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 the curriculum of their degree program.

*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 an International Student Advisor 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 CPT, you must meet the following conditions, in addition to those mentioned above:

- 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) at a U.S. school authorized to issue SEVIS I-20’s* 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 CPT involves up to 20 hours of work per week.
- Full-time CPT involves more than 20 hours of work per week. This is only an option:
  - during the summer OR
  - for students whose degree programs require internships involving more than 20 hours of work per week (e.g. Exercise Science, Athletic Training, Speech Pathology/Communicative Disorders, Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy ) OR
  - for graduate students whose thesis, project or dissertation requires CPT and who are only enrolled in Thesis / Dissertation Guidance OR
  - when the CPT opportunity is considered as full-time enrollment by the university and you are only enrolled in the CPT credit (e.g. students who are enrolled in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences’ Student Co-Op Program/EAS-496)

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 CPT, prepare your application and submit it online to ISSS following the directions below:

1. Login to the myISSS Student Portal at: [http://ubisss.buffalo.edu](http://ubisss.buffalo.edu) by clicking on the blue “LOGIN” button on the left side of the screen, and using your UBIT Name and Password to access the portal. **Note:** Do NOT click on “Administrative Services for University Departments”.
2. Click on “F-1 Practical Training Applications” and then “Application for Curricular Practical Training”.

3. You must complete the entire E-form and upload the required document before you can submit your application. Only documents saved as a PDF or JPEG are acceptable. You must upload the following:
   a. 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.
      ▪ Note: Be sure that you are registered for the appropriate CPT credit BEFORE you submit your CPT E-form.
4. After providing all required information and uploading the required document, remember to click the “Submit” button. ISSS will review your CPT application and notify you if any additional information is needed.

How long will it take to process my CPT application?

ISSS reviews CPT applications on a case-by-case basis. Review of a CPT application takes approximately 5-7 business days. If CPT is approved, ISSS will update your information in SEVIS and print a new I-20, endorsed with your CPT authorization.

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

You cannot begin working until you receive the CPT endorsement on your I-20. CPT is only valid for the period between the beginning and ending dates on your 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.

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.

Can I apply for CPT after I have applied for Post-Completion OPT?

No, once you apply for Post-Completion OPT, you are no longer eligible for CPT. Remember, CPT must be an “integral part of an established curriculum”. You are not eligible for CPT if you have completed all degree requirements.