



## Curricular Practical Training

### What is CPT?

- CPT stands for Curricular Practical Training.
- CPT is an off-campus work authorization for a position that enhances your studies. Federal immigration regulations state the work or internship experience must be integral to (part of) your academic studies.

### When do I need to seek CPT authorization?

- You MUST apply for and receive CPT authorization BEFORE you begin any type of off-campus work or internship.
- Paid or unpaid off-campus work or internship requires CPT authorization.
- CPT is authorized with a specific employer for a specific amount of time.
- CPT can only be used prior to completion of studies while you are enrolled as a student.

### Am I eligible to apply for CPT?

- Are you in valid visa status?
- Are you registered as a full-time student?
- Have you been a student in the United States for at least two consecutive academic semesters?

\*If you answered “yes” to all three questions, then you can submit an application for CPT. However, final authorization is dependent upon review of your application by the International Programs Office (FOB 232A).

### When should I apply for CPT?

- When you have a job offer from an off-campus employer. This job must be directly related to your field of study.
- Before you have finished all of your coursework towards your degree.
- At least two weeks before you want to begin work. It takes 7-10 business days for International Programs Office to process work authorizations.
- After you have registered for the semester, including the CPT course credit.
- When the internship or employment is paid or UNPAID.

### What if my employer wants me to start working right-away?

You must tell your employer that you cannot begin work until you are authorized by the International Programs Office. You will need to explain to your employer that it takes 7-10 business days to process CPT paperwork.

### When can I start working at this job?

After you have received a new I-20 for this period of CPT, the start date of the CPT is the first day you can work.

*NOTE: Submitting paperwork to the International Programs Office does NOT mean you can automatically begin working. You must wait until you receive the new I-20 for CPT.*

**Can I begin training or volunteering in the position before the CPT I-20 is ready?**

No. This puts your valid visa status at risk and your employer in jeopardy with U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Protect your valid visa status, do not do this. You cannot begin job training until you receive the new I-20 for CPT from International Programs Office and the start-date has occurred.

**I'm a new student here. Can I apply for CPT?**

Only after you have completed two continuous academic semesters as a student will you be eligible to apply for CPT.

This means that if you arrived in the United States as a new F-1 student in the fall semester, you can begin working on CPT after the last day of classes in May. If you arrived as a new student in January (spring semester), then you can begin work under CPT after fall semester classes end.

*Note: If you have studied previously at another U.S. school, please come to the International Programs Office to see if you are currently eligible to apply for CPT.*

**Unpaid Work, Unpaid Internships:**

**I've been offered an unpaid internship. Do I have to apply for CPT?**

Yes. All work off campus, whether paid or unpaid, must be authorized. In the eyes of immigration, the job experience you receive at this internship is considered "compensation" and a benefit. Do not place your immigration status at risk.

If you have questions about volunteering, come to talk to us at the International Programs Office.

**The internship is unpaid. Do I have to register for my CPT course credit?**

Yes. Almost all students who do CPTs must arrange for the necessary 1 credit for CPT.

**CPT and Course Registration:**

**What is this CPT credit? Do I have to register for a course?**

Almost all students who do CPT must arrange for the necessary 1 credit for CPT.

Some academic majors require all students, U.S. citizens and international students, to complete an internship (sometimes called a practicum) as part of their degree requirements.

**What happens if I do not register?**

The course registration is required by Federal immigration regulations. Immigration regulations are US federal law. There is no way around it. If you do not register for the required credit as part of your necessary full time course registration, then you place your immigration status at risk. Don't do it. This is a serious violation of federal immigration regulations.

The International Programs Office checks your student record to be sure you are in compliance with this rule. Failure to register will result in your CPT authorization being cancelled. The International Programs Office will contact your employer to tell them you are no longer authorized for employment.

**What course should I register for?**

You and your academic advisor decide which course you should register for the CPT.

The course credit should reflect the work you are doing for the CPT employment. For example, you could register for an internship credit, an independent study credit, or for a specific course in which the job experience is used towards your class work (For example: in the form of a project, research paper, or journal writing).

A thesis/final project credit can also be used to cover the CPT course-registration requirement if the advisor has certified that the CPT is directly related to your final project or thesis on your academic advisor's form.

### **Do I have to be registered full-time to apply for CPT?**

Yes. To be eligible for CPT, you must be registered as a full-time student. This is part of your SEVIS responsibilities to maintain valid visa status. You cannot be authorized for CPT unless you are in valid visa status.

### **Is CPT only available during the academic breaks (like summer or winter)?**

No. You can apply and work under CPT during any time during the year as long as you meet the eligibility guidelines.

### **How much CPT can I have?**

You can have as much as you want while you are a student in valid F-1 visa status. However, if you accrue more than 365 days of full-time CPT, then you become ineligible for Optional Practical Training (OPT). This means that you forfeit OPT.

*Note: The "365-Day Rule" only applies to full-time CPT. You can accrue more than 365 days of part-time CPT without affecting your eligibility for Optional Practical Training.*

### **The Application Process:**

#### **How do I apply for CPT? What kind of paperwork is needed?**

Two pieces of paper:

- an Academic Advisor's form
- a letter from the employer containing specific information

The CPT packet can be picked up from the International Programs Office or downloaded from our website. The completed paperwork can be handed in to the International Programs Office directly, faxed, or emailed to us if you are out of the area.

#### **What does my employer need to do?**

Provide a letter on their official business stationery containing very specific information:

- Number of hours per week you will be working (is the work full-time or part-time?)
- A starting date and ending date (CPT is time-period specific)
- A brief description of job duties (a general statement or list of your responsibilities is sufficient)

#### **What does a "complete" application mean?**

All questions must be answered on the academic advisor's form. Nothing is left blank. The letter from your employer contains all of the required information.

*Note: If you submit a complete CPT application, the processing for International Programs Office is much smoother. An incomplete application causes delay.*

**How long does it take to get the new I-20 with the CPT authorization on it?**

Due to processing through the SEVIS database it will take approximately 7-10 business days (we do not work on the weekends). Don't forget -- You cannot begin work without the new I-20.

**CPT and Graduation:**

**I'll graduate at the end of this semester. Can I still apply for CPT?**

It depends. The purpose of CPT is to enhance your studies. Consult with the International Programs Office if you are currently in this situation.

**CPT and Other Employment Authorizations:**

**Can I apply for OPT and CPT at the same time?**

Yes, but CPT cannot be used to start your OPT employment early. CPT cannot be a "bridge" to OPT.

**Can I have a job on campus and apply for CPT?**

Yes. The employment rules governing on-campus work and off-campus work are separate. Again, this can be added up to a lot of work hours. We recommend that you discuss the employment with your academic advisor. We want you to be a successful student.

**Can I do a CPT in another country?**

No. CPT authorization is only necessary to work here in the United States. You would need to follow the work rules of the other country to be employed legally there.

If you have questions about how to find a job, the Career Development Center can assist you.

*Adapted from SUNY Binghamton, Curricular Practical Training for F-1*