



Curricular Practical Training (CPT) – Overview

Overview

Curricular practical training (CPT) is a type of employment authorization that allows international students to participate in a curricular practical training program that is “an integral part of an established curriculum” and is directly related to the student’s major area of study. In many, but not all cases, the student will receive some type of compensation for the experience. CPT should not be thought of as an easy or convenient way to get a job, but it should be thought of as training that helps a student to get experience to meet specific academic objectives that can only be met through practical training. CPT should provide a student with mentoring and evaluation. **Before you are eligible for CPT, you must be enrolled in classes on a full-time basis (3 units per semester minimum) for at least two semesters.** Only programs that require immediate practical training for ALL students are exempt from this rule.

CPT Authorization

You should not begin work until your CPT application has been approved and you have received a new I-20 with the CPT endorsement on Page 2. Working before CPT has been authorized is a violation of your immigration status and can have serious consequences. While on CPT, you can only work for the employer and during the dates listed on your CPT I-20.

You should bring your completed CPT application and a copy of your job offer letter to ISSO at least 2 weeks prior to your anticipated start date. Bringing documents later than this may affect your ability to start your internship on the desired date.

Academic credit

For GSOM students in MBA and MSF programs, because an internship is a required part of the program for all students, registration for an “internship” course is not required.

For all other students, you must receive academic credit for the training/internship experience.

You should meet with your academic department/faculty advisor prior to accepting an internship to discuss how you will receive academic credit.

Full-time vs. part-time

Immigration regulations limit employment to 20 hours per week during the regular semester, primarily because students are expected to be enrolled in a full course of study (3 units minimum) each semester. Full-time employment is allowed during school breaks when classes are not in session. Summer is considered a vacation term, so full-time employment can be authorized during the summer as your academic program will allow. Registration for the internship course is usually done concurrently with the internship, with the occasional exception for certain programs who do not offer an internship course in the summer.

Limits on CPT

There is no limit on the amount of CPT that a student can be authorized for, as long as the internship continues to meet the academic criteria for CPT. However, doing 12 months or more of full-time CPT will eliminate eligibility to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT).

If a student wants to participate in an internship, but it does not meet the requirements for CPT, they should speak with ISSO about the other (limited) options that are available for employment authorization.