Curricular Practical Training (CPT) in F-1 Status:

This information details correct compliance for F-1 students and CPT. **Definition:** Curricular practical training (CPT) is employment or training pursuant to an internship requirement or internship elective which is an integral part of the established curriculum of the school, which will be counted towards completion of your degree. Do NOT engage in PAID or UNPAID work off campus without first speaking to the SEVIS Office. *Please see the reverse reference to UNPAID internships*

It is important to emphasize F-1 students have proof of financial support upon arrival to KSU, thus negating the need to work off campus solely for money. Therefore, no CPT or internship is approved for the purpose of supporting oneself financially. F-1 students are designed to complete their program and if necessary and authorized, may gain curricular training associated with their major. **The only time a student may have an internship is if they are concurrently enrolled in a(n internship) course showing they will receive academic credit during the time they are working or if the degree requires the training inclusive of all students in that major.** This satisfies the regulation for USCIS that a student is gaining work experience for academic purposes rather than for financial support. CPT taken without integrated coursework does not sustain F-1 nonimmigrant status at KSU. The internship sought must be a part of the degree requirements, such as a mandatory training course or a free elective inclusive of the degree.

**Eligibility to engage in CPT:** You must be a degree candidate who has been full time in lawful status for at least one academic year (a fall and spring) prior to requesting CPT. Students who are incoming from OPT (or any break in study) must wait the 2 consecutive full time semesters before applying for CPT. Student may enroll in part time CPT during Spring and Fall semesters and Full time in Summer, unless otherwise approved or required by the department. Internship sites must be within 50 miles of the campus.

**Your specific training opportunity must fall into one of the following categories:**

* **CATEGORY 1:** Satisfies an internship requirement expected of ALL students in your program and necessary for the completion of the degree, such as Education, Social Work, or Nursing.

* **CATEGORY 2:** Satisfies an internship elective which counts towards completion of your degree. You may wish to contact your department to see if an internship elective is available before beginning the CPT enrollment procedure. You must be able to register in the course elective and the course must be listed in the KSU catalog stating in the official course description that it is specifically designed to allow students enrolled in the course to engage in internships, practical training, or course work off campus.

* **CATEGORY 3:** Satisfies a thesis or dissertation requirement expected of ALL masters or doctoral students in your program and necessary for the completion of the degree.

**CPT PROCESS:** You must plan in advance for CPT. The SEVIS office generally does not approve CPT after the first 2 weeks of start of class. CPT taken with academic coursework should be approved by the department or the Career Center and registered for before drop/add ends in the semester which the course is taken. The student must then have their I-20 authorized in the SEVIS Office. The “authorized” CPT period must be completed during the same semester. Each department can use their own policies/discretion when renewing CPT for a following consecutive semester. In addition, CPT must be renewed on the I-20 EACH semester it is used. Students who do not renew their I-20 authorization during each consecutive CPT period are in violation of USCIS regulation.

**What to submit to the SEVIS office:**

1) proof of internship, self-study, or special topics class registration
2) a copy of the course catalog description OR class agreement
3) a copy of the offer letter from the job site

See reverse side for important information
Duration Restrictions: US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regulations do not place an absolute limit on the amount of consecutive CPT you may utilize. However, you must be able to enroll each semester in a qualifying course, or be in a continuing course. **NOTE:** If you participate for twelve months or more of FULLTIME CPT you will not be eligible for optional practical training (OPT) post graduation. KSU generally does not allow multiple fulltime CPT periods.

**Fulltime vs Part time:** CPT is always part-time during the academic year (Fall and Spring, max of 20 hrs/wk) unless the student is engaged in doctoral dissertation research and has completed all degree requirements except the dissertation. CPT may be full time (40 hrs/wk) during the annual vacation periods or if required by the Department. Summer is not considered a vacation period if you are in your final semester and will graduate in summer. **NOTE:** Full time CPT is only authorized if it is a requirement of the department or elective course to gain your grade.

**I am in my final semester:** If you are a student in your final semester, you must be registered for at least 3 credits of inclusive coursework that applies to your degree. An extension of graduation cannot be granted for the purpose of pursuing CPT or additional CPT. Students in their final semester who are taking internship, must remain within 50 miles of KSU and have an on campus presence during the semester. Final semester internships in the summer are regulated at 20 hrs per week, unless the department requires fulltime participation.

**SUMMER SEMESTER:** Usually summer is a “break/vacation” session. However, students who begin their program on F1 visa during summer or who choose to graduate in summer are subject to restrictions as if it were Spring or Fall session, meaning working only 20 hours per week and only 3 credits online with a once per (or EO) week attendance to campus.

**When may I start my internship?** Do not begin CPT employment until after your SEVIS record has been updated and a SEVIS I-20 has been printed with approved employment dates indicated on it, and you have picked it up. The endorsement will indicate the precise details of the authorized training, including in SEVIS, the name and location of the employer, the specific dates of the training period, and whether it is full-time or part-time. If you are in a PAID position, do not begin CPT employment until you have received your Social Security Card. For instructions on how to obtain a SS#, please visit the SEVIS office.

**Do I need CPT if I am UNPAID or Volunteering?** If you are offered an UNPAID internship or volunteer position, please see the SEVIS Office. All internships, PAID or UNPAID must be documented in a monitored school program prior to beginning work. You must adhere to the regulations addressed in this handout and be enrolled in an internship course to participate in off campus unpaid training* Please see the below reference from the Code of Federal Regulation:

3.37.1 CPT and unpaid training
Although the CPT regulations permit employment connected with curricular practical training, CPT should not be looked at simply as a form of "work authorization." SEVP’s online DSO training states that "Compensation is not a consideration when determining whether an opportunity qualifies as CPT." In fact, NAFSA has received reports from the field that in response to individual inquiries, some government officials have stated that if a training opportunity meets the definition of curricular practical training, CPT should be given regardless of whether the student will be paid.

Labor laws must also be taken into account when assessing unpaid training opportunities. These laws govern what kinds of activities constitute "employment" for which minimum wages must be paid. A student who engages in an unpaid activity that would constitute "employment" under labor laws would be seen as having been "employed." The “employer” in this case would risk having to pay fines and provide back pay under labor laws, as well as possible fines and IRCA/I-9 penalties. The student would risk his or her immigration status if the activity were not covered by an authorization such as CPT or OPT.

**Also, please make sure to keep ALL original copies of any CPT I-20’s given to you. These will be required for future USCIS applications such for H1B’s and PR.**

QUESTIONS? SEVIS@KENNESAW.EDU 678-915-5293 or 470-578-3165

Kennesaw State University
Division of Global Affairs