

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Frequently Asked Questions

Below is a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) the Office of International and Cultural Affairs (OICA) has fielded over the years concerning CPT. We hope you find the additional explanations helpful. If you should have any questions or require further clarification, please don't hesitate to attend a [CPT Workshop](#) or contact your [International Student Advisor](#). If you would like to see a question added to this list, please e-mail ia@mst.edu. It is our pleasure to assist you.

CPT FAQ's

1. What is curricular practical training?

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)]*. CPT is available only prior to the completion of your degree program and you must have a job offer at the time of application.

2. What makes me eligible to apply for CPT?

To be eligible for CPT, the student must:

- Have been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for one academic year at Missouri S&T (i.e. two full consecutive regular semesters)
 - Graduate students: 9 credit hours is full-time enrollment
 - Undergraduate students: 12 credit hours is full-time enrollment
- Be in lawful F-1 status
- Have a job offer which meets immigration requirements
- Not be enrolled full-time in an intensive English language training program

3. Can I apply for CPT in my first semester? Can I apply for CPT in the graduating semester?

International students must be enrolled for one academic year to be eligible for CPT. CPT employment may not delay completion of the academic program. Thesis or dissertation students who have completed their minimum program requirements and are solely doing research are eligible for summer internships only unless they are full-time enrolled.

4. What is the deadline for applications? What can I do if I have a job offer but I am unable to meet the application deadline?

The complete CPT packet must be received by OICA no later than one week prior to the first day of class of each academic semester. If the student fails to meet this deadline, there is no guarantee that your request will be processed by the start of your proposed begin date or by the deadline for students' SEVIS registration.

5. What are the documents that are required? In what order must they be filled?

- Completed and signed CPT Request Form
- A job offer letter from the employer. The letter must:

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Frequently Asked Questions

- Be written on the company's letterhead,
- Be addressed to the student.
- Include job title.
- Provide a job description that demonstrates clearly how the job is related to the student's field of study.
- Specify the employment physical address (street, city, state, and zip code).
- Specify if the employment is full- or part-time (if part-time, the number of hours per week the student will work).
- Specify the exact begin and end dates of CPT employment. (CPT can only be authorized one term at a time).
- Provide authorization by COER for co-op.

6. What are the maximum working hours?

Full-time CPT is 40 hours per week. However, some employers may require additional hours of work. This is authorized in full-time CPT.

7. What kind of job offer do I need? What information should/should not be mentioned in the job offer letter?

The job offer letter must:

- Be written on the company's letterhead.
- Be addressed to the student.
- Include job title.
- Provide job description that demonstrates clearly how the job is related to the student's field of study.
- Specify the employment physical address (street, city, state, and zip code).
- Specify if the employment is full- or part-time (if part-time, the number of hours per week the student will work).
- Specify the exact begin and end dates of CPT employment. (CPT can only be authorized one term at a time).

8. What are the enrollment requirements?

Students participating in part-time CPT (20 hours or less) are required to be enrolled full-time. Students participating in full-time CPT (21 hours or more) are not required to be enrolled. Full-time CPT takes the place of full-time enrollment.

9. Can I take distance courses while I complete my CPT?

If the student is in part-time CPT, he can take only one online course per semester.

If the student is participating in full-time CPT, he is exempt from the full-time enrollment regulations related to distance courses. Such a student can take any number of online courses.

10. Will a CPT program affect OPT (Optional Practical Training) in the future?

A student who participates in full-time CPT for more than 365 days is ineligible for OPT. Students must carefully monitor the time they spend on full-time CPT.

**Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
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11. What do I do if I am authorized and registered for CPT and then I change my mind or lose my job?

If the student changes his mind or loses his CPT job, he should enroll full-time in order to remain in valid immigration status.

12. Does the University allow full-time as well as part-time CPT?

Both types are authorized.

- Part-time CPT is 20 hours or less.
- Full-time CPT is 21 hours or more.
- Students participating in full-time CPT (21 hours or more) are not required to be enrolled. Full-time CPT takes the place of full-time enrollment

13. Can I do an unpaid internship during my CPT?

The OICA strongly recommends CPT authorization for unpaid internships only for the following reasons:

- The CPT, even though unpaid, is similar to training which would be given if the student would be paid;
- The student does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;
- The employer that provides the training derives no immediate material advantage from the activities of the student;
- The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

14. Do I need to apply to USCIS for CPT authorization?

No. Only the OICA can authorize CPT for eligible Missouri S&T international students.

15. Is it permissible to use CPT to engage in self-employment or to open a business?

No. It is not permissible to engage in self-employment under CPT regulations.

16. Will I be eligible to extend my I-20 if I do full-time CPT?

The most common answer to this question is no. If you are eligible for full-time CPT approval, you are required to make normal progress on your degree. The only exception to this rule is if CPT is required by your program. Otherwise, OICA will not agree to extend an I-20 if a student participated in one semester or more of full-time CPT and cannot graduate on time. If you think you may find yourself in this situation, please visit with your International Student Advisor before applying for full-time CPT.

17. What is the difference between OPT (Optional Practical Training) and CPT?

OPT permits employment after completion of your degree. CPT provides access to authorized employment during your degree program. While a job offer letter is required to apply for CPT, it is not required for OPT.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Frequently Asked Questions

18. Am I permitted to change employers while on CPT authorization? Or shift my employment status from full-time to part-time or vice versa?

COER does not allow students to change employers while on CPT. To shift your employment status from part-time to full-time, you are required to reapply for a new and separate CPT authorization (the same application process all over again). You are not permitted to make changes to your CPT without prior authorization from OICA. Failure to obtain the necessary authorization will result in unauthorized, illegal work. If you need to reduce your full-time employment status to part-time employment, that also requires notifying OICA, so as not to affect your eligibility for OPT in the future. Also, since part-time CPT replaces the requirement for full-time academic enrollment, you must enroll full-time if you switch from full-time CPT to part-time CPT.

19. I was once enrolled part-time instead of full-time. Does this mean I am ineligible for CPT?

If you were ever enrolled less than full-time, then you will need to have an approved [“Reduced Enrollment Request Form”](#) on file with OICA for the semester you were under-enrolled. Otherwise, you are ineligible for CPT.

20. Am I permitted to travel outside the USA if I have been authorized for CPT?

Yes, but there are exceptions. Students on CPT are only allowed to travel during institutional academic breaks. You will need to fill out a [Travel Request Form](#) and secure the necessary approvals from OICA before traveling outside of the United States. Your reason for travel must not be work related. If otherwise, in addition to the Travel Request Form, you will need to provide a letter from the employer with approval to travel, dates of travel, and anticipated date of return to work. It is a good idea for you to carry with you proof of employment, such as a paycheck receipt. For extenuating travel needs, please contact your International Student Advisor.

In addition to above FAQs, visit the links provided below to see what the Departments of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services have to say concerning CPT.

- [U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#)
- [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement](#)
- [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#)

Lastly, the SEVIS Helpdesk and the USCIS Helpdesk are additional resources for all students:

- SEVIS Helpdesk – [1-800-892-4829](#)
- USCIS Helpdesk – [1800-375-5283](#)