

Curricular Practical Training Guidelines and Required Documentation

In accordance with the Department of Homeland Security [August 12 Broadcast Message](#), [August 24 Broadcast Message](#), and the [Student and Exchange Visitor Program \(SEVP\) guidance](#) regarding Curricular Practical Training (CPT), the ISS office will move forward with authorizing CPT when the following conditions are met.

1. The CPT is a degree requirement for all students in the program, regardless of citizenship, as indicated in the UCR course catalog. An exception may be available for Master's and PhD students who require research for the completion of their thesis/dissertation.
2. Master's Thesis/Doctoral Dissertation Requirement CPT can be authorized in specific cases in which a practical training/internship is required to complete the Master's thesis or Doctoral dissertation and is an integral part of the student's degree requirements and is not reasonably replaceable by an alternative method or data collection process. This is only possible for Master's (Thesis Track) or Doctoral students who are Advanced to Candidacy.
3. Practical training must be an integral and required part of an established curriculum necessary for degree completion.
4. The employer (practical training site) is a legitimate employer capable of providing the training and has an established [Cooperative Agreement](#) with UCR.

CPT Basic Eligibility Requirements

1. Must be directly related and integral to the major field of study.
2. Must be required for everyone in the degree program as outlined in the course catalog. An exception may be available for Master's and PhD students who require data research for the completion of their thesis/dissertation. Please see the "For thesis/dissertation students who require CPT for data collection" section below.
3. Programs where practical training is optional for degree completion do not qualify for CPT at this time.
4. Must be making normative progress in your academic program and be in good standing academically.
5. Must have been enrolled full-time for one uninterrupted academic year before becoming eligible for CPT and be in valid F-1 status. The only exception is for graduate students whose program requires immediate participation in CPT as indicated in the course catalog for all students.
 - a. Transfer Students: You may use time spent in valid F-1 status before starting at UCR to count towards this requirement if you have the same SEVIS number as your prior school.

- b. If you begin at UCR after engaging in Optional Practical Training, you will not be able to immediately start CPT in your first quarter at UCR.
 - c. Change of Status Students: You may use time spent in another qualified immigration status (e.g., E-2, H-4) if you changed your status to F-1 while in the U.S., as long as you were consecutively enrolled in a full-time qualified program at an SEVP-approved university or college for one academic year.
 - d. ESL Students: Time spent studying English at an SEVP-approved school does not count towards the one-year requirement.
- 6. Must have an internship/practical training offer before applying for CPT.
 - 7. Must continue to enroll as a full-time student at UCR while engaging in practical training.
 - 8. Must enroll in any required coursework as specified by your academic program. This is usually a 198-I course for undergraduates or 298-I/398-I course for graduate students.
 - 9. CPT authorization must be indicated on your Form I-20 before starting your work-based learning experience off campus. CPT cannot be backdated.
 - 10. CPT is part-time during the academic year and full-time during summer/breaks. Full-time CPT is anything over 20 hours per week.
 - 11. PhD students who are advanced to candidacy may be able to enroll in full-time CPT during the academic year if full-time CPT is a program requirement.
 - 12. Only part-time CPT will be authorized in the final quarter.
 - 13. CPT can only be authorized for employers within the United States.
 - 14. Engaging in full-time CPT for 12 months or more will disqualify you from OPT (Optional Practical Training) eligibility.

Required CPT Documentation

- 1). [CPT Request Form](#)
- 2). Proof of enrollment in required coursework
- 3). Offer Letter (see [Offer Letter Template](#))
- 4). [Cooperative Agreement](#) between the student, the department, and the employer
- 5). Letter from Academic Advisor on departmental letterhead confirming the required CPT. The letter should include:
 - A description of the required practical training and how it directly relates to the student's major field of study.
 - Confirmation that the training is required and is integral to the curriculum.
 - Confirmation that all students in the program need this practical training experience in order to complete their degree. Reference where this is indicated in the UCR course catalog.
 - Confirmation that the student has not already completed this requirement.

For Thesis/Dissertation Students Who Require CPT for Data Collection**

- 1). [CPT Request Form](#)
- 2). Proof of enrollment in required coursework
- 3). Offer Letter (see [Offer Letter Template](#))
- 5). [Cooperative Agreement](#) between the student, the department, and the employer
- 4). Letter on departmental letterhead confirming the required CPT. The letter should include:
 - A description of the thesis/dissertation topic or area of research.
 - A description of the methodology to be utilized and how it informs the thesis/dissertation topic.
 - Confirmation that this data collection is required for the completion of the thesis/dissertation.
 - Confirmation that there are no alternative methods to this data collection process.
 - The beginning and end date for the data collection activity along with the anticipated thesis completion date or an anticipated defense date for dissertation.
 - Signature of the supervising Faculty Advisor or the Faculty Principal Investigator (PI), including name, title, and date.

****Understanding When Doctoral Dissertation CPT is Appropriate**

The dissertation demonstrates a capability to contribute new, original knowledge or groundbreaking insights to an academic discipline. It requires conducting novel research, developing original theories, or discovering fresh data that advances the current body of knowledge in a field.

Data collection methodologies for a dissertation generally fall into three overarching categories: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods. The selected methodology must be appropriate to the student's research questions, discipline, and dissertation objectives. In addition, a dissertation may require substantial research including interviews, surveys, laboratory work, field research, observations, access to specialized equipment, or other research activities.

While data collection is required of all students working on a dissertation topic, students seeking to engage in CPT experiences must demonstrate that the data collection activity is required to complete the dissertation and is an integral part of the student's degree requirements and is not reasonably replaceable by an alternative method or data collection processes.

****Understanding When Master's Thesis CPT is Appropriate**

The master's thesis demonstrates a mastery of a specific field of study and the ability of a student to conduct independent research, synthesize existing literature, and critically analyze information. It typically builds upon existing research, theories, or frameworks rather than creating entirely new original theory.

Data collection methodologies for a master's thesis are very similar in structure to those used in a doctoral dissertation, though they are often slightly more focused in scope and tailored to be completed within a shorter timeframe. They also generally fall into three primary categories: Qualitative,

Quantitative, and Mixed Methods. The selected methodology must be appropriate to the student's research questions, discipline, and dissertation objectives. In addition, a thesis may require research including interviews, surveys, laboratory work, field research, observations, access to specialized equipment, or other research activities.

While data collection is required of all students working on a master's thesis topic, students seeking to engage in CPT experiences must demonstrate that the data collection activity is required for the collection of data necessary to complete the thesis, is an integral part of the student's degree requirements, and is not reasonably replaceable by an alternative method or data collection processes.