

## Optional Practical Training (OPT) or Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

F-1 students who are presented with an off-campus employment opportunity have to determine what type of employment authorization would be appropriate and whether or not they are eligible for that authorization. Many students would like to save all of their Optional Practical Training eligibility for post-graduation employment and look to Curricular Practical Training as the most expedient type of authorization for these opportunities. However, most off-campus employment opportunities do not meet the high academic standard for Curricular Practical Training but do fit within the guidelines for Optional Practical Training.

OPT was specifically designed to allow students to engage in employment “directly related to the student's major area of study.” For OPT, there is no requirement for a student to earn academic credit for the employment experience, or the benefits derived from it, to be part of the curriculum.

For CPT, federal immigration regulations allow F-1 students to “participate in a curricular practical training program that is an integral part of an established curriculum.” The key part of that sentence is “an integral part of an established curriculum.” In the context of GSAS, this means that you must be registered for a course in which the proposed employment activity, or the benefits derived from it, must be a central component of the course structure, goals, and evaluation.

GSAS students can request CPT if they register for a 300/3000 level Reading and Research course, or a 299r course (SEAS students).

The students will need to provide me with a detailed description of their proposed activities that includes the following:

1. An outline of the goals of the independent study, and how the employment experience will assist them in meeting the preset goals of the course
2. The name and location of the employer
3. A description of the activities to be performed at the employer location
4. How the employment activities will be integrated into the course objectives and how they will be evaluated
5. How the employment activities will be integrated into your thesis
6. In which term the student will receive academic credit
7. Copy of the employment offer letter

The detailed description must be reviewed and approved by the course instructor, who should sign off on the document. SEAS students must use the 299r project sheet format that must be signed by both the course advisor and the CHD advisor. CPT will be granted for one semester only. Requests for additional periods of CPT will be reviewed thoroughly to determine if there is any true academic benefit to be derived. An in-depth recommendation from the student's academic advisor will be required.

Darryl E. Zeigler /Tel: 617-495-0640 /Fax: 617-495-4088 /Email: [darryl\\_zeigler@harvard.edu](mailto:darryl_zeigler@harvard.edu) /  
Skype ID: dz87hoyasaxa (Skype by appointment only)  
Hours: Monday to Friday from 9am to 3pm