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## Curricular Practical Training

### FIRST:

- Read this application packet.
- Obtain a job offer in the form of an Employer Letter (see below).
- Enroll in an internship or practicum course for the corresponding term.
- Have your academic advisor complete page 2 of the "Advisor Recommendation for CPT."
- Understand requirements, restrictions and limitations.

### SECOND:

- Attend an OIE walk-in CPT session. If not residing in Pittsburgh, contact your OIE advisor.
- Submit your completed CPT Recommendation Form and supporting documents (see below).
- OIE will issue a new I-20 for you in 5 business days which will include our approval of your CPT on page 3. You cannot begin work until the CPT is authorized by OIE.

### Explanation

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is only available to F-1 students who have not graduated and who have been enrolled on a full-time basis for one full academic year (i.e. fall and spring.) Full time is at least 36 units per semester. Degree programs requiring off-campus employment before meeting this one full academic year requirement may be eligible for CPT.

### Submit the following to OIE:

**\*\*INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED\*\***

- EMPLOYER LETTER** : *With the following information underlined:*
  - number of hours per week OR if the job is full time or part time
  - employer/company address with zip code
  - start date of employment (must be a date in the future)
  - end date of employment
  - **These details change?** New CPT authorization required.
  - **Offer letter doesn't include required CPT information?** Request a new letter from employer and underline OR get an email to submit to OIE along with the letter containing all required information.
  - **Only have one letter for yourself?** Make a copy prior to coming to CPT session for OIE.
- ADVISOR RECOMMENDATION FORM** (attached) completed by academic department advisor.
- PROOF OF ENROLLMENT FROM SIO is required** unless the internship is a requirement for all students in the program. **In SIO:**
  - Click Course Schedule  $\Rightarrow$  Semester Schedule  $\Rightarrow$  select Correct term (ex: summer) for the Correct year.
  - $\Rightarrow$  Print the List version that shows BOTH the course name and number.

### CPT Extension Requests

CPT extension applications must be submitted to OIE two to three weeks before the end date of your current CPT authorization. Your OIE advisor will need a new job offer letter (or an e-mail from your employer) with the new end date for your employment AND the approval from your department in the form of an e-mail. It will take OIE 5 business days to process an extension request. *OIE cannot accommodate CPT extension requests during the week of Fall Orientation (mid-August).* Your new I-20 can be picked up by a designated friend for mailing or you can e-mail [oie@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:oie@andrew.cmu.edu) to request our mailing form and obtain payment information.

# CPT – Frequently Asked Questions

## **1. Can I get CPT authorization first and then find a job?**

No. CPT work authorization is granted for a specific employer and for a specific period of time, usually corresponding to a semester.

## **2. Do I need to be enrolled while doing my CPT?**

Your program must require an internship/practicum OR you MUST earn academic credit for your CPT, even if your CPT is during the summer term.

## **3. Can I be employed full-time while on CPT?**

Students may apply for: Full-time CPT during an annual vacation period or Part-time CPT (no more than 20 hours per week) during an academic semester.

## **4. Do I have to pay for CPT work authorization?**

If a student has a job offer and meets the eligibility requirements for CPT, authorization is given on a new I-20 form, and no additional employment authorization document from US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is required. Note: You may be required to pay for the internship course units. Consult your academic department about billing from the Hub.

## **5. I heard that Curricular Practical Training is for any off-campus job. Is that true?**

No. CPT is employment that *is an integral part of an established curriculum and is directly related to the student's major area of study. CPT is not meant to facilitate the creation of a special employment opportunity or for employment unrelated to the major field of study.* If the primary goal is practical work experience rather than an academic pursuit, apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). CPT opportunities include internship or cooperative education arranged with the approval of your academic program that will be part of your program's curriculum.

## **6. I have a great internship opportunity. Can I start working tomorrow?**

No. You must have authorization from OIE before you begin a paid internship or any other form of CPT. You need to get a new SEVIS I-20 issued by an OIE advisor which is endorsed with CPT authorization before you start working on your internship. New I-20s are processed in 5 business days after the receipt of all required CPT documentation.

