requested by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as part of applications for certain immigration benefits (such as OPT or H-1B), and could adversely affect a student’s ability to receive such benefits.
VII. CPT and Other Work Authorizations

Does CPT affect my eligibility for OPT?
Students who participate in one year or more (365 days and up) of full-time CPT are no longer eligible for OPT at their current degree level. Participation in part-time CPT does not affect OPT eligibility.

Can I keep my on-campus job if I have CPT employment, even if my work will total more than twenty hours a week?
U.S. regulations do not explicitly restrict on-campus employment while participating in CPT. Therefore, ISSS recommends that students who wish to work on-campus while engaging in CPT should apply for part-time CPT and not exceed 40 hours of work combined between their on-campus work and CPT work. As a reminder, you cannot work more than 20 hours per week on campus while school is in session.

ISSS cannot guarantee that students who choose to do full-time CPT while working on campus will encounter no questions or problems in the future (i.e., as part of an H-1B or other immigration petition). Students who choose to do full-time CPT alongside on-campus work must understand that they do so at their own risk.

May I apply for CPT and OPT at the same time?
Yes. CPT is processed by the ISSS office, and OPT is processed by both ISSS and USCIS. Applying for both at the same time or one while the other is pending will have no detrimental effect. However, you will not be approved for CPT that will push you beyond the 364-day full-time CPT limit if you have pending OPT with USCIS.