

F-1 Curricular Practical Training Internship Opportunities for International Students

F-1 International students must not pursue any off-campus employment without proper authorization. Such authorization must be received **before** beginning any off-campus work, internship, or related employment activity.

IMPORTANT: F-1 students who accumulate 12 months (365 or more days) of full-time CPT authorization lose eligibility for Optional Practical Training (OPT). Part-time CPT authorization, or fewer than 12 months of full-time CPT authorization, does not affect OPT eligibility. Multiple overlapping, part-time CPTs may count as full-time CPT days for OPT eligibility.

Curricular Practical Training Definition: Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a type of work authorization that allows F-1 international students to participate in paid/unpaid off-campus academic internships. The purpose of CPT is academic (not just for employment purposes); the internship must be considered an integral part of a student's degree program and must *directly* correlate to their degree program of study.

Work integrated learning can include:

- Employment
- Internship Experience (paid or unpaid)
- Cooperative (co-op) education work experience
- Practicum work participation

CPT work authorization can be:

- Part-time (20 hours per week or less)
- Full-time (more than 20 hours per week)

Valid F-1 Student Status:

- Must have properly maintained F-1 status each academic quarter.
- Must be enrolled at full-time status for the academic quarter they wish to pursue CPT.
- In general: F-1 students must be registered **full-time**.

Full-Time Enrollment Undergraduate Level: 12 credits

- Three (3) Residential/Hybrid courses and 1 online course is allowed each academic quarter to meet the minimum full-time enrollment requirements as an undergraduate F-1 student.

Full-Time Enrollment Graduate Level: 6 credits

- One (1) Residential/Hybrid course and 1 online course is allowed each academic quarter to meet the full-time enrollment requirements as a graduate F-1 student.

Exceptions to the Full-Time requirement for F-1 students:

- Reduced Course Load (RCL) for Specific Academic Reasons.
- Reduced Course Load (RCL) for a Documented Medical Condition.
- Reduced Course Load (RCL) for Final Quarter Registration.
- Doctoral students who are completing their Thesis/Dissertation Credits.

- Students who attended another school in the U.S. as an F-1 student and transferred their SEVIS record to Sofia. These students must submit copies of their previous school's I-20 and official transcripts to dso@sofia.edu for review.
- During Sofia's period of online instruction due to COVID-19, students are permitted to work remotely at home in the U.S. or abroad by employer request/approval.

CPT Eligibility: F-1 students need to be aware that *any* unauthorized work could jeopardize completion of their degree program and any future visas they would otherwise be entitled to obtain. In general, international students may participate in the university internship program if they meet the following criteria:

- I. You are a student enrolled in a graduate degree program – For all master's and doctoral level degrees at Sofia University (including those granted to domestic students), internships are an integral part of the training.
- II. Students must have been in F-1 student status for at least one full academic year in a degree-seeking program before they can apply for Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at Sofia University.
- III. Prospective F-1 students who have been enrolled full-time at a college or university in the **U.S.** for at least **one academic year** (one academic year at Sofia is defined as three full-time quarters per the academic calendar) in the following, master's degree programs **DO NOT** need to fulfill the one-year academic requirement to apply for CPT:
 - **Master of Science in Computer Science – MSCS – STEM Cip Code 11.0701.**
 - **Master's in Business Administration – MBA – Cip Code 52.0201.**
- IV. As previously stated, an exception to the academic year rule is provided for F-1 graduate students whose programs require *immediate* participation in WIL. The program requirement must be for *all students* in the program and listed in the degree program's curriculum description as stated in the Sofia Academic Catalog.
- V. In order to obtain approval to participate in an internship, you must be able to show that your curricular practical training *directly* relates to your major area of study. When a student files a **CPT Authorization Request**, this application will be reviewed by a qualified Internship Faculty Advisor. The Internship Faculty Advisor will review the proposed internship experience and sign-off if it adequately correlates with and supports the training objectives of the student's degree program.
- VI. All internship participants must maintain a **3.0 GPA** throughout their participation in internships, with certain limited exceptions.
- VII. For those students unable to find a placement in the first quarter, the university will assist in locating a placement; will help a student to find an appropriate substitute internship; or suggest the filing of a temporary waiver.
- VIII. CPT Approval Requirements for F-1 students:
 - Must remain in good academic standing, **3.0 GPA or above.**
 - Must have an employment/training offer related to their major area of study.
 - Must have a specific job/internship offer.
 - Must complete and submit a *Request for CPT Form*, job offer letter and a Cooperative Agreement Form **each academic quarter.**