Purpose
This handout is designed for students in F-1 status. It will provide you with information on the type of employment opportunity which the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) calls "Curricular Practical Training".

Definition of Curricular Practical Training
The Immigration Service defines “Curricular Practical Training” as employment which is an integral or important part of your curriculum, including:

…alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school.

According to USCIS, the word “required” does not always limit this type of practical training only to work experiences, which are required parts of the curriculum. This clarification is discussed below in more detail.

Job Eligibility Requirements
To be considered Curricular Practical Training, the work must not only be related to your major field of study but must also be an integral or important part of your studies. Training which is required by your degree program always meets the requirements for Curricular Practical Training, regardless of whether or not you receive academic credit for your work. Training which is not required by your degree program may meet the requirements of Curricular Practical Training if you receive academic credit for the employment experience and if it is an important part of your studies. If you have a training opportunity which involves employment, check with your Foreign Student Advisor to determine if it qualifies as Curricular Practical Training.

Student Eligibility Requirements

Employment Which Is a Required Part of Your Degree Program. If 1) you are a graduate student, 2) your are maintaining lawful F-1 status, and 3) if the proposed employment is a required part of your studies, you may apply for permission to engage in Curricular Practical Training whenever your program requires your participation, even if it is immediately upon beginning your studies. Undergraduate students must have completed nine months of full-time study in order to be eligible for any form of Curricular Practical Training.

Employment Which Is Not a Required Part of Your Degree Program. In order to be eligible to apply for permission to work in a job which is not required for your study program, you must 1) be in lawful F-1 status and 2) have been a full-time student for at least nine months. To qualify for the CPT of non-required employment the training must be 1) necessary for thesis/dissertation research or 2) For internship, academic (which the work is required to fulfill the academic needs) credit, or CO-OP credit.

Part-time vs. Full-time Curricular Practical Training

Part-time Training. Employment for 20 hours or less per week while you are also enrolled in classes is considered “part-time” Curricular Practical Training. The employment authorization should therefore specify permission to engage in "part-time" training and you must be careful to limit your work to no more than 20 hours per week. There is not a limitation upon the length of time you may participate in part-time
Curricular Practical Training but you must be simultaneously enrolled (full-time) in order to maintain lawful F-1 status.

**Full-time Training.** Employment for more than 20 hours per week is considered “full-time” Curricular Practical Training and the employment authorization should, in this case, specify permission to participate in “full-time” training. While in full-time training, you will need to be enrolled for classes in order to maintain lawful F-1 status. There is no limitation upon the length of time you may participate in full-time Curricular Practical Training but if you participate more than twelve months, you will not be eligible for post-completion practical training (OPT) (see next paragraph).

**Curricular Practical Training and Eligibility for Post-Completion Practical Training**

It is important that you understand that if you participate in twelve months or more of “full-time” Curricular Practical Training, you lose eligibility to apply for twelve months of Optional Practical Training after you complete your studies.

**Application and Authorization Procedures**

You should contact staff in International Scholar & Student Services (ISSS) so that they may evaluate your situation and the proposed employment opportunity to make certain that both you and the job meet the eligibility requirements. You will need the following information to apply for Curricular Practical Training:

- Offer letter from potential employer
- Letter from Academic Advisor (see attached example)
- Registration for internship, practicum, or department credit, OR Cooperative Education Credit

Your Foreign Student Advisor will assess your eligibility for Curricular Practical Training and either authorize part-time or full-time CPT. **You must be careful not to continue employment beyond the date authorized on your I-20 unless you apply for and are granted an extension of your permission to work. Also, you must not begin the position until the CPT is granted. Violation of this will result in immediate revocation of your authorization and termination of your I-20.**

**Employment Eligibility Verification**

When you work, you and your employer must complete a form entitled “Employment Eligibility Verification” (INS Form I-9), which the employer retains. The I-9 must be updated each time you receive a renewal of your work permission.

**Note of Caution**

While immigration regulations provide a variety of opportunities for you to be employed during your time in F-1 status, working improperly or without authorization is a serious violation of your status. You should therefore consult with your Foreign Student Advisor before taking up any employment. It is your responsibility to comply with all immigration regulations which apply to F-1 students. Staff in ISSS have responsibility for advising and counseling you regarding your responsibilities. If you fail to comply with your responsibilities, you may not be eligible for benefits normally granted to F-1 students.

**Further Information**

Additional information on F-1 employment is available from ISSS. Staff of that office are pleased to offer information, counseling and assistance on all Federal regulations related to maintaining your student status.
EXAMPLE

Dear Employer:

It is essential that the following information be included in offer letter:

- Beginning date
- Position student is serving in (job description)
- Full-time (21 hours or more) or Part-time (20 hours or less)
- On company letterhead

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sample of Academic Advisor’s Letter
Please have this letter on letterhead from the advisor

Date

Stacey Fraser, Foreign Student Advisor
International Scholar and Student Services
University of Alabama at Birmingham
HUC 250. 1530 3rd Avenue South (mailing address only)
Birmingham, AL 35294-1150

Dear Ms. Fraser:

I recommend that Ewa Selegrat be allowed to participate in Curricular Practical Training as an Internet Marketing Specialist for McDonald’s Corp. Her responsibilities will include developing and implementing a Web page. The McDonald’s Corporation would like her to begin June 11, 2000 and continue through the summer quarter until September 13, 2000 as a part-time (or full-time) employee.

As Ewa’s academic advisor, I certify this experience is an integral part of her Business curriculum. This training and experience will is required to fulfill internship requirements for MBA 623 to complete her MBA. (Or specify one of the other reasons for CPT: 1) Necessary for thesis/dissertation research, 2) Through Coop program, 3) required part of the curriculum)

Sincerely,

Advisor’s Signature
& Name