

Northwestern State University

International Student resource Center

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Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

OVERVIEW

- ❖ **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** is a type of off-campus employment available to international students with an **F-1 visa** to participate in employment opportunities that are an integral part of the student's degree program or established curriculum. **CPT** includes alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum (full and part-time).

ELIGIBILITY

- ❖ **CPT** is only available for **F-1 students** who have not graduated, and who have been enrolled as full-time students in the US for two consecutive semesters (fall and spring). **EXCEPT** for graduate students whose program requires immediate participation in an internship, a practicum, or other employment.
- ❖ **CPT** must be related to the student's major area of study.
- ❖ The students must have a job offer at the time of application.
- ❖ **If CPT is for your last semester**, you must have at least one other remaining degree-required course for which to register, in addition to the CPT course. **Unless the CPT course is the degree-required course.**

OTHER INFORMATION

- ❖ The internship can be paid or unpaid. You need to have CPT authorization in either case.
- ❖ The International Student Resource Center will receive and evaluate the complete application packet. Work authorization comes as additional information on the student's I-20. The new CPT I-20 shows the specific employer and dates for employment. Plan in advance and allow 5 business days for the new I-20 to be issued. **DO NOT work until you receive the new I-20. Working off-campus without the proper authorization means you are working illegally and it can result in the termination of your visa.**
- ❖ There is no fee to apply for CPT, but the student is responsible for paying registration fees to NSU.
- ❖ CPT is authorized on a semester by semester basis. If you wish to extend your CPT you need to complete the application process again.

APPLICATION STEPS

- **First:**
 1. **Read** the application packet.
 2. **Understand** CPT requirements, restrictions, and limitations.
 3. **Verify** that you will be authorized to enroll in a course to obtain credit for CPT.
- **After:**
 4. **Obtain** a job offer letter.
 5. **Obtain** recommendation form from your academic advisor, completed and signed.
 6. **Enroll** in the appropriate course to receive credit for CPT (unless CPT is a degree requirement)
- **Gather all documents for your application packet and bring it to the International Student Resource Center (Russell 227):**
 - Copy of your passport.
 - Proof of internship-course enrollment for the semester where you want to complete CPT.
 - A copy of job offer (Even unpaid job offer) ([Sample page 5](#))

- CPT application form. (Page 6)
 - Advisor recommendation for CPT. (Page 7)
7. **Pick up** your new I-20 form. The new I-20 endorsed for employment is proof of off-campus employment authorization.
 8. **Begin** employment **after** receiving CPT I-20. Work authorization cannot be post-dated.
 9. **Use** CPT I-20 to apply to apply for a Social Security Number: <https://www.ssa.gov/forms/ss-5.pdf>. The SSN is not work authorization, you can start working without it. Your new CPT I-20 is your work authorization. You will need the SSN to receive payment from your employer.

TYPES OF CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING

1) Degree Requirement

CPT may be authorized when an internship or practicum is a **requirement** of the **degree program** in order to graduate (practical work experience is mandatory for all students in the program). Proof of course enrollment is not required for this type of CPT. Must follow the application procedures to obtain work authorization for CPT.

2) Course Credit

CPT may be authorized for students who enroll in a **course that requires** employment to earn a grade, or an **independent study course** where the student and the advisor design a project based on the employment. Off-campus employment must be concurrent with enrollment in the course. You must be enrolled in the course, even during summer term. The **NSU courses that require employment to earn a grade are COOP 3010 and COOP 1010**. For more information on COOP courses, how to apply, and responsibilities visit: <https://business.nsula.edu/student-employment/> To enroll in one of these courses contact the COOP coordinator: Sue Champion, Russell Hall 101E, Ph: 318.357.5887, champions@nsula.edu.

FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME

- 1) **Full-Time CPT:** Employment for more than 20 hours per week is considered full-time. Full-time employment is only permitted during your annual vacation term; summer and winter breaks. Unless the CPT is required for all students during a particular academic semester in the academic year, and stated in the degree program catalog. **IMPORTANT:** Full-time CPT employment for 12 months (365 days) or more will invalidate eligibility for Optional Practical Training (OPT). You may work 11 months and 29 days on Full-Time CPT to maintain your eligibility for OPT.
- 2) **Part-Time CPT:** Employment for 20 hours or less per week is considered part-time. There is no limitation upon the length of time you may participate in part-time CPT. You must be simultaneously enrolled in classes full-time in order to maintain lawful F-1 status.

CPT AND UNPAID INTERNSHIPS

You must have a work authorization even for unpaid internships.

It is important to understand the difference between **volunteering** and **unpaid internship**. A common misconception is that the only difference is that employees get paid while volunteers do not. **Volunteering** refers to donating time to a non-profit organization, whose primary purpose is charitable or humanitarian in nature, without remuneration or any type of compensation. **Unpaid internships** do not qualify as volunteer activity. Internships, paid and unpaid, are primarily offered by the private sector, a for-profit company, and related to the student's major field of study. **Unpaid internship** also need **CPT authorization**, whether the student needs to provide employment authorization to the company or not. **CPT** is an authorization to conduct practical training as part of the curriculum for the academic program. CPT authorization is more than just permission to be remunerated.

