

Carnegie Mellon University

Office of International Education

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F-1 Curricular Practical Training Information

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is F-1 work authorization for off-campus employment opportunities that are an integral part of your curriculum – meaning that the course credits are going towards your degree or it is required by your department to graduate. CPT employment must be directly related to your major field of study. It is only available to F-1 students who have not graduated and who have been enrolled on a full-time basis in the US for one full academic year (i.e., fall and spring) immediately preceding the CPT authorization. Full-time is at least 36 units per semester. Graduate degree programs requiring off-campus employment before meeting this one academic year requirement may be eligible for CPT without meeting the one academic year requirement.

FIRST STEPS:

- ☐ Read this information packet.
- ☐ Understand CPT requirements, restrictions, and limitations.
- ☐ Obtain a job offer letter with the required information (see below).
- ☐ Enroll in a credit-bearing internship or practicum course during the term in which you are seeking CPT.
- ☐ Have your academic advisor complete the "[Advisor Recommendation for CPT](#)."

NEXT STEPS:

- ☐ Complete and pass the [CPT Canvas Course](#).
- ☐ The CPT e-Learning Course will help you learn how to submit your CPT documents online through your MyOIE Portal Account: <https://myoie.andrew.cmu.edu> (instructions for the MyOIE Portal can be found [here](#)).
- ☐ OIE will issue a new I-20 for you in 10 business days after a CORRECT and COMPLETE CPT E-Form Request has been submitted to OIE. This new I-20 will include your work authorization (page 2).
- ☐ You will then receive an email to your Andrew email account once your new I-20 is ready.
- ☐ **NOTE: YOU CANNOT BEGIN WORKING UNTIL YOUR CPT HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED BY OIE, YOU HAVE YOUR CPT I-20 AND YOU ARE WITHIN THE DATES LISTED ON THE CPT I-20. CPT CANNOT BE BACKDATED.**

You must submit **ALL** of the required documents (listed below) online through your [MyOIE Portal account](#):

1. **[EMPLOYER OFFER LETTER AND/OR SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION](#)**: *With the below information circled or underlined:*
 - Number of hours per week **OR** if the job is full-time
 - Complete employer/company address including zip code (no P.O. Box)
 - If work location is different from parent/headquarter company location, the letter must indicate both addresses
 - Start date of employment (must be a date in the future)
 - End date of employment
 - Offer letter doesn't include required CPT information? Request a new letter from your employer
 - **OR** an email to supplement the letter's missing information.
 - **EMPLOYER OFFER LETTER AND/OR SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION SHOULD BE NO MORE THAN 1-3 PAGES!**
2. **PROOF OF ENROLLMENT FROM [SIO](#)**
In SIO: Click Course Schedule ➡ Semester Schedule ➡ select **CORRECT** term/semester
(ex: summer) for the Correct year ➡ Print the List Version that shows **BOTH the course name *and* number
3. **COPY OF YOUR MOST RECENT [I-94 RECORD](#) (NOT THE TRAVEL HISTORY!)**
4. **[CPT ACADEMIC ADVISOR RECOMMENDATION FORM](#)** completed by academic advisor.
5. **Screenshot of CPT e-Form Course Quiz Results/Grade (if applicable)**

CPT End Date

CPT can only be authorized between the start and end date of one [academic term](#). While you must abide by your employer's specified end date, you may (with your department's approval) request authorization through the end of an academic term to avoid the need for an extension if your employer later extends your employment through the end of the academic term.

Curricular Practical Training – 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 an academic semester.

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

Yes. Your program must require an internship/practicum OR you **MUST** earn academic credit for your CPT, even during the summer term.

3. Can I have CPT in my final semester?

No. Remember, CPT work authorization is based upon your curriculum. Therefore, CPT can only be granted if your academic program **REQUIRES** an internship in the final semester.

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

You can apply for full-time CPT during **vacation academic terms** 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 and/or The HUB 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** – meaning that the course credits are going towards your degree OR it is required by your department to graduate. If the primary goal is practical work experience rather than an academic pursuit, apply for Pre-Completion Optional Practical Training (Pre-OPT). CPT opportunities include internship or cooperative education arrangements with the approval of your academic program that will be part of your program's curriculum.

