Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Guidebook
A Guide for F-1 International Student Seeking an Off-Campus Internship or Practical Experience

What is CPT?
Curricular Practical Training (CPT) can be either a required internship or an optional internship which is an integral part of the curriculum for your degree program. It is a type of off-campus employment authorization for F-1 international students that allows you to participate in a paid or unpaid internship or practical experience for academic credit. According to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), “employment” is any type of service for which a benefit, including academic credit, is received. This is why you need CPT authorization for both paid and unpaid internships. The internship/practical training must be directly related to your program of study.

Student Eligibility:
CPT is available for F-1 international students who:
- Currently have a valid F-1 visa status
- Are considered to be in “good standing” with the University
  - “Balance due” holds and other similar negative holds must be removed prior to CPT authorization.
- Have completed at least one academic year as a full-time student in the U.S. prior to requesting CPT*
  *some exceptions available for graduate students
- Have the ability to maintain F-1 status while on CPT
  - Full-time enrollment requirements require enrollment in a minimum of 12 credit hours every Fall and Spring semester for undergraduate students (minimum of 9 credits of face-to-face classes).

Internship Eligibility:
An internship or practical experience must meet one of the following criteria for CPT authorization:
- **Optional Internship** – If a student is not required to complete an internship for their degree program, but they are encouraged by their department to do an internship, the student must register for an internship course for academic credit each semester that they wish to do CPT.
  - Registering for an internship course for academic credit can be achieved through scheduling an appointment with an Internship Coordinator in the Applied Learning Center (https://msudenver.edu/appliedlearningcenter/).
- **Required Internship** – If a student is required to complete an internship or practical experience in order to graduate for their respective degree program, CPT can be authorized with enrollment in an internship course.
  - Student should expect to enroll in an internship course in order to gain academic credit for their internship by contacting an Internship Coordinator in the Applied Learning Center (https://msudenver.edu/appliedlearningcenter/).
  - If a degree program only requires one internship, but a student wants to do multiple internships, they must register for academic credit for any additional internships which go beyond the minimum requirement for the degree program.

Please direct questions to:
Leigh Eleazer - International Student Support Coordinator, MSU Denver
Student Academic Success Center (Student Success Building - Suite 230)
890 Auraria Parkway, Denver, CO 80217
(303) 352-7243 LELEAZER@msudenver.edu
Requirements:

- The type of internship/practical experience must be directly related to the student’s program of study.
- A letter from the employer is required before a student can receive approval for CPT.
- Employment may be part-time (20 hours or less per week) or full-time (more than 20 hours per week), and either paid or unpaid.
  - **Part-time CPT** must be 20 hours or less per week. If you are working for multiple employers, the total numbers of hours worked must still be 20 hours or less per week in order to maintain part-time CPT.
  - **Full-time CPT** is more than 20 hours per week. If you engage in full-time CPT for 12 months, you will no longer be eligible for 12 month Optional Practical Training (OPT) employment authorization.
  - Part-time CPT will not impact your eligibility for Optional Practical Training.
  - Please remember that you will have to balance your academics with your CPT. You are on an F-1 student visa, not an employment visa. Your studies should take precedence over your internship.
- Employment must be authorized by ISS and an updated I-20 must be issued BEFORE you begin your internship.
- Employment start/end dates should be within the normal start and end dates for the semester.*
  *Some exceptions may apply, depending on the nature of the student’s program or internship.
- Registration for an internship course for academic credit is required for CPT to be approved.
- If you need to change employers to continue your internship requirements, or if you will have multiple employers, you must complete a separate CPT application for each employer and a new I-20 must be issued prior to beginning employment.
  - CPT is employer-specific. Any changes in the employer must be approved by International Student Support prior to beginning the internship with the new employer.

