



F-1 Visa Student Practical Training and Employment Options

A summary of the Practical Training and employment regulations for F-1 students is provided below. Additional information is available at the International Education and Programs Office, Building 38, Room 108.

On-Campus Employment

You may work 20 hours per week during an academic quarter and 40 hours per week during the vacation periods. No documentation is required from International Education and Programs for on-campus employment. You may begin on-campus employment 30 days prior to start of classes. A transfer student can only work at the campus that holds jurisdiction over his/her SEVIS record. You must be in good academic standing in order to qualify for work authorization.

Off-Campus Employment is restricted by the regulations of the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), and the Department of Labor. *It must be pre-authorized by IEP and USCIS.* Students must have been in F-1 for at least one academic year (9 months) to be eligible for off-campus employment or Practical Training.

Economic Hardship

Students can apply for off-campus work permission based on economic hardship caused by unforeseen circumstances. Off-campus work permission based on economic hardship is granted by USCIS. Authorization is granted in one-year intervals and is only valid when the student is attending the university that recommended the authorization.

Practical Training

Practical Training is employment directly related to your degree program. The following Practical Training options are available. All require prior authorization and the issuance of a new Form I-20.

(A) **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**: Curricular Practical Training is defined as internship or cooperative education. Before beginning employment, students must receive prior authorization from the IEP Advisor in the form of a new SEVIS Form I-20 with CPT authorization indicated on the last page. To apply for Curricular Practical Training, follow these steps:

- 1) Come to the IEP office to find out if you are eligible for work authorization.
- 2) Secure a job and a letter of offer from the employer listing your dates of employment, amount of pay, and a description of the job duties. The dates of work must be within the dates of the quarter in which you are registered for the internship or co-op course.
- 3) Obtain a letter of support for Curricular Practical Training from the Academic Advisor stating that the training will enhance your education.
- 4) Register for the appropriate internship or cooperative education course (listed in Cal Poly's catalog of class offerings) for the particular quarter that you will be authorized to work. Independent study or special problems courses are not acceptable.

- 5) Complete a Work Authorization Form I-538. (Form can be completed at IEP office.)
- 6) Bring the above items to the IEP office to receive work authorization (new I-20) from Dr. Andre, International Student Advisor. **Note:** *Do NOT file any request for CPT authorization with USCIS. IEP grants authorization for CPT.*

Note: If you engage in full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for over 12 months, you will be ineligible for Optional Practical Training (OPT.)

(B) **Post-Completion Optional Practical Training (OPT):** F-1 students are eligible for up to 12 months of Practical Training upon the completion of the degree. Training must be completed within 14 months following the completion of study. Optional Practical Training (OPT) must be requested prior to the completion of all course requirements for the degree or prior to the completion of the course of study. You cannot apply more than 90 days prior to graduation. The IEP Advisor for international students must recommend OPT and the actual authorization will be granted by the USCIS. You must have applied for graduation evaluation at the Office of Academic Records and must meet the GWR requirement prior to requesting OPT. Make appointments early with the IEP Advisor for international students, Barbara R. Andre, Associate Director of International Education and Programs, at 756-5837 to discuss your plans. **Download the application from the IEP web site. The packet contains detailed instructions and the necessary forms. Come to IEP to receive a new I-20 with OPT recommendation. (See OPT packet for details.)**

Health insurance coverage must also include the period you are engaged in any work or training that is prior to completing your degree requirements. Although having health insurance is an option after graduation, you are strongly advised to maintain your health insurance due to the high cost of health care in the United States. Wells Fargo Insurance Services will allow their clients to continue their coverage at the student rate throughout the term of their student visa status and they will also accept new clients who have graduated.

Additional information on Employment will be given during International Students Orientation and informative workshops.