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

No. You must have authorization from OIE before you beginning **ANY** off-campus work. You need to get a new I-20, issued by an OIE advisor, with CPT authorization before you start working off-campus on your internship. New I-20s are processed in 10 business days after the receipt of all required CPT documentation.

8. I am working this summer at "Company X," and OIE approved my CPT until the end of the summer term. How can I get it approved so that I can work through the end of fall semester?

Students can only be authorized for CPT one semester at a time. Students should consult with their OIE advisor to determine if CPT is possible in a subsequent semester, or if other authorization is required, such as OPT. **CPT is not allowed in the final semester.**

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. It is a requirement to be enrolled in the internship/practicum course during the semester of the CPT experience **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 www.cbp.gov/i94 or paper I-94. If you are unable to find your I-94, please email OIE: oie@andrew.cmu.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 - meaning that the course credits are going towards your degree OR it is required by your department to graduate. Therefore, your academic department and academic advisor must approve this CPT and they must complete the OIE CPT Recommendation Form to determine your eligibility for CPT. You must be enrolled for at least a 3-unit course that requires a work experience (such as co-op, internship or practicum) OR be enrolled in a degree program that requires an internship/practicum for all students in the program. This type of training requires supervision by a faculty member and must be listed in the university course catalog.

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. You will need to apply [for Post-Completion OPT](#). It can take 3-5 months to receive OPT authorization from USCIS. **Note: Both CPT and OPT are for jobs in your major field of study.**

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 Post-Completion OPT. Participating in fewer than 12 months of full-time CPT, or in part-time (20 hours or less per week) CPT does not impact your eligibility for Post-Completion OPT.

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

No. You can only do a CPT while you are an enrolled 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?

Maybe. F-1 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 volunteer work, you **MUST** have employment authorization. Compensation includes money, lodging, meals, transportation, gift certificates, or other remuneration. OIE generally recommends that students obtain CPT authorization for all unpaid volunteer/internships in case funding becomes available later, to apply for a Social Security number, or to use the experience on a resume or CV. Please consult an OIE advisor before engaging in **ANY** volunteer work or unpaid internships.

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

You will present your CPT I-20 with the CPT authorization listed on page 2 of your I-20.

17. I'm finished with my thesis/dissertation. Can I have CPT while I wait to graduate?

No. CPT is not meant to serve as a means to facilitate an employment opportunity and it cannot delay graduation; therefore, CPT is not allowed in the final semester. Remember you should apply for Post-Completion OPT 3 months prior to the completion of program (**not graduation**) to ensure that you receive your work authorization as soon as possible.

18. 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 new I-20, with a new travel signature. You will always travel with your most recently issued I-20. Remember - keep all previously issued I-20s but present the new CPT I-20 if re-entering the US after a trip abroad **even beyond your internship end date**.

19. What if my CPT is not near campus?

Remember, enrolled students in F-1 status must keep permanent (address in home country) and off-campus address (current US residential address) information current through your CMU [SIO account](#). If you will be moving for your internship, **you must update your local address in the off-campus address field in SIO within 10 days**. You must also remember to update your local address again when you return to CMU.

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 in spring or spring is my first semester in the U.S. as a student. Do I qualify for CPT?

No. Even though you have been a CMU student, you must be a student in the U.S. for one academic year immediately preceding the CPT authorization to qualify for CPT.

24. My program started in spring, but I was enrolled at another U.S. institution and transferred my SEVIS record to CMU. Do I qualify for CPT?

MAYBE. Even though you have been a student in the U.S., you must have been enrolled for one academic year immediately preceding the CPT authorization to qualify for CPT. If this is your situation, you **MUST** email oie@andrew.cmu.edu in advance to see if you are eligible for CPT authorization after only one semester at CMU.

EMPLOYMENT RELATED INFORMATION

Employment Eligibility Verification

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. OIE has [instructions](#) on how to apply. Note that your number will remain the same if you already had a previous SSN. Some Social Security offices may not accept applications until 30 days before the start date of the CPT authorization. **You may begin work without a SSN, however you need one to meet payroll and tax requirements.**

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.