OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT) FOR F-1 STATUS INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Rules for Holding a Paid Internship in the United States

An international student in F-1 status can obtain permission from ISSO to undertake an off-campus internship in the US if the internship is considered Curricular Practical Training (CPT). CPT, in the context of the MIA and MPA degree programs, is authorization for off-campus, often paid (but not always paid) employment that fulfills a degree requirement. NOTE: Off-campus internships may still need CPT authorization even if unpaid or uncompensated per F-1 international student regulations.

Eligibility and Requirements to Engage in CPT

An international student in F-1 status cannot receive pay for off-campus work in the US unless and until the ISSO has processed the appropriate application and granted permission on a new I-20. It is your responsibility to understand the rules of your status and have the proper documents in order by proactively consulting with the ISSO. For more information, please visit the ISSO website at https://isso.columbia.edu/content/f-1-cpt-curricular-practical-training or contact them at isso@columbia.edu or 212-854-3587.

F-1 students must be enrolled full-time for two consecutive semesters and be a full-time student in F-1 status at the time of CPT application before they can accept off-campus US internships. You must be offered an internship in the US that satisfies the SIPA internship requirement expected of students in two-year MPA and MIA programs (see OCS website) and necessary for completion of your degree.

You CANNOT begin work until your CPT form has been approved by both OCS and ISSO. Therefore, the start date listed on your CPT form must be post-dated. You should allow at least 10 business days for ISSO processing. CPT approval cannot be granted retroactively.

CPT + INTERNSHIP START + END DATES

You must begin your internship by the Monday of the seventh week of the fall or spring semesters or by the last day of July for the summer semester. During the academic terms, you must work a minimum of 10 hours per week and a maximum of 20 hours per week. During the summer break, you may work full-time. The internship start/end dates must fall within the following academic term dates:

CONTINUING STUDENTS
Fall semester: September 1 – December 31
Spring semester: January 1 – May 31
Summer semester: End of final exams period – August 31

GRADUATING STUDENTS
Fall semester: September 1 – Official last day of semester (refer to Academic Calendar)
Spring semester: January 1 – Official last day of semester (refer to Academic Calendar)

CPT APPLICATION PROCESS

* The application process does not apply to students in the MPA-EPM, MPA-DP, and MPA-ESP program. These departments will approve CPT forms for students in this program.

STEP 1: If you are applying for CPT for the first time, determine which section you will register in for the SIPA U9013 internship course. Most F-1 students will register in the 0-credit section (section 003), to preserve up to 3 credits for additional semesters of CPT.******

Students may earn a maximum of 3 internship credits during their degree program, which includes any credits associated with CPT. When registering for credit that is tied to CPT, you must have completed the first 1.5 credit internship and received a grade BEFORE you will be allowed to register for a second 1.5 credit CPT.

First Semester of CPT: You are not required to receive credit in SIPA U9013 sections 001 (1.5 credits) or 002 (3 credits) for your first CPT since the internship will fulfill a degree requirement. You may instead register in section 003 for 0 credits.

Students should register for SIPA U9013 in the fall semester if the internship is completed in the summer or fall; if the internship is completed in the spring semester, students should register in the spring.

Registration exception: For summer internships, if you are registering your first CPT in sections 001 (1.5 credits) or 002 (3 credits), you must pre-register in the prior spring semester <u>or</u> upcoming fall semester, as there is no summer registration.

**Second or Third Semester of CPT: If a second or third CPT is secured, you MUST register in sections 001 (1.5 credits), 002 (3 credits) of SIPA U9013. This is because the internship degree requirement has already been fulfilled and now any internships completed with CPT will count as electives.

Registration exception: Once again, for summer internships, if you are registering your first CPT in sections 001 (1.5 credits), 002 (3 credits), or 003 (0 credits), you must pre-register in the prior spring semester <u>or</u> upcoming fall semester, as there is no summer registration.

To register for internship credit, students should register during the standard registration period in SSOL or by visiting the Office of Student Affairs.

STEP 2: You must complete Part 1 and Part 2 of the CPT Request Form and bring it to SIPA OCS with a letter offering internship employment from your employer printed on employer's letterhead including:

- o beginning and ending dates of employment
- o how many hours you will work weekly
- o a description of duties in sufficient detail to clearly show them as appropriate to meeting the requirements for your degree
- o location of the company or organization where employment will take place

OCS will not sign the CPT form without all of the above information stated clearly in the offer letter. If OCS can approve your CPT application, we will complete Part 3 of the CPT Request Form and return it to you so that you can submit your application in its entirety to ISSO for authorization (see Step 3 of application process, below.)

STEP 3: Submit the below documents in-person to ISSO during ISSO walk-in hours or email to ISSO as a single PDF file at ISSO-opt@columbia.edu for processing as early as 90 days but no less than 10 days before you wish to begin employment.

- o CPT Request Form completed by you and signed by SIPA OCS
- o your complete offer letter with all required information
- o your passport and most recent I-94 card

The International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) staff will then:

- o Review your application for eligibility.
- o If you are eligible, update your SEVIS record to authorize your CPT, print a new SEVIS I-20 form indicating the approved employment and give it to you. Your employer will need to see this authorization along with your passport and I-94 form to put you on the payroll.

You may engage in CPT only after your SEVIS record has been updated by an ISSO adviser to reflect CPT authorization and a SEVIS I-20 has been printed, indicating the approved CPT. The endorsement will indicate the precise details of the authorized training, including the name and location of the employer, the specific dates of the training period, and whether it is full-time or part-time.

We encourage you to contact an adviser at the ISSO at https://isso.columbia.edu/content/contact if you still have questions.

ADDITIONAL FAQ

What if I still need to apply for a Social Security Number to be paid for my internship?
After receiving CPT authorization, you will be eligible to apply for an SSN number with a Social Security Office. Please review the information under the Social Security Number Application section of the ISSO website at: https://isso.columbia.edu/content/social-security-number-application. If you still have questions, you may contact the ISSO.