

MSCS/MBA Work Integrated Learning (WIL) Internship Program

Purpose of the Sofia Internship Program

As part of Sofia University's mission, we support the pursuit of academic excellence for students interested in traditional employment in the US and participation in entrepreneurial ventures. We not only offer all students an opportunity for experiential learning work through internships, but also require them as part of the academic training process.

Students enrolled in the MSCS or MBA program have the opportunity to work with startup companies, venture capital firms, and associated corporate environments. Those in the program will have the chance to capitalize flourishing technological and business innovations in the US and will demonstrate their scholarly aptitude through experiential learning. Therefore, we believe that students enrolled at Sofia will acquire valuable real-world knowledge through these internships.

Overall, our degree programs rely on modernized curricula and communication competency, relevant to the field (rather than utilizing older, text-based forms of instruction). However, we respect the traditional approach to higher education which includes research, the identification of best practices, and the dissemination of high-quality academic and professional analysis. With these variables combined, the educational focus of our programs in business administration and computer science helps students transition seamlessly into their professional roles and gives them the confidence to pursue their goals.

With an emphasis on specialized areas tailored to the US market needs, students are actively encouraged to collaborate with relevant local industry firms early in their academic journey.

As an institution that has arisen historically from a rich background in humanistic and transpersonal theory, we at Sofia promote the training of degree candidates who will, in their professional lives and endeavors, seek to make the world a better and more compassionate place for all to live in.

As such, the hallmarks of advanced education at Sofia University include:

- Respect for people and business practices, while serving as a force for good.
- A recognition of the concept "B Corps" as the preferred business model that adheres to the values of environmental sustainability, equality, human dignity, and the alleviation of suffering where possible and applicable.
- Multicultural awareness through international exchange of scholarly discourse and rapport with students, from around the globe.
- Competency-based courses that utilize innovative instructional methods.
- Cross-disciplinary curricula that encourages students to look beyond their own academic fields and create new possibilities through innovation.
- Programs that meet the high standards of both: Sofia University's Advisory Board (which consists of mainstream Silicon Valley industry leaders) and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

What is an Internship?

In general, an internship is viewed as a structured opportunity for a student to gain new knowledge and experience while in a professional setting. An internship may be paid or unpaid; part-time, or full-time; and can be taken for credit or no credit; towards the student's degree program. This component might be local to the school or in a different location. Internship placements can also take place abroad in an international setting for domestic students.

Internships often have these characteristics in common:

1. They are methodically structured with clearly designated responsibilities.
2. They provide an opportunity to apply classroom theories and concepts to real-world situations.
3. They are meant to be completed in a set period.
4. Well-planned internships set clear goals and objectives that should be achieved while students are engaging in these experiential exercises.
5. Good internships include proper supervision, the opportunity for mentorship, and a constructive feedback method in which participants can learn from more experienced professionals.
6. Ideally, students are provided with the necessary resources and support to transition from academia into their professional field of choice.

What *isn't* part of an Internship?

1. An internship is not work, which primarily involves clerical or unskilled assignments.
2. An internship is not a placement where the primary purpose is to make money.
3. A good internship does not necessarily have to be a paid placement.
4. An internship is not a placement that has no connection to the student's course of study or degree program.
5. An internship is not a place where the student works and receives no training or mentorship.

Internship Course Learning Outcomes: The purpose of an internship course is to enhance a student's academic training with the benefits of related work experience. In this aspect, the traditional gap between academia and the world of competitive employment is shortened. Sofia University is therefore a firm believer in the value of direct work integrated learning (WIL).

As an outcome of their participation in Sofia University's MSCS & MBA Degree Programs, domestic and international students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking, quantitative methods, and verbal communication skills.
2. Employ an entrepreneurial perspective and subsequently utilize innovative problem-solving skills to create industry-relevant applications.
3. Display technical competency, research skills, and leadership ability in their respective professional fields.
4. Exhibit the ability to work effectively in team and group settings to advance professional objectives.
5. Understand and advocate for social responsibility, professional ethics, global diversity, and sustainability in future endeavors.
6. Learn how to apply and properly prepare for interviews and jobs they are interested in.
7. Learn the importance of good communication skills and how to present themselves as professionals and ambassadors of their corporate culture.
8. Develop a better understanding of the business sector they are targeting and learn about competitors in the industry.
9. Acquire a general understanding and appreciation of business processes while simultaneously applying industry-specific techniques to daily work operations.
10. Apply academic concepts, training, and theoretical knowledge to real job situations.
11. Learn how to take on new responsibilities and be accountable for business outcomes.

12. Obtain work experience that makes them more competitive and qualified to take on increasingly challenging assignments.

Curricular Practical Training: Definitions

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)

F-1 Full-Time Enrollment:

- Student must have properly maintained F-1 status each academic quarter.
- Student must be enrolled at full-time status for the academic quarter they wish to pursue CPT.
- In general: F-1 students must be enrolled **full-time**, this is defined:
 - **Undergraduate Level:** Minimum 12 credits (3 residential courses and 1 online course)
 - **Graduate Level:** Minimum 6 credits (1 residential/hybrid course and 1 online course)

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.

