



Office of International Education

Curricular Practical Training Information

International Students in F-1 status are only permitted to work off-campus under certain circumstances and only after receiving **prior written** authorization on their I-20 from the Immigration Services office. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regulates the various types of employment authorization available to international students through the F-1 regulations.

The Immigration Services’ office at Virginia Commonwealth University is the only office authorized to provide information on F-1 employment options, and to authorize employment for F-1 international students seeking to work off-campus during their academic programs. A signature or verbal approval from the Career Center or the Academic Advisor at Virginia Commonwealth University, alone, is NOT acceptable employment authorization for students in F-1 in immigration status.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is just one type of employment authorization available to students in F-1 immigration status. **The USCIS requires the International Student Advisor’s WRITTEN approval on the I-20 BEFORE a student can begin any paid or unpaid off-campus work experience (including internships or Coops).** Failure to obtain PRIOR WRITTEN approval on the I-20 is a serious violation of the F-1 student status.



CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT) DEFINITION

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is work experience that is an “integral part of an established curriculum.” CPT is defined as “alternative work/ study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreement with the school.” [8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(1)]. Sponsored employment is structured employment that is monitored by Virginia Commonwealth University through the students’ academic advisor.



ACADEMIC INTERNSHIP AND CPT ELEGIBILITY

In order to qualify for Curricular Practical Training, an academic internship must meet the definition of CPT as described above. In addition, all of the following 3 eligibility requirements must be met:

1. The F-1 student must have been “lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis in a Service-approved college, university... for at least one full academic year [two full semesters]” [214.2(f)10]. Exceptions to the one full year enrollment requirement can only be made for graduate students who are required by their academic department to begin an internship earlier. (Currently, this exception does not appear to apply to any VCU graduate program.)

(over)

2. The internship/work experience must be “directly related” to the student’s “major area of study” [241.2(f)(10)].
3. The proposed employment (internship) must be required for all students for the completion of the degree,

--OR--

The proposed employment (internship) must be required for a particular course within the program of study from which the students can choose. In this case, the internship course credit must count toward graduation and the course must appear on the student’s transcript. The Course “must also be listed on the school’s course catalogue with the assigned number of credits, and the name of the faculty member teaching the course clearly indicated. There should also be description of the course with the course objectives clearly defined”. [INS cable, 22 January 1992, pp, 3-4]

Paid Internships that do NOT meet the specifications for CPT can still be done through Optional Practical Training (OPT), but students must plan ahead because the OPT application may take USCIS 3-6 months to process.

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PART-TIME AND FULL-TIME CPT

Part-time CPT (20 hours or less per week)

_ Students engaging in part-time CPT, during the academic term (Fall and Spring semesters), must be take concurrent course work, in order to maintain status as a full-time student (12 hours for undergraduates, 9 hours for graduates).

Full-time CPT (more than 20 hours per week)

_ Full-time CPT, during the academic term (Fall and Spring semesters), can only be granted if it is required by the student’s Academic Program for completion of the degree.

_ Students may engage in full-time CPT during the summer vacation period without being enrolled in classes full-time.

_ Students who receive an aggregate of 12 months or more of full-time CPT will NOT be eligible for any Optional Practical Training.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

_ Students must maintain their F-1 status on CPT.

_ Engaging in CPT must not delay the completion of studies or graduation.

_ CPT is not available after the completion of all required coursework. Students interested in gaining work experience in their field of study after completing all required coursework would need to consider applying for the Optional Practical training (OPT) benefit, which may be used before or after graduation.

_ **Student MUST apply for a new endorsement on their I-20 from the International Student Advisor each time they apply for a different job (internship), and each time they wish to increase/decrease their work hours.**

➤ **CPT will be authorized for one semester at a time.** If the student wishes to renew the CPT for the following school term, he or she must complete the full application process again, including a new letter from the employer and a new CPT Authorization Form.

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Curricular Practical Training Application

Application and Authorization Procedures:

To apply for curricular practical training, the student must bring to the DSO the following items:

- A Curricular Practical Training Authorization Form, completed and signed by the student and the academic adviser.
- A copy of the page in the university bulletin indicating that the employment is required for the student's degree program
- A letter from the employer on letter-head indicating job title, exact dates of employment, number of hours of work per week, place of employment, and a brief description of the work to be performed.

If all eligibility requirements are met, the DSO will authorize the employment for the specific time period outlined in the CPT Authorization Form and the employer's letter.

CPT work authorization cannot be backdated. This means that any work done before the CPT is authorized is illegal and will put the student out of legal F-1 status.

Updated 2007



Office of International Education
Curricular Practical Training Authorization Form

Section A. (To be completed by student.) Semester requested: spring/ summer/ fall 20__

- 1. Employment start date (mm/dd/yyyy)
2. Employment end date (mm/dd/yyyy)
3. Full time (more than 20 hrs/week) or part time (20 hrs/week or less)
4. Employer name E-mail
5. Employer full address
City State ZIP

6. Student Name Phone
E-mail @vcu.edu SEVIS #: N (above bar code)

Student Signature Date

Section B. (To be completed by academic adviser.)
How is the employment integral to the student's field of study?

Blank lines for text input

- 1. How many hours per week will the student work?
2. How many credits will the student receive toward this work and what is the course number?

Academic adviser name Phone
E-mail
Academic Adviser Signature Date

Dear prospective employer:

Because we now must update all international student information in SEVIS, it is necessary to obtain the following details prior to authorizing CPT. We ask that you issue the student a letter, on company letterhead, with the following:

- Student's job title
- Exact beginning and ending dates of employment (ex. from 01/12/03 to 05/23/03)
- Number of hours of work per week
- Place of employment (actual site where student will be working)
- Brief description of the work to be performed

We are pleased that you are considering or have chosen one of our students to join your workforce. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at iamercer@vcu.edu or call (804) 828-0595. Thank you for your time and patience in completing this letter.

Sincerely,

Ingrid Mercer
Director, Immigration Services