

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Policy and Instructions

Definition

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is defined by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as “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” and which is “an integral part of an established curriculum” ([8 C.F.R 214.2\(f\)\(10\)\(i\)](#)). CPT is available only prior to the completion of the student’s degree program and may not delay completion of the academic program.

Eligibility

A student in an undergraduate or graduate program who has completed 1 academic year (2 semesters) in full-time F-1 status may apply for CPT.

- **Undergraduate Students** – undergraduate students must declare an academic major before applying for CPT. Undergraduate students must complete 1 academic year in full-time F-1 status before they can be eligible for CPT. There are no exceptions to this requirement.
- **Graduate Students** – a student in a graduate program who has already completed a full year in F-1 status may be considered eligible for part-time CPT during the first semester of the program. A student in a graduate program for which practical training is required from the outset is eligible for CPT during the first semester.
- **Transfer Students** - Transfer students may be eligible for CPT in their first or second semester at North Park, if they have completed at least one academic year in F-1 status at a previous institution *and* meet all departmental requirements for internship/practicum. Students must have been continuously enrolled in an academic program for one year, and OPT does not count toward this requirement (i.e., students coming off of OPT into a graduate program are not immediately eligible for CPT). Transfer student CPT requests during the first year should be reviewed by the PDSO for eligibility.

CPT may be designated as an internship or a non-internship experience according to the policies set forth by the student’s academic program. If CPT is classified as an internship, it must also meet all institutional requirements for internship eligibility, which may mean the student must wait longer than 1 academic year before taking part in CPT. Please refer to the [Career Development and Internship Office’s resources](#) for more information.

In any and all instances of CPT, it is the academic curriculum and not the desire for employment that should determine the usefulness and purpose of CPT. USCIS expressly prohibits the authorization of CPT for the purpose of facilitating employment. Eligibility for CPT will be determined by the P/DSO on a case-by-case basis at the time of application. The P/DSO reserves the right to make exceptions or changes to the above policy, given particular student circumstances and/or in accordance with amendments to federal law or its interpretation.

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CPT Application Procedure

UNDERGRADUATE & GRADUATE INTERNSHIPS

1. **Meet with your Academic/Faculty Advisor** to discuss the off-campus training experience/internship and determine if you are eligible for an internship (4970 or 5970) or a non-internship course in your major.
2. **Complete NPU internship application:**
 - **Undergraduate students:** CPT taken as an **undergraduate internship (for example, BSE 4970)** must first complete the [CDIO internship application](#).
 - **Graduate students:** please work with your advisor to complete any internship application materials required for your program.
3. **Course Registration:** Students should ensure they are registered for the appropriate course, which corresponds to the CPT experience. Undergraduate internship courses will be added to your schedule by the Office of the Registrar. **Remember that you must register for any course/internship according to the university drop/add policy.*
4. **Ask your employer for an Employment Letter:** you must submit a signed offer letter from your prospective employer with your CPT application, which includes your job title, dates of employment, hours, and location. Please find a template on the [International Student Services website](#).
5. **Complete the [CPT Application Form](#).** Please complete the SoftDocs form and must have the following documents ready in order to complete this form:
 - a. Name and email address of your advisor
 - b. Employment letter from your internship site
 - c. Copy of your class schedule, with CPT/internship course
6. **Receive CPT I-20:** OIA will authorize Curricular Practical Training in SEVIS and issue a new Form I-20 to the student. The student may begin CPT only after they have received the new Form I-20. Starting work *before* authorization is a violation of your F-1 status. **Please allow 3 business days for processing.**

Maintaining status is your responsibility as an F-1 visa holder. North Park University is required by law to report unauthorized/illegal employment. If a Designated School Official (DSO) has constructive knowledge that a student is engaging in off-campus work that is not properly documented, the student's SEVIS record will be terminated for "Unauthorized Employment."

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MAJOR PRACTICUM (Nursing Clinical, Student Teaching, Field Education, or other Practicum)

Note for students Nursing, Education, Counseling, Athletic Training OR Seminary programs: you will likely have various courses that require off-campus experiences. You must repeat completed CPT authorization process for each course which requires a clinical/practical training. You do NOT need to complete the CDIO application unless you are an undergraduate student completing an *optional* internship experience outside of your required coursework.