You need to obtain work authorization even for unpaid internships because:

- CPT authorization by the University serves to demonstrate that the practical experience is part of the curriculum.
- CPT authorization is a way of reporting in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Program) the student's activity, location, employment and therefore maintaining their status.
- If a student is doing a job for which someone would be hired and paid for, employment authorization is needed.
- If the unpaid internship changes to a paid one (at some point the employer decides to pay the student), you won't be able to accept the payment if your internship is not authorized as CPT. F-1 students cannot be retractably remunerated for a job done in an unpaid internship if they did not obtain proper work authorization before the work was performed.
- If for any reason you do not have CPT authorization and you must conduct an unpaid internship, make sure your supervisor is aware of the U.S. Department of Labor regulations concerning unpaid internships and that you have written assurance to that effect before you accept the position. It is also highly recommended that at the end of your internship you obtain a letter from your employer stating that there was no remuneration or any other type of compensation during the time you participated in the internship. Keep the letter for your permanent records.

Curricular Practical Training FAQs

1. Can I get a CPT authorization first and register for the internship course and find a job?

No, CPT work authorization is granted after the student has a job offer and is shows proof of course registration. The CPT work authorization is issued for a specific period of time, employer and semester.

2. Do I need to be enrolled in an internship course while doing my CPT?

Your program must require an internship/practicum to all students in the major, OR, you MUST earn academic credit for your CPT. If earning credit, even during the summer, course enrollment must be concurrent with your CPT.

3. Can I work full-time with my CPT?

You can apply for full-time CPT (more than 20 hours) during vacation periods, and part-time CPT (20 hours or less) during an academic term.

4. Is there a fee to apply for CPT work authorization?

No, CPT application process and authorization are free and only requires a new I-20. However, it is your responsibility to pay tuition and registration fees.

5. A CPT work authorization can be used to work anywhere off-campus?

No. CPT is employment that is an integral part of an established curriculum and is directly related to the student's major area of study. CPT is not an employment opportunity for employment unrelated to the major field of study. If the primary goal is practical work experience rather than an academic pursuit, apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). CPT opportunities include internships, practicum or cooperative education that requires the approval of your academic program advisor stating that the internship is part of your program's curriculum.

6. I just received a great internship opportunity. Can I start right away?

No. You must have authorization from the ISRC and the new I-20 before you begin any form of CPT. The new I-20 must be endorsed with CPT authorization before you start working on your internship.

7. My academic advisor does not want to recommend my CPT. Can I still apply?

No. You must be enrolled in a course and you MUST have the approval of your academic advisor to receive CPT work authorization. If your degree program mandates a practical experience to graduate, you do not need a letter from an advisor.

8. Can I have CPT after I finish my studies?

No. You can do a CPT only while you are an enrolled student. Students are not eligible for CPT once they have completed all course requirements for degree.

9. Do I have to apply for CPT if I do volunteer work or an unpaid internship?

F-1 students may participate in volunteer work without work authorization, of doing so won't violate any labor laws. If you will be compensated in some way for the service you provide you must have employment authorization. Compensation other than monetary includes lodging, meals, gift certificates, or other type of goods of economic value.

10. What can I show my employer so that they know I have work authorization to do a CPT?

You will show the new I-20 with the CPT authorization notation.

11. Which I-20 do I use for traveling, my original I-20 or the new I-20 for CPT?

The new I-20 for CPT will have a new travel signature. Keep all previously-issued I-20s, but present the CPT I-20 if reentering the US after a trip abroad even beyond your internship end date.

12. My major is "X", but my job offer is related to my minor. Can I get a CPT work authorization?

No. CPT employment MUST be directly related to the major field of study.

13. Do I need CPT authorization to work on-campus?

No. CPT is off-campus work authorization. As an F-1 student, you are permitted to work on campus up to 37 hours per month.

14. What is the difference between CPT and pre-completion OPT?

CPT and pre-completion OPT are both work authorizations you can use before you finish your degree program. CPT can only be used if your work experience is a required part of your degree program, or if you are receiving academic credit. Pre-completion OPT can be used for a job which is directly related to your field of study, but is not necessarily a requirement for your degree program. (OPT is adjudicated by USCIS).

15. I met all my degree requirements in the Fall semester, but I will not receive my degree certificate until the end of the Spring semester. Can I engage in CPT during the Spring Semester?

No. As soon as you have met all of your degree requirements, your F-1 student status ends. You are no longer eligible to continue enrollment and are no longer eligible for CPT. You may want to apply for OPT if you would like to work for some time after you finish your degree program.

16. Can I apply for multiple semesters of CPT at once?

No. CPT is authorized on a semester by semester basis.

17. Do I need to report changes of address if I move while engaged in CPT?

Absolutely. Immigration requires that you report any changes of address. You must change your address after you come back from the internship.

18. Can I travel outside the U.S. while on CPT?

Yes. You must have proper travel endorsement on your CPT I-20. It is highly recommended to have a letter from your employer acknowledging the travel, and a transcript of coursework.

