



University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

Office of International Education
International Student and Scholar Services

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR F-1 STUDENTS

What is Curricular Practical Training?

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a type of off-campus employment* authorization that enables international students in F-1 visa status to take part in an internship, Co-Op, field placement, practicum, or work / service experience that is integral to their curriculum.

***Please note that the USCIS defines “employment” as any type of service for which a benefit, including academic credit, is received. Therefore, even if you will not be getting paid for your internship, you should obtain CPT authorization.**

What type of service / employment qualifies for CPT?

At UB, we use the following criteria to determine whether your proposed employment qualifies for CPT authorization:

- It is an internship, practicum, field placement or other type of employment / service that is required for your degree, or is a necessary component of the field of study or concentration that you have chosen within your major.
- It is taken for academic credit toward the degree.
- The employment / experience will be evaluated by a faculty member at UB, will be graded and will appear on your transcript.
- You will be registered for the appropriate course and credits in the semester during which the employment will occur. Note: Summer registration is required for summer internships.

Do I need CPT if I just want to “volunteer”?

Yes. Even if you want to “volunteer” at an off-campus location without receiving payment, you should have special off-campus authorization (CPT or OPT). Please speak to a Designated School Officer (DSO) to discuss which authorization is appropriate for your situation.

What if my department does not offer an internship, Co-Op or practicum?

If your department does not offer an internship, practicum or Co-Op, then you may not be able to pursue this type of employment. Because CPT is directly linked to the curriculum of your department, not every F-1 student at UB will have the opportunity to

utilize CPT. In cases where you will not be getting credit, or you will simply be gaining experience in your field, you should apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) instead.

Who is eligible for CPT?

To be eligible for Curricular Practical Training, you must document, in addition to the conditions stated above, that:

- You are currently in valid F-1 status **AND**
- You have been in lawful status and a full-time student for at least one academic year (two semesters)** **AND**
- You have a job offer for an internship from a specific employer with established beginning and ending dates.

*** An exception to this requirement is given to Graduate Students whose academic program requires immediate participation in an internship or field placement.*

Can my CPT be full-time or part-time?

- Part-time Curricular Practical Training involves up to 20 hours of work per week.
- Full-time Curricular Practical Training involves more than 20 hours of work per week. This is only an option:
 - during the summer **OR**
 - for undergraduate engineering students who are enrolled in the Engineering Co-Op program (which requires full-time work) **OR**
 - for students whose degree programs require internships involving more than 20 hours of work per week (e.g. Exercise Science, Athletic Training, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy) **OR**
 - for graduate students whose thesis, project or dissertation requires CPT and who are only enrolled in Thesis / Dissertation Guidance..

How long can I use CPT?

Since few academic programs at UB **require** more than one or two semesters of work / service experience, most students will be eligible for only one or two semesters of CPT. CPT will not be authorized in situations where Optional Practical Training is more appropriate or for work to be done after completion of your degree requirements.

Note: If you are authorized for 12 or more months of full-time CPT, you lose your eligibility for post-completion Optional Practical Training. Any part-time CPT does not affect your eligibility for OPT.

How do I apply for CPT?

To apply for Curricular Practical Training, submit the following to ISSS, 210 Talbert Hall:

- International Student Data Form
- A photocopy of your current I-20 and all previous I-20's
- Academic Advisor's Recommendation Letter (*guidelines attached*)
 - *This letter must include complete details of your internship, as requested in the attached guidelines. If the letter is incomplete or inaccurate, you will be asked to provide a new one.*
- Proof of registration for your CPT credits
- Proof of Full-Time Certification from the Graduate School (if appropriate)

How long will it take to process my CPT application?

ISSS reviews CPT applications on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, review of a CPT application takes approximately 5-7 business days. ISSS will notify you directly about the status of your application. If CPT is approved, ISSS will update your information in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) and print a new I-20, endorsed with your Curricular Practical Training authorization.

When can I start my off-campus internship / field placement?

You cannot begin working until you receive the Curricular Practical Training endorsement on your I-20. CPT is only valid for the period between the beginning and ending dates endorsed on the form I-20. **Retroactive authorizations will not be granted. Any work that takes place outside the CPT approval dates is unauthorized employment.**

May I change employers while on CPT?

No, CPT (unlike OPT) is employer-specific. Separate applications for CPT are required if you want to work for different employers. Likewise, if you want to extend your CPT employment period, you will need to submit another application.

What if I want to extend my internship and my CPT?

When authorized for CPT, you are permitted to work only from the specified beginning date through the specified ending date. If you need to extend your employment authorization, you will need to submit another CPT application. Please keep processing times in mind and submit your application to extend your CPT in a timely manner. Please also keep in mind that extensions of CPT are not guaranteed.