1. **Contact your Academic/Faculty Advisor or Clinical Coordinator** to discuss your required practicum placement. You cannot proceed with the application process until you have a placement site.
2. **Course Registration:** Students should ensure they are registered for the appropriate course, which corresponds to the CPT experience. **Remember that you must register for any course according to the university drop/add policy.*
3. **Ask your Clinical Coordinator/Advisor or Employer to provide you with a letter:** you must submit a signed offer letter from your coordinator/advisor or employer with your CPT application, which includes your job title, dates of employment, hours, and location. Please find a template on the [International Student Services website](#).
4. **Complete the [CPT Application Form](#).** Please complete the SoftDocs form and must have the following documents ready in order to complete this form:
 - a. Name and email address of your academic advisor and clinical coordinator
 - b. Employment letter from your internship site or clinical coordinator
 - c. Copy of your class schedule, with CPT/internship course
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Frequently Asked Questions

Am I eligible for CPT?

- ✓ You must have completed 1 academic year in F-1 status
- ✓ You must have declared a major
- ✓ You have been cleared by your major/department to participate in an internship/practicum experience

Do I need a job/internship/placement offer to apply for CPT?

You **MUST** have an offer/placement from a specific employer before CPT can be authorized. CPT may be only for the specific employer, location, and period of time.

Can CPT be paid?

CPT may be paid or unpaid. A student must have an offer from a specific employer before CPT can be authorized. Employer offer letter should outline compensation.

How many hours am I permitted to work during CPT?

Part-time CPT is 20 hours or fewer per week. You may also continue any part-time on-campus employment during CPT authorization, up to an additional 20 hours/week.

- **Undergraduate Students** – undergraduate students are eligible only for part-time CPT during the fall and spring semesters. Full-time CPT may be authorized during the summer term; however, the student must not be in the final semester and must show proof of enrollment for the following (i.e., fall) semester.
- **Graduate Students** – unless required by the program, graduate students are eligible only for part-time CPT during the fall and spring semesters. Full-time CPT may be authorized during the summer term; however, the student must not be in the final semester and must show proof of enrollment for the following (i.e., fall) semester.

Note: Use of full-time CPT for 12 months or more eliminates eligibility for Optical Practical Training (OPT).

If I am volunteering, do I need CPT authorization?

Students interested in volunteering off campus must consult the P/DSO to determine whether or not the experience qualifies as CPT. Any off-campus work experience that is not properly documented as CPT may impact a student's future prospects for employment benefits or Change of Status petitions.

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How many credit hours is CPT?

All CPT must be taken for 1 or more credits and must appear on the student's academic schedule. Students must be registered for a course within their major which corresponds to the CPT experience. Throughout CPT, the student **MUST** be enrolled on a full-time basis when they add a CPT/internship course to their schedule. Full-time enrollment is 12+ credit hours for an undergraduate student and 8+ credit hours for a graduate student.

- **Undergraduate Students** enrolling in a 4790 internship course should refer to the [CDIO policy](#) and confer with their faculty advisor regarding credit hours.
- **Graduate Students** should confer with their faculty advisor on course number and credit hours for registration.

Exception: during the summer or final semester, full-time enrollment is not required, however CPT must still be taken for course credit and appear on the student's schedule. If you are doing CPT/internship in your final term, you must also register for other coursework. Please consult with OIA if you are studying part-time in your final semester and also plan to add a CPT course.

Can I work at the same internship/training site over multiple semesters?

Yes, you may repeat CPT at the same internship/site over multiple semesters, but you must be re-enroll in the corresponding coursework AND resubmit your CPT application each term. You cannot continue working without an updated CPT I-20.

How many semesters can I do CPT?

There are currently no regulations limiting frequency of CPT. You should limit full-time CPT to LESS than one calendar year (365 days). Exceeding 1 year of full-time CPT makes you ineligible for Optical Practical Training (OPT) at that educational level.

Can I be authorized for more than one CPT in the same term?

A student wanting to do more than 1 CPT in a given semester must complete a separate CPT Authorization Form for each experience and must work less than 20 hours/week, combined. SMAT students with multiple "gigs" for academic credit in a given semester must fill out a separate form for each.

Changing employers during CPT without prior authorization by the Office of International Affairs is NOT ALLOWED. CPT will be authorized only for the specific employer, location, and duration (i.e., start- and end dates) indicated on the CPT Authorization Form, approved by the P/DSO, and recorded on the student's Form I-20. Each employer must be recorded separately on the I-20.