

## Curricular Practical Training (CPT): FAQ for Faculty

### What is Curricular Practical Training?

The Federal Government defines Curricular Practical Training (CPT) as the following, quoted from the Code of Federal Regulations 8 CFR 214.2 (f)(10)(i): “alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school.”

The intent of CPT is to provide hands-on work experience in a student’s major field of study prior to completion of their program.

### Who is eligible for CPT?

CPT may be authorized to an F-1 student who has lawfully enrolled in an academic program on a full-time basis for one full academic year. CPT can only be authorized if a student has a job/internship offer and at least one of the following conditions has been met:

- The student’s academic program requires—credit-bearing or not—practical training, employment, or an internship experience as a required component of the program.
- The student’s academic program offers an optional credit-bearing opportunity that is an integral part of the program.

Any work completed under CPT authorization must be directly related to a student’s field of study.

### In what situations are CPT authorization necessary?

CPT authorization is necessary whenever an F-1 student plans to undertake an experiential component to a class or academic program in the form of work experience. At CMU, these experiences usually take place in the form of internships.

### What happens if a student completes an internship without CPT authorization?

If the internship meets the U.S. Department of Labor’s definition of “employment” and an international student is found to have engaged in that employment unlawfully, there could be serious negative consequences on the student’s immigration status in the United States. These consequences could include being considered “out of status” or being denied entry to the United States in the future.

### My students will participate in an unpaid internship. Is CPT still necessary?

Yes. The term “employment” is much more broadly defined by the U.S. Department of Labor than in the traditional sense. Therefore, uncompensated work may still be considered employment. If there is ever a question of unauthorized employment by an international student, compensation or lack of is generally not used to determine lawfulness of the work.

**My students will participate in internships on-campus at CMU. Is CPT still necessary?**

It does depend on the nature of the internship experience and who the student will be working for. If the student will be working with a CMU department or organization, CPT may not be necessary provided that a student does not engage in more than 20 hours of on-campus employment inclusive of any existing employment the student may have with the university (i.e. general student assistant, graduate assistant, etc.). If the student's internship experience alone or their experience combined with existing on-campus employment totals 20 hours or more each week, CPT authorization is necessary.

**Why are international students required to receive special authorization for internships while domestic students are not? This seems silly and unnecessary.**

Domestic students are authorized to work in the United States by virtue of their citizenship. International students are not afforded the same work authorization per their F-1 status in the United States. CPT authorization is therefore necessary for students to maintain compliance with the terms of their status. Keep in mind that this special authorization is a government requirement that is not unique to CMU. All international students in F-1 status studying at any university in the United States are subjected to the same restrictions and requirements per the Code of Federal Regulations.

**Where can I read more about CPT?**

Pertinent language about CPT can be found the Code of Federal Regulations under [8 CFR 214.2 \(f\)\(10\)\(i\)](#). The exact language is included below:

Curricular practical training. An F-1 student may be authorized by the DSO to participate in a curricular practical training program that is an integral part of an established curriculum. Curricular practical training is defined to be alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school. Students who have received one year or more of full time curricular practical training are ineligible for post-completion academic training. Exceptions to the one academic year requirement are provided for students enrolled in graduate studies that require immediate participation in curricular practical training. A request for authorization for curricular practical training must be made to the DSO. A student may begin curricular practical training only after receiving his or her Form I-20 with the DSO endorsement.