## **7. I am working this summer at "Company X," and OIE approved my CPT until the end of the summer term. How can I get it approved so that I can work through the end of Fall semester?**

Students may be authorized for CPT only one semester at a time. Students should consult with their OIE advisor to determine if CPT in a subsequent semester is possible.

## **8. The company where I will be doing my summer internship wants me to turn in the CPT approval ASAP. I am not enrolled for summer yet. Can you approve my summer CPT?**

No. It is a requirement to be enrolled in the semester of the CPT experience *prior* to CPT authorization.

## **9. My academic department does not want to recommend CPT. In this case, can I still apply?**

No. It is required that your academic department and advisor approve this CPT. An academic advisor, department head, or dean must complete the attached recommendation form to determine eligibility for CPT. You must be enrolled for at least a 3 unit course that requires a work experience (such as co-op, internship or practicum) or be enrolled in a degree program that requires an internship/practicum. This type of training requires supervision by a faculty member and must be listed in the university course catalog.

## **10. My professor got me this job with "Company X." It is a nice opportunity for me to do research there. It will give me experience for after graduation. Can I do CPT there?**

No. CPT cannot be approved based on it being a good opportunity alone. CPT is only authorized when the employment is part of the curriculum for your program. OIE will recommend and you should apply for OPT. It can take 2-3 months to receive OPT authorization. Note: Both CPT and OPT are for jobs in your major field of study.

## **11. Can I do full-time CPT and still be eligible for OPT?**

Maybe. If you participate in 12 months or more of full-time CPT you are not eligible to apply for OPT. However, if you participate in fewer than 12 months of full-time CPT, you may still use all 12 months of OPT. Part-time (20 hours or less per week) CPT does not affect your eligibility for OPT.

## **12. Can I have CPT after I finish my studies and during my grace period?**

No. You can only do a CPT while you are an enrolled student. Students are not eligible for CPT once they have completed all course requirements for the degree except in certain cases, for example PhD students who will be collecting data for a thesis or dissertation and are required to have work authorization to obtain necessary data.

**13. Do I have to apply for CPT if I am offered volunteer work or an unpaid internship?** International students in non-immigrant status may participate in volunteer internships without work authorization. If you will be compensated in some way for the service you are providing, you must have employment authorization. Compensation includes money, lodging, meals, transportation, gift certificates, or other remuneration for services. OIE generally recommends that students obtain CPT authorization for all unpaid/volunteer internships in case funding becomes available later, to apply for a Social Security number, or to use the experience on a resume or CV. Please consult an OIE advisor before engaging in a volunteer or unpaid internship.

**14. What do I show my employer so that they know that I have work authorization?**

You will present your I-20 with the CPT authorization notation. The authorization can be found on the 3<sup>rd</sup> page of your I-20.

**15. I'm finished with my thesis/dissertation. Can I have CPT while I wait to graduate?**

No. CPT is not meant to serve as a means to facilitate an employment opportunity and it cannot delay graduation; therefore, CPT is not allowed in the final semester. Remember to apply for OPT 3 months prior to your completion of program (not graduation) to ensure that you receive your work authorization as soon as possible.

**16. Will I get a new I-20 for CPT? If yes, which one (my original I-20 or new I-20) do I use for travel?**

A new travel signature is included on the CPT I-20. Keep all previously-issued I-20s and present the CPT I-20 if reentering the US after a trip abroad.

**17. What if my CPT is not near campus?**

Remember, enrolled students in F-1 status must keep permanent (address in home country) and local address (US residential address) information current while in the US through the HUB's Student Information On-Line (SIO) web site. If you will be moving to a different city or state for your internship, **you must update your local address in the off-campus address field in SIO.** You must remember to update your local address again when you return to CMU.

**18. My major is "X," but my job offer is for a different field. Can I get OPT?**

No. CPT and OPT can only be used for jobs that are directly related to the major field of study.

