

What is CPT?

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a benefit of F-1 Status. CPT is a type of employment authorization for an F-1 Visa Holder that enables a student to pursue work in his/her major (not minor) field of study under certain circumstances.

The work experience must either be **integral** to the degree program (earns academic credit for all students in that major) or **required** (fulfills a degree requirement. The work experience must be part of the established curriculum at ISU. The student must meet all academic requirements, university requirements for enrollment, and secure the CPT authorization from the Center for Global Engagement prior to beginning the internship/work/practicum/experience.

Please Note: Employment that offers “excellent” or “relevant” experience to a student’s field of study, but does not meet the requirements stated above, does not qualify for CPT.

Who is eligible for CPT?

To be eligible for CPT, students must meet all of the following criteria:

- Must be an F-1 visa holder maintaining legal status
- Must be enrolled full-time and be in good academic standing
- Must have been enrolled as a full-time student in the United States for a minimum of one academic year (this includes a fall and spring semester) prior to applying for CPT authorization.

There is an exception to the one academic year requirement for graduate students whose programs require all students to complete an internship in the first or second semester

Do I need CPT to work on campus?

Normally, F-1 students do not need to have CPT authorization to pursue on-campus employment. When classes are in session F-1 students are allowed to work up to 20 hours per week on-campus without obtaining CPT authorization. Students may work over 20 hours per week on-campus when classes are not in session (i.e. summer and winter break) without obtaining CPT authorization.

In certain cases, a student may need to apply for CPT or OPT employment authorization for an on-campus job. An example of this would be a student who wishes to pursue an on-campus internship in addition to on-campus employment during the academic year. If a situation like this arises, please visit the Center for Global Engagement as it may be necessary to apply for CPT or OPT authorization.

Can I get CPT for any job?

No. CPT authorized work must be an integral or required part of the student's degree program. The internship/experience must be for academic credit or be a mandatory part of the student's academic program.

The actual job must be directly related to the student's major field of study. It cannot be in a declared minor or program.

If the employment does not fulfill a degree requirement or earn academic credit, but it is directly related to the major field of study, the student may be eligible to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT).

Do I have to have a job offer to apply for CPT?

Yes. CPT Authorization is granted for a specific job. The student must obtain an offer for employment before applying for CPT Authorization.

I have an opportunity for an unpaid internship. Do I need CPT authorization?

Yes, you will need to either have an approved CPT or OPT (Optional Practical Training). All off-campus employment requires authorization. Failure to obtain proper authorization, even for an unpaid position, can result in a violation of the student's F-1 status. Students should contact the Center for Global Engagement before starting any off-campus employment to avoid any violations to their F-1 status.

Do I have to be enrolled in an internship course in the same semester that I pursue the actual employment/internship experience?

Yes. Students may not do a work experience one semester and register for the course in a different semester/term. To receive CPT authorization, students must be enrolled in the appropriate course and the dates of employment must correspond to the dates of enrollment/semester.

Do I have to take classes while on CPT?

You must be enrolled as a full-time student during the semester of your part-time CPT work. If you are on authorized full-time CPT during your annual vacation term, you must be enrolled for at least an internship or independent study course that gives you academic credit for the work you are performing on CPT.

How do I obtain CPT authorization?

You must have CPT Authorization BEFORE beginning work. Working without authorization is a violation of your Student Visa Status. Please contact your immigration advisor in the Center for Global Engagement for information on how to apply for CPT.