Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

F-1 Student Employment Authorization for Required Academic Internships

International students in F-1 immigration status are only permitted to work off-campus under certain circumstances and only after receiving prior written authorization on their I-20 from the Office of International Student Services (OISS) or an EAD from USCIS. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regulates the various types of employment authorization available to international students through the F-1 regulations. The OISS at the Regent University is the only office authorized to provide information on F-1 employment options and to authorize employment for F-1 international students seeking to work off-campus during their academic programs. A signature or verbal approval from any other office or department is not acceptable employment authorization for students in the F-1 immigration status. Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is just one type of employment authorization available to students in the F-1 immigration status. CPT application packets will be distributed during the mandatory CPT Information Sessions, which will be advertised through the OISS email messages. All students who plan to work in the U.S. will need to have a U.S. Social Security number for payment and tax purposes. Details about the Social Security number application can be found in the OISS.

**Definition of Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**

According to the USCIS, Curricular Practical Training is work experience 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” [8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(i)]. Sponsored employment is structured employment that is monitored by Regent University through the student’s Academic Department.

**Academic Internships & CPT Eligibility**

In order to qualify for Curricular Practical Training, an academic internship must meet the definition of CPT as described above. In addition, the following three eligibility requirements must be met in order for the student to qualify for the CPT employment benefit:

1. The F-1 student must have been “lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis in a Service-approved college, university…for at least one full academic year” [214.2(f)(10)]. Exceptions to the one full year enrollment requirement can only be made for graduate students who are required by their academic department to begin an internship earlier.

2. The internship/work experience must be “directly related” to the student’s “major area of study” [214.2(f)(10)].

3. The proposed employment (internship) must be required of all students for the completion of the degree; OR The proposed employment (internship) must be required for a particular course within the program of study from which the students can choose. In this case, the internship course credits must count toward graduation and the course must appear on the student’s transcript. The course must also be listed in the school’s course catalogue with the assigned number of credits, and the name of the faculty member teaching the course clearly indicated. There should also be a description of the course with the course objectives clearly defined” [INS cable, 22 January 1992, pp. 3-4].

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▶ **Special Note:** Paid internships that do not meet the specifications for CPT can still be done through Optional Practical Training (OPT), but students must plan ahead because the OPT applications take approximately 2-3 months for the USCIS to process. Students must attend an OPT information session before their OPT application can be processed.

## PART-TIME & FULL-TIME CPT

### PART-TIME CPT (20 hours or less per week)
▶ Students engaging in part-time CPT during the regular academic terms (required terms) must take concurrent course work in order to maintain status as a full-time student (generally 12 credit hours for undergraduates, 9 credit hours for graduates, 6 credit hours for doctoral students, and 10 credit hours for JD/LLM students). Most academic programs only require enrollment in the Fall and Spring terms, but some programs require Summer enrollment as well.

### FULL-TIME CPT (More than 20 hours per week)
▶ **Required Enrollment Terms:** Full-time CPT during the regular academic terms/required enrollment terms (generally Fall & Spring, but includes Summer for some academic programs) can only be granted if it is required by the student’s Academic Department for the completion of the degree.

▶ **Summer Vacation:** Students who are not required to be enrolled in the Summer may engage in full-time CPT during the summer vacation period without being enrolled in classes full-time.

## CPT APPLICATION PROCESS
▶ Applications for CPT must be submitted at least 1 week prior to the employment/internship start date.
▶ There is no cost to apply for CPT. The applications are processed in-house by the OISS!
▶ You must have a written job offer from a prospective employer before the CPT application can be processed.

## OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION
▶ Employment is considered to be the rendering of services for compensation, financial or other, and all F-1 student visa holders are required to have prior written authorization for any off-campus employment.
▶ Students must maintain their lawful F-1 status while on CPT and must continue to be enrolled full-time during regular academic terms (Fall & Spring for most programs, Fall, Spring, & Summer for some programs.).
▶ Students must be enrolled in the course that qualifies them for CPT during the semester/term in which they are engaging in CPT/internship experience.
▶ Engaging in CPT must not delay the completion of studies or graduation because the CPT internship/work experience is supposed to be an integral part of the academic curriculum.
▶ CPT is not available after the completion of all required coursework, except for graduate students who need CPT for their thesis/dissertation research. Students interested in gaining work experience in their field of study after completing all required coursework would need to consider applying for the Optional Practical Training (OPT) benefit, which may be used before or after graduation.
▶ Students MUST apply for a new CPT endorsement on their I-20 from the OISS each time they apply for a different job (internship), and each time they wish to increase/decrease their work hours.
▶ Students who receive 12 months or more of full-time CPT will not be eligible for any Optional Practical Training (OPT).

(LJJ, 3/12/10)