

F-1 Curricular Practical Training Information

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is work authorization that allows F-1 students to participate in paid off-campus academic internships during their degree program. The purpose of CPT is academic, not just for employment purposes and the internship must be an integral or required part of a student's degree program.

Unpaid Internships: If the internship is an unpaid or volunteer, CPT is not required. However, students cannot accept *any kind* of compensation for work performed in an unpaid internship without work permission. You should obtain a letter confirming that you received no compensation of any kind for your work and you should keep this letter for your records. Practical Training provides the opportunity to be employed during your time in F-1 status. Working improperly or without authorization is a serious violation of your status. IPO recommends that you obtain work permission even for an unpaid internship.

Eligibility for CPT:

- You must be in your degree program and have been a full-time student for at least one academic year (two consecutive semesters, i.e. fall and spring semesters) by the requested CPT start date.
- You must be maintaining valid F-1 status at the time of the application
- The internship must be an integral or required part of your established curriculum with academic oversight
- The employment must be directly related to your *major* field of study

CPT Usage:

- **Full-time CPT:** During official university breaks and vacations, CPT can be full-time or part-time. Immigration considers anything over 20 hours per week to be full-time. If a student participates in more than 12 months of full-time CPT, they become ineligible for Optional Practical Training.
- **Part-time CPT:** During the academic year, CPT is limited to part-time. Immigration considers part-time to be 20 hours or less per week.

Application Process: IPO authorizes CPT. You must receive authorization (in the form of a new CPT I-20) **BEFORE** you may begin working. Follow the steps below:

STEP 1: Be Informed. Read this handout carefully. With questions, consult the International Programs Office.

STEP 2: Meet with your Academic Advisor to ensure an internship is an integral part of your curriculum.

STEP 3: Obtain a job offer letter. The information below must be included in your offer letter. (If your offer letter is missing any of the required information, you must either request a new letter or obtain a supplemental email with the missing information.)

- Employer name
- Employer address where you will be working
- Start date AND end date of internship
- Number of hours per week you will be working (or an indication of whether it is a full-time or part-time internship)

STEP 4: Register for the internship course.

STEP 5: Submit your request and upload required CPT documents (see below) to the [CPT Request Portal](#).

- CPT Recommendation Form
- Job offer letter
- Printout showing your enrollment in the internship course.
- STEM and Business students** must also submit a completed *YSU Professional Practice Agreement*

CPT – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

No. CPT work authorization is granted for a specific employer and for a specific period of time, corresponding to a semester.

2. Do I need to be enrolled while doing my CPT?

Your program must require an internship/practicum for all students in the program OR you must be enrolled for an internship earning academic credit for your internship, even during the summer term.

3. Can I be authorized for CPT in my final semester?

CPT can only be granted in your final semester if your academic program requires an internship in the final semester to complete degree requirements.

4. Can I be employed full-time while on CPT?

You are eligible for full-time CPT during vacation periods and part-time CPT (20 hours or less per week) during an academic term.

5. Do I have to pay for CPT work authorization?

If approved, CPT work authorization is free and only requires a new I-20. However, you may be charged tuition for enrolling in an internship or practicum course. Please see your department for further information.

6. I heard that Curricular Practical Training is for any off-campus job. Is that true?

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 meant to facilitate the creation of a special employment opportunity or for employment unrelated to the major field of study.* If the primary goal is practical work experience rather than an academic pursuit, you may apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT).

7. I have a great internship opportunity. Can I start working tomorrow?

No. You must have authorization from IPO and a new I-20 must be issued before you begin your internship. Upon submitting a complete application, a new CPT I-20 will be processed in 3 business days.

8. I am doing an internship this summer. How can I get it approved so that I can work through the end of Fall semester?

Students may be authorized for CPT only one semester at a time. Students should consult with IPO to determine if CPT is possible in a subsequent semester or if another authorization is required, such as OPT.

9. The company where I will be doing my summer internship wants me to turn in the CPT approval ASAP. I am not enrolled for summer yet. Can you approve my summer CPT?

No. You must be enrolled in the internship/practicum course *prior* to CPT authorization.

10. Do I need an I-94 Arrival/Departure Record?

Yes. Your employer will need to see either your I-94 record from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/> or paper I-94. If you are unable to find your I-94, email IPO at isss@ysu.edu.

11. My academic department does not want to recommend CPT. In this case, can I still apply?

No. CPT is only authorized for employment that is an integral part of your curriculum. Therefore, your academic department and advisor must approve this CPT and your advisor, department head or dean must complete the recommendation form to determine your eligibility for CPT.