REMEMBER

- Full-time CPT for 12 months or more cancels your eligibility for OPT.
- Your eligibility for OPT will **not** be affected by any amount of **part-time** CPT.
- Students may be authorized for as much part-time CPT as is necessary for their programs.
- Even if internships are unpaid, F-1 students must still obtain CPT authorization.
- You are authorized to be employed only for the employer, location, and time period specified on your new I-20. The job cannot change during the CPT.
- You cannot begin employment until you receive your new I-20.
- Report any change of address if you move during CPT. Update your address after you return.

IMPORTANT: All types of employment authorization require permission of International Student Resource Center. Engaging in unauthorized employment is a violation of your student visa and can result in the termination of your visa.

Curricular Practical Training Internship Offer Letter Template

F-1 Students applying for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) must turn in a letter from their CPT employer.

The letter must:

- Be written on the company's letterhead.
- Be address to the student.
- Include Job title.
- Provide Job description.
- Specify employment address.
- Specify type of employment, part-time or full-time. Include number of hours per week.
- Specify the exact dates of CPT employment. Start and end-dates.

Below there is a template in case your employers needs an example.

Letter must be printed in Company's letterhead

DATE

Student Name

Student Address

Dear **Student Name**,

Company Name is pleased to offer you an **Internship/Practicum** opportunity with the following terms:

- **From:** _____ **to** _____
mm/dd/yyyy mm/dd/yyyy
- **Number of hours per week:** _____
- **Job location address:** _____
Street Address City State Zip Code
- **Job title** _____
- **Brief description of the position**

- **The internship/Practicum** will be paid at the hourly rate of _____
or **This is an offer for an unpaid Internship.**

Should you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact **Name of supervisor, phone number, e-mail address,**

Sincerely,

Signature

Title

Northwestern State University

International Student resource Center

Curricular Practical Training Application Form

Student Information

Name: _____
(Last name) (First Name) (Middle)

Student ID Number: _____ Major/Department: _____

Telephone: _____ SEVIS ID Number: _____

E-mail: _____

Have you participated in CPT? Yes No If so, list dates of employment: _____
Part-time Full-time

Have you participated in OPT? Yes No If so, please list dates of employment and employer name:

*U.S. address: _____
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip code)

*Remember to update your address if you will be relocating for your internship.

Employment Information

Job Title: _____

Job description: _____

Part-time (20 hours/week or less) Full-time (more than 20 hours/week)

Requested **Start Date**: _____ Requested **End Date**: _____
(mm/dd/yyyy) (mm/dd/yyyy)

Company Name: _____

Company Address: _____
(Street) (City) (State) (Zip code)

Student's Signature: _____

Date: _____

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Advisor Recommendation for Curricular Practical Training

CPT Applicant (student)

Name: _____ ID Number: _____
(Last Name) (First)

To the academic advisor: Carefully review the information provided by the student, his/her application form, and the offer letter from the employer. If you decide to approve the CPT request complete the Advisor's recommendation for Curricular Practical Training. Return the completed recommendation form to the student. Note: Authorization will NOT be granted for work that has started before submitting this form.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is employment authorization for work that is an integral part of the established curriculum. Unless required for all students in the program, students must be enrolled in a credit-bearing course that requires employment (such as an internship, practicum or co-op course). That course must earn credit towards the degree, must have faculty oversight and must be directly related to the field of study. Carefully review the information provided by the student on this recommendation form, and the offer letter from the employer. **If the employment is part of the curriculum for this student's academic program AND the job is directly related to the major/field of study and you approve this request, complete the form below** and return it to the student to submit to the ISRC.

Students often have excellent opportunities for employment related to the field that are not tied to an integral part of the curriculum. These great employment experiences that are related to, but not part of, the curriculum are possible when a student engages in Optional Practical Training (OPT) rather than CPT. If you have any questions about whether the employment opportunity being presented qualifies for CPT, call an the International Student Resource Center 318-357-593 or email international@nsula.edu.

To be completed and signed by the Academic Advisor, Dean, or Department Head

Advisor's Name: _____ Title: _____
Department: _____ E-mail: _____ Telephone: _____

• **To comply with federal regulations governing institutions that host students in F-1 status, confirm the following:**

This internship/practicum is an integral part of the established curriculum in this student's major field of study and:

- a. The student will be enrolled in an academic course for which s/he will receive academic credit.

Course number: _____ Course title: _____

- After completing the course, this student will earn _____ academic credits towards his/her degree during the _____ semester.

--- OR ---

- b. This is a required component for every student in this degree program and:

No internship/practicum course is required.

The student will be enrolled in the following academic course:

Course number: _____ Course title: _____

- This student is expected to complete all course requirements for the degree on: _____ (date)
And will receive the degree of _____ in the field or major of _____

- The department representative/faculty member listed here will monitor the student's progress during the internship:

Name: _____ Title: _____

Note: If all degree requirements have been met, students are not eligible for CPT. Master's students who have completed all required coursework excluding the thesis or dissertation may be authorized for CPT.

By signing below, I confirm that this work experience is directly related to the student's major academic program.

Advisor's Signature: _____ Date: _____