

Applying for F-1 Curricular Practical Training

F-1 Curricular Practical Training: Part One

What is Curricular Practical Training?

Curricular practical training is an employment option available to F-1 students where the practical training employment is considered to be an integral part of the curriculum or academic program. This employment may be an internship, cooperative education job, a practicum, or any other work experience that is either required for your degree (as defined in the course catalog) or for which academic credit is awarded.

What is the criteria for determining if I am eligible for Curricular Practical Training?

To be eligible for curricular practical training, you must have been in legal student status for 9 consecutive months, your employment must be an integral part of your degree program or requirement for a course, and your job offer related to your major or field of study. The OMA Director can authorize curricular practical training for you if it can be clearly documented that the proposed employment meets one of the three following conditions:

1. The training employment is required of all degree candidates in the program and is necessary for the awarding of the degree. Included in this category is employment in a required internship or practicum. Graduate students in their first year of study may be eligible for curricular practical training in this category. Undergraduates are not eligible in their first year of study.
2. The training employment will result in the awarding of academic credit, at least preponderantly, if not solely, on the basis of the training experience. Included in this category is employment for a course specifically designed to award academic credit for an employment experience. Also included in this category is employment that will result in the award of at least one course credit for an independent study. In both of these cases you must be registered for the course during the period that you are working under curricular practical training authorization.
3. Students in dissertation status where the training opportunity is an absolutely necessary component of the student's research without which the dissertation cannot be completed may be authorized to undertake curricular practical training. A letter from the student's dissertation advisor explaining in detail the relationship between the proposed employment and the student's dissertation research must be provided.

If I use Curricular Practical Training, will the time be deducted from the twelve months of optional practical training?

The time you spend on curricular practical training will not be deducted from the twelve months of allowable optional practical training UNLESS you use 12 months or more of full-time curricular practical training.

What is considered part-time?

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 ID copy will specify permission to engage in part-time training and you must limit your work to no more than 20 hours per week. There is no limitation upon the length of time you may participate in part-time curricular practical training, but 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 ID 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.

How do I apply for Curricular Practical Training?

Your first step is to contact the OMA Director to evaluate your eligibility for curricular practical training and the proposed employment opportunity to determine whether or not both you and the job meet the eligibility requirements. If all eligibility requirements are met, you will need to present the OMA Director with the following documents:

- A completed *Form I-538* (you may wish fill out this form online. Make sure you print it out from a laser printer). Complete Section A; the OMA Director will complete Section B.
- A completed *F-1 Curricular Practical Training Request Form*.
- Your original I-20 form.
- A letter from your employer which states the duties of the job, beginning and ending date of your employment, and supervisor's name, title, address and phone number.
- Proof of registration for curricular practical training credits if you are earning academic credit for the CPT experience. Please note, you must be registered for CPT credits in the same semester during which the work will be done. (i.e. You must be registered for CPT credits in the summer if you will be working in the summer.)

Curricular practical training is authorized by the OMA Director; it does not require approval from the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The authorization is noted on the back of your I-20 form. You must not continue employment beyond the date authorized unless you apply and are granted an extension of your permission to work.

Do I need a U.S. Social Security Number?

Yes, if you plan to work in the U.S. you will need a valid Social Security number. The OMA Director can provide with instructions on applying for a social security number.

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

In general F-1 students who have been in the U.S. for fewer than six years 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. If you need more information about the F-1 social security tax exemption, please contact the OMA Director. Students in F-1 status are subject to all other taxes that may apply, including federal, state and local.

What proof of employment authorization can I give my employer?

Your I-20 form authorized for curricular practical training is all you will need to provide your employer. Within the first three days of beginning work you and your employer must complete a form entitled Employment Eligibility Verification (INS Form I-9). This form will be kept on file by your employer and must be updated each time you receive a renewal of your work permission. Your I-20 endorsed for curricular practical training should meet the documentation requirement of the I-9.

Introduction to Electronic Filing (E-Filing) USCIS Forms

<http://uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/eFiling.htm>