CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (“CPT”)

USCIS defines CPT as employment which is an integral or required part of your 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.” 8 CFR § 214.2 (f)(10)(i). According to USCIS, the word “required” does not always limit CPT to work experience required by your curriculum. This clarification is discussed below in more detail.

Job Eligibility Requirements

You have two options for participating in CPT.

Internship. Enroll in an internship class available within your course curriculum that grants credit hours to your transcript. The internship can be for either full-time or part-time employment for one academic semester, however full-time CPT employment can be approved only during a vacation semester or when you are participating in a UAB sponsored co-op program (see below).

For ISSS to authorize internship CPT, you will need to bring proof of registration in the internship course, a letter from your academic advisor, and a letter from the internship employer (see sample below). ISSS will review the documents and determine if they are sufficient to authorize internship CPT.

Co-op. Participate in an institutionally-sponsored cooperative education experience (co-op). Credit hours are not typically granted for a cooperative experience, but you still must enroll in the cooperative course. Co-op CPT must be integral to your program of study and be offered by an employer with whom UAB has entered a formal a cooperative agreement. Co-op CPT can be granted for only one academic term per year. Additional co-op terms can be granted for a vacation semester on a case-by-case basis.

Eligibility

- You are maintaining lawful F-1 status and are in good academic standing.
- You must have completed 9 months of full-time study in your academic program.
- Former Pathway students can count their time in an accelerated or standard Pathway towards the 9 months of full time study eligibility for CPT. Students currently enrolled in a Pathway program are not eligible for CPT.

Part-Time vs. Full-Time CPT

Part-Time Training. USCIS considers off-campus employment of 20 hours or fewer per week to be part-time. Your Form I-20 should therefore specify permission to engage in part-time training, and you must be careful to limit your work to no more than 20 hours per week. There is no limitation on the length of time you may participate in part-time CPT, but you must be simultaneously enrolled (12 hours for undergraduates, 9 hours for graduates) in order to maintain your lawful F-1 status.
Full-Time Training. USCIS considers on-campus or off-campus employment of more than 20 hours per week to be full-time. Your Form I-20 should specify permission to participate in full-time training, but full-time CPT will be approved only during your vacation semester or if you are participating in a UAB sponsored co-op program. Keep in mind, if you participate in more than 12 months of CPT, you will not be eligible for post-completion Optional Practical Training (“OPT”).

Application and Authorization Procedures

Contact ISSS for evaluation of both your academic situation and the proposed CPT employment opportunity to make certain that both you and the job meet the eligibility requirements. Your Form I-20 must be endorsed for CPT.

To apply for CPT, bring the following documents to ISSS:

- **Internship**
  - Offer letter from potential employer (see attached example letter)
  - Letter from academic advisor verifying enrollment in internship course and justification as an integral or required part of the curriculum
  - Proof of enrollment in internship course

- **Co-op**
  - Offer letter from potential employer outlining the terms of the co-op agreement with UAB and the student
  - Letter from academic advisor confirming the co-op is an integral part of the student’s curriculum, listing the specific terms, timelines, and expectations
  - Proof of enrollment in co-op course

ISSS will assess your eligibility and endorse your Form I-20 for either part-time or full-time CPT. Do not begin employment until CPT is authorized. Violation of this condition will result in the immediate revocation of your authorization and termination of your I-20. You must also be careful not to continue employment beyond the date stated on the third page of your I-20 unless you apply for and are granted an extension of your CPT work authorization.

Employment Eligibility Verification

You and your employer must complete the Form I-9, “Employment Eligibility Verification,” which your employer must retain. The I-9 must be updated each time your work authorization is renewed.

Caution!

While immigration regulations provide a variety of employment opportunities during your time in F-1 status, working improperly or without authorization is a serious violation of your status. Consult ISSS before accepting any employment. It is your responsibility to comply with all immigration regulations applicable to F-1 students. ISSS is responsible for advising and counseling you regarding your responsibilities. If you fail to comply with your responsibilities, you may not be eligible for benefits normally available to F-1 students.
CPT (Internship)
SAMPLE EMPLOYER LETTER – print on UAB letterhead

Date

International Student and Scholar Services
ATTN: Associate Director for Student Services
917 13th Street South, SL 248
Birmingham, AL 35233

To Whom It May Concern:

It is essential that the following information be included in the student’s offer letter:

- Beginning date
- Position in which student is employed (job description)
- Whether job is full-time (21 hours or more) or part-time (20 hours or fewer)

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

CPT (Internship)
SAMPLE ACADEMIC ADVISOR LETTER – print on UAB letterhead

Date

International Student and Scholar Services
ATTN: Associate Director for Student Services
917 13th Street South, SL 248
Birmingham, AL 35233

To Whom It May Concern:

I recommend that (student) be allowed to participate in Curricular Practical Training as a (position name, e.g., Intern) for (company). The student is enrolled in (Course # Internship), which is part of the degree curriculum. His/her responsibilities will include (job description). (Company) would like him/her to begin on (date) and continue the internship until (date) as a (part-time or full-time) employee.

As (student)’s academic advisor, I certify that this internship is an integral or required part of his/her (major/degree) curriculum. This employment experience is required to fulfill internship requirements for (course code) to complete his/her major.

Sincerely,

Advisor’s Signature
& Name
CPT (Co-op)

SAMPLE EMPLOYER LETTER – print on company letterhead

Date

University of Alabama at Birmingham
International Student and Scholar Services
ATTN: Associate Director for Student Services
917 13th Street South, SL 248
Birmingham, AL 35233

To Whom It May Concern:

List the terms and conditions of the cooperative experience:
Beginning date and terms of employment (work a semester/off a semester, or work part-time subsequent semesters). Reference agreement made between UAB and employer to provide the student the fullest benefit under the cooperative agreement.
Job Title
Duties
Whether job is full-time (21 hours or more) or part-time (20 hours or fewer)

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

SAMPLE ACADEMIC ADVISOR LETTER (CO-OP) – print on department letterhead

Date

International Student and Scholar Services
ATTN: Associate Director for Student Services
917 13th Street South, SL 248
Birmingham, AL 35233

To Whom It May Concern:

I recommend that (student) be allowed to work as (position) for (company). His/her responsibilities will include (job description). (Company) would like him/her to begin on (date) and continue working until (date) as a (part-time/full-time) employee. It is expected that (student) will work (terms of the agreement, dates/duration of employment and specific duties).

As (student)’s academic advisor, I certify that this cooperative experience with (company) is an integral part of the student’s curriculum and a coordinated cooperative agreement with (company). Employment with (company) will provide the experiential learning opportunity that UAB strives to provide our students through our integrative curriculum with businesses and organizations.

Sincerely,

Advisor’s Signature