



OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

University Center for International Studies
University of Pittsburgh

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Guidelines for Swanson School of Engineering

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is defined as employment which is an **"integral part of an established curriculum, including: alternate work/study, internship, cooperative education, or any other type of required internship or practicum which is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school."** *Source: 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(i)*

As per federal regulations, CPT is a benefit extended to F-1 students only, and does require an offer letter prior to authorization. CPT can only be granted after a student has been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one academic year (i.e. two full consecutive semesters). Exceptions to this can only be made for graduate students in a program which *requires* immediate practical training.

CPT may be full-time (more than 20 hours/week) or part-time (20 hours/week or less). Use of 12 months or more of full-time CPT will prohibit the student from applying for OPT. Use of part-time CPT does not affect OPT eligibility.

The following guidelines apply to all University of Pittsburgh students, and ensure that students can take advantage of opportunities that are appropriate to their academic program while protecting their F-1 status.

- CPT will be granted if:
 - Practical training is a requirement of all students to fulfill a degree requirement,
 - or*
 - A student will be awarded credit that will count toward degree requirements (e.g. through an internship or practicum course offered by the program), as listed in department/program literature.
- Credit earned to satisfy CPT requirements must appear on the transcript during the semester that the internship takes place (e.g. summer internship requires summer enrollment).
- CPT employment may not delay completion of the academic program.
- CPT authorized for the fall or spring semester, or in the final semester of study may only be part-time. Exceptions will be made if the student is participating in a Pitt Co-Op or in a program that requires a full-time internship to fulfill a degree requirement.
- CPT authorized in the summer may be full-time. If summer will be the final semester of study, CPT will be authorized part-time, unless the student is participating in a Pitt Co-Op or in a program that requires a full-time internship to fulfill a degree requirement.
- Doctoral students may be eligible for CPT authorization for employment that will directly contribute to their thesis. OIS reserves the right to review the relationship between practical training experience and dissertation research.
- CPT is granted on a semester-by-semester basis, unless a longer length of time is needed to complete program requirements.

CPT and on-campus employment:

- Individuals can be employed [on-campus](#) and participate in CPT at the same time, provided they adhere to regulations for employment
 - **Note:** students with academic appointments (TA, TF, GSRs) should check with their academic departments about any potential restrictions on off-campus employment while they participate in their academic appointment.



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Option 1: Engineering Co-Op Program

- **Undergraduate** students in the [Engineering Co-Op program](#) will be granted CPT up to **three** times in their academic career, if approved for Co-Op rotations by the Co-Op office.
 - Students must apply separately for each period of CPT to correspond with each internship rotation.
 - Each internship rotation must be at least 12 weeks in length in order to be authorized for CPT, as per Co-Op policy.
- **Master's** students in the Co-Op program will be granted CPT as many times as is approved by the Co-Op office. Generally, this is **once** per program.
- **Doctoral** students who participate in the Co-Op program will be granted CPT as many times as is approved by the Co-Op office, up to **three** rotations, or 12 months total.
 - Pre-dissertation and dissertation phase students are both eligible to participate in the Co-Op program.

Option 2: Co-Op alternatives

- Undergraduate, Master's, and pre-dissertation phase PhD students:
 - Students not participating in the Co-Op program must enroll in a course (independent study, practicum) in the same term as the internship activity in order to tie the internship to the curriculum. The course credits must count toward degree requirements.
 - OIS may request information from the professor about specific course outcomes/requirements to ensure that there is some academic 'product' as part of the course registration.
- Dissertation phase PhD students:
 - **PhD** students enrolled for full-time dissertation status (FTDS) may request CPT to conduct research off-campus that will directly contribute to their thesis.
 - OIS reserves the right to review the relationship between practical training experience and dissertation research.

Students who do not meet the eligibility requirements for CPT may apply for pre-completion OPT.

If you have any questions about your eligibility requirements or the CPT application, please consult your [Immigration Specialist](#).

(continue to page 3 for instructions about how to apply for CPT)



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How to apply for CPT

An application for CPT authorization should be submitted to OIS at least 2 weeks prior to the anticipated start date of employment.

Step 1: Meet with your academic advisor to inquire about your academic eligibility.

Step 2: Once you have obtained the position, request an offer letter from the employer (on company letterhead). The letter should include:

- Your Name
- The start date and end date of the internship (Keep in mind that CPT can only be authorized one semester at a time.)
- Position title
- Employment site address (street, city, state, and zip code). This must be where you will be physically present for the duration of your employment. If there will be multiple locations, all must be listed.
- The number of hours to be worked per week

Step 3: Submit a CPT request in [My OIS](#).

- Normal processing time of a CPT request is **five business days** from the date OIS receives a completed e-form.
- Please remember that your academic advisor will receive an email requesting their approval for the practical training experience.
- Once your advisor has completed their section of the e-form, OIS will review and contact you via email once a determination has been made.
- Authorization will be granted for the employer, location, and dates specified on the new I-20.
 - Please contact OIS prior to commencing employment if any of this information will change.
- Once CPT has been approved, you will receive a confirmation mail, with an attached, digitally-signed Form I-20.
 - CPT will be authorized for specific location(s) and for a set length of time.
- **You may not begin employment until you receive the new CPT I-20.**