Approval Process/Timeline:

- Schedule an appointment to speak with International Student Support to discuss the CPT process and confirm your meet the eligibility requirements
  - Contact Leigh Eleazer (International Student Support Coordinator) by phone +1-303-352-7243 or email LELEAZER@msudenver.edu.
- Meet with an Internship Coordinator to begin an Application for Academic Credit in the Applied Learning Center.
- Complete the CPT Application packet:
  - **CPT request/application form** – This form asks for basic information about you and the internship.
  - **CPT Advisor/Internship Coordinator Form** – Your academic advisor or Internship Coordinator should complete this form. They should select from the list of options why your internship is an integral part of your curriculum for your major, or otherwise required for your degree program.
  - **An official letter from the employer stating the following:**
    - Hours you are working per week (i.e. 15 – 18 hours per week)
    - Location of where you will be working (i.e. 890 Auraria Pkwy., Denver CO 80217)
    - Description of the work you will be doing
    - Your start and end dates for employment
- Submit your completed CPT Application packet to International Student Support at least 5 business days before the requested CPT start date.
After submitting your completed CPT packet to International Student Support, you will receive a response within 2-3 business days.

- **Not Approved:** If International Student Support is NOT able to establish that the requested internship is an integral part of the established curriculum and is related to your major, you may be denied for CPT. You are not eligible to do the internship if this happens. Doing a paid internship after being denied for CPT is grounds for termination.
- **Approved:** If ISS is able to clearly see that your internship is an integral part of the established curriculum and is related to your major, a new I-20 will be issued for you with the approved CPT information listed on page 2.

You should not work before receiving approval for the CPT and getting the new I-20.

If you wish to do another internship after the official end-date of your CPT, you must submit another application to request CPT again for a future semester.

- **Continuing to work at an internship after the CPT end date is grounds for termination.**

  - You must submit an additional CPT request to extend the internship and receive another updated I-20 from ISS before continuing the internship. Extensions are not guaranteed.

**Important Things to Remember about CPT**

- CPT is not guaranteed for students.
- Paid and unpaid internships qualify for CPT and will need to be updated on the I-20 if your CPT is approved.
- 1 year (12 months) of full-time CPT will disqualify you from applying for OPT in your final semester.
- Do not work BEFORE your approved CPT start date. Do not work AFTER your approved CPT end date.

**Examples of Common CPT/Internship Situations:**

- **Example 1:** Sohan is a Civil Engineering major and has been an MSUD student for 3 years. He is required to complete an internship in order to graduate with his Bachelor’s degree. His friend works at a hotel in downtown Denver and has offered Sohan an internship as a hotel receptionist. Can Sohan be approved for CPT for this internship?
  - This would not be an internship eligible for CPT. Working as a hotel receptionist is not related to his Civil Engineering major.
  - He should not take this internship or begin working at the hotel. If he is required to complete an internship in order to graduate, it must be related to his degree program.

- **Example 2:** Maria is a Journalism major in her 4th semester at MSUD. She recently found an unpaid internship at a local TV station which will require her to learn more about news casting and reporting on television. She is required to complete an internship for her major. Will this qualify as CPT?
  - She should request CPT for this internship since it is directly related to her Journalism major.
  - Even though it is unpaid, she should request CPT to properly document her experience.
  - She is required to complete an internship in order to graduate. She should plan to register for an internship course and speak with the Applied Learning Center about getting academic credit.

- **Example 3:** Sasha has been a student at MSUD for one year. He has found an internship working at a Denver law firm. Sasha is a Criminal Justice major, but this internship not required for him to graduate. Sasha has registered for an internship course through the Applied Learning Center and had been approved to do CPT from International Student Support from January 17th – May 1st, as listed on his updated I-20. His employer wants him to start working a little earlier and asks him to start on January 5th instead. Is this okay?
  - No, he should not begin working before his approved CPT start date.
  - Working before or after the authorized CPT dates is grounds for termination of Sasha’s SEVIS record.

Please direct questions to:

Leigh Eleazer - International Student Support Coordinator, MSU Denver
Student Academic Success Center (Student Success Building - Suite 230)
890 Auraria Parkway, Denver, CO 80217
(303) 352-7243 LELEAZER@msudenver.edu