

## WHAT IS CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)?

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) defines [Curricular Practical Training](#) as alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or another type of required practicum that a sponsoring employer offers through cooperative agreements with your school. CPT **must** be related directly to the student's major area of study and be a part of the school's established curriculum. Students must secure a training opportunity **before** CPT can be authorized. Students may begin CPT only **after** receiving their I-20 with DSO endorsement.

- CPT authorization is required **only** when the training is **inside the United States (US)** (e.g., a summer internship in a student's home country does **not** require CPT authorization or qualify for CPT).
- CPT can be approved for a student's final semester **only** if they are enrolled full-time or have an approved reduced course load (RCL).
- CPT is **NOT** a way for students to earn money while attending school, to help secure a job after graduation, or to start OPT early. It will not be approved if it is not applicable to an experiential training/learning opportunity.
- CPT **CANNOT** be used as a reason for a program extension, and **students with the approved program extensions are ineligible to be considered for CPT.**
- CPT **CANNOT** be approved for students that have completed all program requirements for their degree and delay the completion of the academic program.

## CPT CRITERIA

Students must maintain their academic and F-1 status, complete one academic year of study (*unless they have evidence that CPT is required before this by their academic department chair*), obtain approval from their Faculty Advisor or their Department Chair (or designee), and eligible to enroll in the required course used for CPT; **EGN 5911 Research.**

**ENROLLMENT:** Students must be enrolled for one academic year to participate in CPT (**Exception:** Graduate students who have evidence from academic department that their studies require immediate participation for their program of study.)

**PART-TIME vs. FULL-TIME CPT:** DSOs will authorize **up to 12 months** of CPT for students who are eligible, but students **must** meet CPT extension criteria. Students that participate in **more** than 365 days of **full-time** CPT are **ineligible** for OPT. Students that participate in **more** than 365 days of **full-time** CPT are **ineligible** for OPT (optional practical training) at the same degree level.

**TERMS CPT CAN BE USED:** CPT can be approved for the fall, spring, or summer semesters. While full-time enrollment is required for fall and spring, the summer semesters are not.

**CPT EXTENSIONS:** Students may request one extension **after** completing the initial CPT internship, **only** if the internship will be with the **same employer and completed consecutively**, and they have evidence the extension is essential to the research.

## UNPAID INTERNSHIPS vs. VOLUNTEERING:

There is a difference between volunteering and an unpaid internship. F-1 students engaging in an unpaid internship off-campus **MUST** utilize and be eligible for CPT, or Pre-Completion OPT Training. If you are uncertain if an internship is considered unpaid employment or a form of volunteering, **please contact your DSO**, to ensure you do not violate the terms of your F-1 visa.

- **Volunteering** refers to donating time to an organization whose **primary purpose is charitable or humanitarian in nature**, without remuneration or any other type of compensation, and the activity is **unrelated** to the student's field of study or intended profession (e.g., donating time with the American Red Cross, working in a homeless shelter).
  - F-1 students are authorized to engage in volunteer work as long as it **meets the criteria** for performing civically charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise expectation or receipt of compensation.
  - Students **meeting** this requirement do **not** require CPT authorization but **must** provide a statement from the organization verifying the volunteer position and expectations (**all** criteria must be met for approval).
- **Unpaid internships** do **not** typically qualify as "volunteer" work. Internships, both paid and unpaid, are primarily offered by the private sector and related to the intern's field of study.
  - [The U.S. Department of Labor](#) has guidelines for unpaid internships; although the internship may include actual operation on the facilities of the employer, it must be similar to training given in an educational environment and be an experiential learning opportunity for the intern.

## EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS:

Employer offer letters are **required** and crucial to authorizing CPT. Letters **must** be on official letterhead and signed; additionally, ISS requires students and the employer to complete the F-1 Off-Campus Employment Verification Letter.

## HOW TO APPLY FOR CPT

1. Complete Graduate [CPT course in CANVAS](#).
2. Obtain Offer Letter and complete [F-1 Off-Campus Employer Verification](#) forms.
3. Obtain Faculty Adviser or Academic Department Chair (or designee) approval.
4. Submit completed CPT Request, Offer Letter and F-1 Off-Campus Employer Verification forms to ISS.
5. Enroll in EGN 5911.
6. Start CPT internship.