

# INTERNATIONAL RESIDENTIAL STUDENTS

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## Overview

F-1 International Students are required to carry a full course of study each semester in order to maintain their legal status to remain in the United States, defined as follows:

- Graduate School: 6 credits per term
- Seminary: 6 credits per term

Students who require exceptions to the full course of study are required to report to the Designated School Official for their school. F-1 International Students are allowed to work in the U.S. with authorization. Please refer to the Employment Section below for details.

### Contact

Students with any concerns regarding information in this section should contact their Designated School Official (DSO).

## Exceptions to the Full-Course-Of-Study Requirement

The exceptions to the "full course of study" requirement are limited, but very important. In the situations described below, F-1 students are considered to be maintaining status even if they are not registered for a full course of study, and they continue to be eligible for F-1 benefits if they are otherwise eligible. A student who drops below a full course of study without the prior approval of the Designated School Official (DSO) will be considered out of status. The federal Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) limits the reasons for which a Reduced Course Load can be granted to seven choices. The DSO must select one of these choices to process the Reduced Course Load approval:

1. Illness or Medical Condition
2. Initial Difficulty with English Language
3. Initial Difficulty with Reading Requirements
4. Unfamiliarity with American Teaching Methods
5. Improper Course Level Placement
6. To Complete Course of Study in Current Term
7. Part Time Border Commuter Student

## Distance Education Limits

Under the Code of Federal Regulations [8 C.F.R §214.2 (f)(6)(i)(G)], for F-1 students enrolled in classes for credit or classroom hours, no more than the equivalent of one class or three credits per session, term, semester, trimester, or quarter may be counted toward the full course of study requirement if the class is taken online or through distance education and does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination, or other purposes integral to completion of the class. An online or distance education course is a course that is offered principally through the use of television, audio, or computer transmission including open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, satellite, audio conferencing, or computer conferencing. If the F-1 student's course of study is in a language study program, no online or distance education classes may be considered to count toward a student's full course of study requirement.

## **Employment**

### **On-Campus Employment**

On-campus employment is the most accessible kind of employment for F-1 students. Requirements are listed below:

- Maintain valid F-1 status.
- Notify the DSO prior to accepting any employment.
- Students may only work up to 20 hours per week while school is in session; full time employment is allowed during official school breaks and vacation periods if students intend to register for the next academic semester.

### **Off-Campus Employment**

There are three categories of off-campus employment opportunities available to F-1 students: Severe Economic Hardship, Curricular Practical Training, and Optional Practical Training. All three of these categories are available at Bethel.

#### **Severe Economic Hardship**

Any F-1 student suffering severe economic hardship as defined by USCIS is eligible to work off campus. Requirements are listed below:

- Active F-1 status for at least one academic year (9 months).
- In good academic standing.
- Provide evidence of economic hardship based on unforeseen circumstances beyond one's control.
- Demonstrate a good-faith effort to find on-campus employment and that on-campus employment is not available or sufficient.
- Work up to 20 hours per week while school is in session; full-time is only allowed during school breaks and holidays.
- The Employment Authorization Document (EAD) is valid for one year per application.

There are a number of circumstances that may qualify as severe economic hardship, including:

- Substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate.
- Excessive increases in tuition and/or living costs.
- Unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support.
- Medical bills or other substantial and unexpected expenses.

#### **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum for international students that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school. This school's curriculum includes opportunities for CPT either through required or optional, credit or non-credit, full-time or part-time, paid or unpaid, on-campus or off-campus internships. To qualify as CPT, the internship must be formally approved by the student's program director (signifying that the CPT is relevant to the student's program of study) and by the Designated School Official (signifying that the CPT is in regulatory compliance with current legislation). Course number 176 (undergraduate) or 576 (graduate) in the appropriate discipline is assigned to non-credit CPT, and the student will be billed a \$400 course fee for the first term of non-credit CPT. Course numbers 476 (undergraduate) and 776 (graduate) in the appropriate discipline is assigned to CPT for credit, and may be taken for 1–6 credits per term. This course is repeatable.