WIL-Graduate Programs:

- Master of Science in Computer Science (MSCS) STEM Cip Code 11.0701
- Master of Business Administration (MBA) Cip Code 52.0201

F-1 Qualifications for WIL

- 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 University is defined as three full-time quarters per academic calendar) before they can apply for Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at Sofia University.
- F-1 students who are enrolled in Sofia's **MSCS and MBA** degree programs that require an internship course or practicum hours within their first year of study must follow the program curriculum requirements as stated in the Sofia Catalog.

- F-1 students applying from abroad do not qualify for the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) at Sofia University. The initial F-1 student must successfully complete 3 academic quarters to receive CPT/Internship approval from the International office
- F-1 students who successfully who have been enrolled full-time at a college or university in the U.S. for at least **one academic year** but have obtained an initial Sofia I-20 given that their previous I-20 got completed or terminated must successfully complete 3 academic quarters to receive CPT/Internship approval.

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.**

Attendance Policies

- **Online Attendance:** Online classes record all activities of a student during the quarter. Students have ten weeks to complete an online course. Failure to complete course requirements will result in a failing grade, and the student may be required to retake said course. Students who are absent for **two or more weeks** (as evidenced by no engagement with the course hosted by the Learning Management System) will receive a failing grade. Required engagement may vary from course to course, but generally consists of posting to discussion boards, exchanging emails of a substantive nature about course content with the instructor, completing reviews of audio-taped lectures, submitting weekly assignments etc.
- **Campus Attendance:** Students are expected to attend all campus-based course meetings as scheduled and complete all assigned coursework. If the student anticipates any absence during the quarter, they should ask permission from the instructor as early as possible. Students must maintain a minimum of **70% attendance** for each course in each quarter. However, this policy does not imply that students should plan to miss class sessions; it simply acknowledges that circumstances may sometimes prevent students from attending a particular scheduled session.
- Students in danger of falling below the minimum attendance requirement must communicate with the Office of the Registrar to arrange attendance make up session(s) registrar@sofia.edu
- Students who fail to maintain regular attendance may be terminated from their degree program and/or receive a failing grade for the course. Students who receive a failing grade may be required to retake said course.

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

1st occurrence: The student **must maintain a cumulative 3.0 GPA** or above to receive part-time/full-time CPT approval every academic quarter.

The **first time** an F-1 student does not meet Good Academic Standing (2.99 GPA or lower), he/she will receive an official written notice of their probation status and will be advised to seek academic guidance from Student Services/Registrar. The F-1 student placed on Academic Probation will also receive a written warning detailing how probation status may impact a student's immigration status/internship eligibility.

CPT Eligibility based on a cumulative GPA score:

- **2.99 - 2.5 GPA** – The student can continue with full-time or part-time CPT with the expectation of significantly increasing their overall GPA score and/or making significant academic progress towards their GPA.

- **2.49 - 2.00 GPA** – The student can only be permitted to engage in part-time CPT with the expectation of significantly increasing their overall GPA score and/or making significant academic progress towards their GPA.
- **1.99 or below GPA** – The student automatically loses all CPT privileges.

The **second occurrence** may result in loss of eligibility to participate in CPT or off- campus work authorization. If the student's GPA continues to drop their cumulative GPA score below a 3.0, any prior CPT approval may be officially withdrawn.

The student is placed on Academic Probation, he/she has two quarters from the time that he/she is placed on academic probation to achieve Sofia's GPA requirement (as defined above). If a student is unable to meet SAP requirements within two quarters, then the student will be dismissed from the program.

- **2.99 - 2.5 GPA** – If the student increases GPA to a minimum of **2.8 GPA**, staff/faculty/dso can review their part-time /full-time CPT eligibility. The student may be approved for full-time or part-time CPT with the expectation of significantly increasing their overall GPA score and/or making significant academic progress towards their GPA.
- **Below 2.5 GPA** – The student automatically loses all CPT privileges.

The **Third occurrence** will result in dismissal of F-1 students from the program and will be subject to SEVIS record termination and lose all CPT privileges.

Internship Limitations for F-1 Students Enrolled:

- An F-1 international student is not permitted under any circumstances to engage in unauthorized employment until they have officially received an approved CPT I-20 from their designated school official (DSO).
- The F-1 student is approved to work for a specific employer and for a specific time (approved each quarter); a student's work shall not exceed their I-20 program end date.
- Students are not permitted to change employers during the quarter in which the Internship/CPT was approved. However, special circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and by an in-office/virtual appointment with the DSO and/or Student Services.
- If a Domestic/International student changes employer during the academic term (after the add-drop period has passed), the student must immediately notify their DSO, Student Services and/or Internship Faculty Advisor to request the employment change to update their employment student record. The student will be requested to complete a Request for CPT Form/Internship Request Form signed and approved by their Faculty Internship Advisor. If an F-1 student, they must also submit a new completed Cooperative Agreement from their new internship opportunity.
- **IMPORTANT:** F-1 students who accumulate 12 months (365 or more days) of full-time CPT authorization lose their 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.

Offer Letter Requirements

The employment offer letter MUST include the following details:

- Company Logo
- Current Date
- Student's name, ID number, and residential address
- Position offered by the associated company
- Start date to end date of said position (For an F-1 student this is an integral part and must NOT be overlooked—if the student is unable to provide this information, the DSO will not be able to approve CPT)

- Name, title, and signature of direct supervisor
- Internship site physical/ mailing address
- Paid/Unpaid status
- Rate of pay/compensation (if applicable)
- Title and working hours per week
- Comprehensive list of job responsibilities