

F-1 Graduate Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Guidelines

WHAT IS CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING (CPT)?

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) defines [Curricular Practical Training](#) as an alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education, or other required practicum that a sponsoring employer offers through cooperative agreements with your school. CPT is **NOT** a way for students to earn money while attending school, to help secure a job after graduation, or to start OPT early.

- CPT must occur **before** a student's I-20 program end date.
- CPT **must** relate directly to a student's major area of study and be an integral part of the school's established curriculum and can be full-time (more than 20 hours per week) or part-time.
- Students must secure the training opportunity **before** CPT can be authorized.
- CPT can be approved for a student's final semester only if they are enrolled full-time (**Exception**: students with an **approved** reduced course load, "RCL").
- CPT **cannot** be approved for students that have completed all program requirements for their degree and are seeking to delay the completion of their academic program.
- CPT **cannot** be used as a reason for program extension. Students with approved program extensions are ineligible for CPT.

CPT CRITERIA

Current graduate programs of study at Florida Polytechnic University do not have a course that requires an internship. However, graduate students may request CPT after completing one academic year (one fall and one spring semester) at their current education level, if they have secured an internship and meet the requirements listed below. If approved, students must enroll in the required course **EGN 5911 Research**.

- F-1 students must meet prerequisites for this course to apply for CPT, if not, they must obtain [Course Enrollment Permission](#) from the applicable faculty member.

ENROLLMENT: Students must be enrolled for one academic year (one Fall and Spring term) to participate in CPT.

- **Transfer students** who have completed one academic in their current education level at their previous school, or one academic year between their previous school and Florida Poly, may meet the one academic year requirement this way.

PART-TIME vs. FULL-TIME CPT: DSOs will authorize up to 12 months of CPT (per request) for eligible students.

- Students who participate in over 12 months of **full-time** CPT are **ineligible** for OPT at the same degree level.

TERMS CPT CAN BE USED: CPT can be approved for the fall, spring, or summer semesters.

- While full-time enrollment is required for fall and spring, the **summer semesters** are not.

CPT EXTENSIONS: Students may request an extension **after** completing their initial CPT internship.

- Students must submit a CPT Request per extension and be re-enrolled into EGN 5911.

F-1 Graduate Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Guidelines

HOW TO APPLY FOR CPT

Complete [Graduate CPT course](#) in CANVAS and obtain CPT Request form upon completion.

EMPLOYER REQUIREMENTS:

Internship offer letters are required and crucial to authorizing CPT. Letters **must** be on official letterhead, signed and provide all required information. Please see [CPT Employment Offer Letter Example](#).

UNPAID INTERNSHIPS vs. VOLUNTEERING:

There is a difference between volunteering and an unpaid internship. F-1 students engaging in an unpaid internship off- campus **MUST** utilize and be eligible for CPT, or Pre-Completion OPT Training. If you are uncertain if an internship is considered unpaid employment or a form of volunteering, **please contact your DSO**, to ensure you do not violate the terms of your F-1 visa.

- **Volunteering** refers to donating time to an organization whose **primary purpose is charitable or humanitarian in nature**, without remuneration or any other type of compensation, and the activity is **unrelated** to the student's field of study or intended profession (e.g., donating time with the American Red Cross, working in a homeless shelter).
 - F-1 students are authorized to engage in volunteer work as long as it **meets the criteria** for civically charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise expectation or receipt of compensation.
 - Students **meeting** this requirement do **not** require CPT authorization but **must** provide a statement from the organization verifying the volunteer position and expectations (**all** criteria must be met for approval).
- **Unpaid internships** do **not** typically qualify as "volunteer" work. Internships, both paid and unpaid, are primarily offered by the private sector and related to the intern's field of study.
 - [The U.S. Department of Labor](#) has guidelines for unpaid internships; although the internship may include actual operation on the facilities of the employer, it must be similar to training given in an educational environment and be an experiential learning opportunity for the intern.
 - **If your unpaid internship is related to your field of study, and does not meet the parameters of volunteering, you will still require CPT approval.**