

CPT and OPT Comparison
College of Arts and Sciences & Maxwell School
February 2025

| | Curricular Practical Training (CPT) | Optional Practical Training (OPT) |
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| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide work experience directly related and integral to a student's degree of study, for example, internship • Not intended for general, ongoing work authorization | Temporary employment that is directly related to an F-1 student's major area of study |
| Type of Job | <p>Two types of internships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • required as part of a degree program, no need to register for academic credit • not required but considered integral to academic experience, must register for at least one credit per semester <p>Any internship, even if it is unpaid, requires CPT authorization at SU</p> | Part time or full-time employment within the field of study |
| Work Hours per Week | Part time (up to 20 hours) or full time (more than 20 hours) | Must be at least 20 hours per week |
| Student Eligibility | Must be degree seeking in valid F-1-status and have been a full-time student for one academic year | Must be degree seeking in valid F-1-status and have been a full-time student for one academic year |
| When to Apply | After receiving an internship offer letter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Completion OPT: 90 days prior to the employment start date with a job offer letter • Post-Completion OPT: 90 days prior to graduation or up to 60 days after graduation with or without a job offer letter |
| Processing Time | 3 to 5 days at the SU Center for International Services | 90 to 120 days at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) |
| Cost | None | \$470 (online application); \$520 (paper application); \$1,685 (premium processing) |
| Duration | A student will be ineligible for OPT if he/she participates in greater than 364 days of full time CPT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 12 months (can be unpaid employment) • An additional 24 months for students in the STEM fields (must be paid employment) • All periods of pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the available period of post-completion OPT • Maximum unemployment period is 90 days from the OPT start date |
| Academic Course with Internship Credit | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAS270, PAF270, PSC317 • CAS490 (experience credit) with a faculty sponsor • Major credit through academic department, coded with the abbreviation of major (270 for lower division credit or 470 for upper; with a faculty sponsor) | N/A |