Policy:

1. An acceptable CPT experience is one that expects the student to:
  - a. Make a deliberate application of one's academic knowledge and skills.
  - b. Continue to learn as stimulated by the problems and issues encountered.
  - c. Grow in one's personal maturity and confidence in one's abilities.
  - d. Develop empathy with and understanding of persons, groups, and settings typically not encountered on campus.
2. The proposed CPT must embody significant academic purpose and content, equal in quality to a regular course, yet be of such a nature that it cannot be obtained within the existing course structure.
3. It is conducted under joint supervision of a Bethel faculty member and an onsite supervisor. Both parties agree on the specific objectives and assignments before beginning and jointly evaluate the student's work during the experience and at the end. There should be a plan for ongoing processing of the experience (log, weekly meetings, etc.). It is expected that the Bethel faculty supervisor will meet at least bi-weekly with the student.
4. The CPT position may be part-time or full-time, and may be salaried or non-salaried. Routine jobs or work that repeats previous experience does not qualify for an academic credit CPT. The work must provide an opportunity to meet academic/educational objectives.
5. The student must meet the following criteria:
  - a. Be currently enrolled in the Seminary or Graduate School.
  - b. Declare a major in the department of the internship being proposed.
  - c. Have a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 and a 3.0 GPA in the major. (Individual departments may require a higher GPA.)
  - d. Meet additional criteria as established by each department.
6. CPT for academic credit requires minimum time onsite.
7. A maximum of nine credits in internships may be taken. Each separate internship must have goals and objectives different than the prior ones taken for credit.
8. Internships are graded S/U (see: Grading System).
9. This policy identifies minimum college-wide requirements. Departments may choose to supplement this with additional requirements.
10. Students must submit Curricular Practical Training Request form no later than 30 days prior to the desired employment start date. More information on CPT and a link to this form is available here (<https://www.bethel.edu/international-services/living-in-us/employment/>).
  - a. Students will register for the course associated with the CPT experience for one term. The curricular aspects of the CPT employment must be completed within one term.

#### Requirements and guidelines:

- Full-time enrollment for at least one year on valid F-1 status (except for graduate programs that require immediate CPT).
- The CPT employment must be an integral part of a degree program or a requirement for a course for which students receive academic credit.
- Students must have first received a qualifying job offer prior to submitting a CPT authorization request.
- The job offer must be in a student's major or field of study.
- Students are responsible for submitting the Curriculum Practical Training Form (<https://www.bethel.edu/international-programs/cpt/>) in a timely manner. A minimum of two weeks is required prior to beginning any CPT employment to allow for registration.
- The program director must recommend in writing the student's proposed CPT experience, verifying that it is curricular in nature.

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- You must receive prior authorization from a DSO (Designated School Official) who will submit this request in SEVIS.

Once authorized, students may only work for the approved employer within the dates specified. Optional Practical Training offers more flexibility; see below. CPT authorization will also specify whether approval is granted for part-time (20 hours per week or less) or full-time (more than 20 hours per week) employment.

### **Optional Practical Training (OPT)**

Optional practical training (OPT) is employment related to the degree or major. Students may qualify for OPT both during and after completion of a degree. OPT can be completed for each degree level (e.g. bachelor's, master's, doctoral). Conditions are listed below:

- Employment must be directly related to one's program of study
- Maintain lawful F-1 status at least for one academic year prior to beginning OPT
- Students may apply for OPT no earlier than three months before degree work is completed or as late as 60 days after the I-20 program end date
- Students are ineligible for OPT if they have engaged in 12 months or more of full-time Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
- Standard OPT is valid for 12 months of full-time employment
- Students may not begin employment until they have received an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from USCIS

### **Social Security Card**

Once authorized to work either on-campus or off-campus, students are required to apply for a Social Security Number. The following documents are required to apply for a Social Security Number:

- A completed Social Security Application (SS-5) form
- Verification of employment letter, signed by employer and Designated School Official (DSO)
- Form I-20
- Form I-94 (Arrival/Departure Record)
- Passport

### **Health Insurance**

Bethel international students and their dependents are required to have health insurance. All students and their dependents must have:

- Medical coverage of at least \$50,000 per accident or illness
- Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$7,500
- A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness

### **Student Visas**

It is the responsibility of the student to obtain their own student visa at their own expense. If necessary, Bethel University will confirm an international student's status to the appropriate authorities at no fee to the student.

### **Multi-Language Learners**

Bethel University does not provide translators for multi-language learners. All courses and instruction will occur in the English language. Therefore, it is expected that each student will possess the ability to write and speak English clearly and correctly.