**19. Do I need CPT authorization for an internship outside of the United States?**

No. CPT is U.S. work authorization and is not needed for internships outside of the U.S. However, you do want to ensure that you have work authorization for the country where you will be working. Visit the appropriate Embassy website for further information.

**20. Do I need CPT authorization to work on-campus?**

No. CPT is off-campus work authorization. As an F-1 student, you are permitted to work on-campus 20 hours per week during the academic year and full-time during official school breaks and vacations.

## EMPLOYMENT RELATED INFORMATION

### Employment Eligibility Verification

When you begin work, you and your employer must complete a form entitled "Employment Eligibility Verification" (Form I-9), which the employer retains. This form requires you to document your identity and work authorization according to directions on the back of the form. One acceptable combination of documentation is:

- Valid passport
- I-94 card marked for F-1 student status
- Social Security Number
- SEVIS I-20 with the Curricular Practical Training work authorization

### Social Security Number (SSN)

For payroll purposes, you will also need to provide your SSN. If you do not already have an SSN number or if you have lost your card, take your passport, I-94 Departure Record and your Form I-20 to the Social Security Administration and apply for a Social Security card. Note that your number will remain the same if you already had one. Some Social Security offices may not accept applications until the start date of the CPT employment has been reached. You may begin work without a Social Security Number.

### Social Security Withholding and Other Taxes:

In general, F-1 students who have been in the US fewer than five years are "non-residents for tax purposes" and are exempt from Social Security (FICA) and Medicare taxes. If you are a non-resident for tax purposes and your employer does withhold FICA, speak to your payroll office. You and your employer can refer to Internal Revenue Service Publication 519, "U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens" for additional information. Your earnings **are subject to applicable federal, state, and local taxes.** Tax returns must be filed on or before April 15 each year for the previous calendar year. The results of the filing will determine if any of the withheld income taxes can be refunded to you. Note that you will be subject to state tax filing for the state in which you are working on your CPT experience.



**This information must be completed and signed by an ACADEMIC ADVISOR,  
Dean or Department Head - NOT BY THE STUDENT.**

1. Approved Dates of Training Program: from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
(month/ day/ year) (month/ day/ year)

2. Is this internship an integral part of an established curriculum in the student's major field of study?  Yes  No

3. Describe the curricular component of the training program:

A. The student will be enrolled in an academic course for which he/she will receive credit for this training:

Course Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_

This course will be worth \_\_\_\_\_ academic units during the \_\_\_\_\_ semester.  
(fall, spring, summer I, summer II, summer all)

- OR -

B. This is a required component for all students in this degree program and no internship/practicum course is required.

4. The student's progress while engaged in the internship will be monitored by this authorized department representative or Carnegie Mellon faculty member:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

5. A clearly defined description and objectives for this internship have been developed, and the course is listed in the undergraduate course catalog or in the graduate department's official course offerings.  Yes  No

6. This student is expected to complete all course requirements for the degree on \_\_\_\_\_, and will receive the  
(Date) \*

degree of \_\_\_\_\_ in the field or major of \_\_\_\_\_.  
(BS, BA, MS, MA, PhD) (Field of Study)

\* This is not the date of the student's graduation ceremony but the date the student completes his/her last final exam or paper in order to obtain the degree. For Ph.D. students, this is often the student's successful defense date.

**NOTE: If all degree requirements are already met, an undergraduate or course-option master's student is not eligible for CPT.**

**Please complete question 7 only for Master's and PhD Students who have completed all required coursework and are working towards their thesis or dissertation.**

7. If this student has already completed all coursework and is working towards his/her thesis or dissertation, the authorized employment must be necessary for the student to collect data for the thesis or dissertation. **Students in this situation typically receive 1-2 semesters of CPT authorization maximum.**

Is the **primary purpose** of this employment experience to collect data for the student's dissertation?  Yes  No

**Name and Title of academic advisor, dean, or department head who completed the above information (please print):**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Print Name) (Title)

**Telephone number and email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_