12. My professor got me a job with “Company X.” It is a good opportunity for me to do research there. It will give me experience for after graduation. Can I use CPT for this?

No. CPT cannot be approved based on it being a good opportunity alone. CPT is only authorized when the employment is part of the curriculum for your program. In this case, OPT would be the appropriate work permission.

13. Can I do full-time CPT and still be eligible for OPT?

Maybe. If you participate in 12 months or more of full-time CPT you are not eligible to apply for OPT. Participating in fewer than 12 months of full-time CPT, or in part-time CPT does not affect your eligibility for OPT.

14. Can I have CPT after I finish my studies and during my grace period?

No. You are only eligible for CPT while you are enrolled as a student. Students are not eligible for CPT once they have completed all course requirements for the degree except in certain cases, for example PhD students who will be collecting data for a thesis or dissertation and are required to have work authorization to obtain necessary data.

15. Do I have to apply for CPT if I am offered volunteer work or an unpaid internship?

Students may participate in volunteer internships without work authorization if doing so won't violate any labor laws. If you will be compensated in some way for the service you are providing, you must have employment authorization. Compensation includes money, lodging, meals, transportation, gift certificates, or other remuneration. IPO generally recommends that students obtain CPT authorization for all unpaid/volunteer internships in case funding becomes available later or to use the experience on a resume or CV. Please consult an IPO advisor before engaging in a volunteer or unpaid internship.

16. What do I show my employer so that they know that I have work authorization?

You will present your I-20 with the CPT authorization notation. The authorization can be found on page 2 of your I-20

17. Will I get a new I-20 for CPT? If yes, which one (my original I-20 or new I-20) do I use for travel?

Yes, you will be issued a CPT I-20 including a new travel signature. Keep all previously-issued I-20s, but present the CPT I-20 when re-entering the U.S. after a trip abroad even beyond your internship end date. F-2 dependents will not receive a new I-20.

18. What I-20 do I use after my internship is over?

You will continue to use the CPT I-20, even after the internship is over. You will see that there has been no change to page 1 of your I-20. Keep all of your I-20s! They are required when applying for future immigration benefits, such as OPT.

19. What if my CPT is not near campus?

Remember, students in F-1 status must keep address information current. You are required to report an address change within 10 days. Report changes to isss@ysu.edu.

20. My major is "X," but my job offer is for a different field or is related to my minor. Can I get CPT or OPT?

No. CPT and OPT employment must be directly related to the *major* field of study.

21. Do I need CPT authorization for an internship outside of the United States?

No. CPT is U.S. work authorization and is not needed for internships outside of the U.S. However, you do want to ensure that you have work authorization for the country where you will be working. Visit the appropriate Embassy website for further information.

22. 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 20 hours per week during the academic year and full-time during official school breaks and vacations.

23. I started my program this January. Do I qualify for CPT?

No. You must be a student in the U.S. for one academic year to qualify for CPT.

Employment Related Information

Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9)

When you begin work, you and your employer must complete a form entitled "Employment Eligibility Verification" (Form I-9), which the employer retains. This form requires you to document your identity and work authorization according to directions on the back of the form. One acceptable combination of documentation is: valid passport, I-94 record marked for F-1 student status, Social Security Number, and a SEVIS I-20 with the CPT work authorization notation.

Social Security Number (SSN)

For payroll purposes, you will also need to provide your SSN. If you do not already have an SSN number or if you have lost your card, take your passport, I-94 record, and CPT I-20 to the Social Security Administration and apply for a Social Security card. Note that your number will remain the same if you already had one. Some Social Security offices may not accept applications until the start date of the CPT employment has been reached. You may begin work without a SSN, however you need one to meet payroll and tax requirements. To find the closest SSA, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/locator.

Social Security Withholding and Other Taxes

In general, F-1 students who have been in the US fewer than five years are "non-residents for tax purposes" and are exempt from Social Security (FICA) and Medicare taxes. If you are a non-resident for tax purposes and your employer does withhold FICA, speak to your payroll office. You and your employer can refer to Internal Revenue Service Publication 519, "U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens" for additional information. Your earnings are subject to applicable federal, state, and local taxes. Tax returns must be filed on or before April 15 each year for the previous calendar year. The results of the filing will determine if any of the withheld income taxes can be refunded to you. Note that you may be subject to local and state tax filing for the state and municipality in which you are working on your CPT experience..