

# Student Guide to Curricular Practical Training (CPT) & Co-op

Presented by Office of International Services and Cooperative Education



The Office of International Services and Cooperative Education work together to provide F-1 international students the opportunity to pursue off-campus practical training during their academic career at NCSU. All international students wishing to engage in off campus training, (including internship, Co-op, paid research, etc.) must complete the application process for both CPT and Co-op before beginning work.

## What is Curricular Practical Training (CPT)?

CPT is a type of employment authorization for students in F-1 status who wish or need to engage in off-campus employment in their field of study when it is a required component of their curriculum, is integral to their thesis or dissertation research (e.g., collecting data or testing hypotheses in a real world industry environment) or part of a cooperative education program in their field of study.

## What is Cooperative Education (Co-op)?

Cooperative Education is an opportunity for NCSU students to participate in an optional program that integrates academic study with related job experience. It provides the chance to develop career related skills while building professional competence and interpersonal skills in a professional work environment.

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**NC State Co-op Office**  
 2100 Pullen Hall  
 (phone) 919.515.2300 (fax) 919.515.7444  
[http://www.ncsu.edu/co-op\\_ed](http://www.ncsu.edu/co-op_ed)

## OIS Information about CPT

**CPT Eligibility Requirements and Regulations** Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a type of employment authorization for students in F-1 status who wish or need to engage in off-campus employment in their field of study when it is a required component of their curriculum, is integral to their thesis or dissertation research (e.g., collecting data or testing hypotheses in a real world industry environment) or part of a co-operative education program in their field of study. Advisors at the Office of International Services (OIS) at NC State are responsible for either authorizing CPT (or recommending Optional Practical Training) for F-1 students if they are statutorily eligible and if the employment is appropriate. We are committed to facilitating such employment when it is possible and are equally committed to upholding both the integrity of academic programs at NC State and regulatory compliance. CPT is authorized by OIS only in conjunction with Co-op approval (and subsequent Co-op registration) along with a recommendation from the student's academic advisor. CPT is authorized on a semester-by-semester basis and any extensions require reapplication and a summary report of the preceding CPT experience. It is important for students to remember that **CPT is a benefit of the F-1 visa status, not a right**. F-1 students who engage in unauthorized employment will be considered to be out of status and ineligible for any nonimmigrant benefits.

*What is the difference between CPT and OPT?* Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a benefit that allows F-1 students to engage in off-campus employment – directly related to their major field of study - either before or after completion of studies for the purpose of gaining real-world experience. The major **difference** between OPT and CPT is whether or not the "employment" is an integral component of the student's current academic program or part of a co-op experience. Employment that does not meet all CPT requirements may still be possible with OPT. Students who wish to work off campus, but where the employment is not eligible for Co-op or if there is a prohibition about freely discussing the Co-op activities with the academic advisor, should apply for OPT at least 3 months before the proposed employment begin date. Pre-completion OPT time is deducted from one's total period, but OPT does not have the same standard of proof regarding the integral relationship to one's academic program. **Note:** If a student has engaged in more than 12 months of full-time CPT during his/her F-1 career, the student becomes ineligible for any OPT.

## Requirements

- Students must attend the Co-op/CPT information session (held by OIS and Co-op)
- Students must be matriculated into a degree program at NC State University
- Students must meet the minimum GPA requirements for Co-op participation (minimum GPA 3.0 for graduate students and 2.5 for undergraduate students)
- Students must have been enrolled for at least one academic year and be in lawful F-1 status before becoming eligible for CPT in his/her field of study
- Students must obtain a recommendation from the academic department
- CPT positions must be temporary intern/Co-op positions in the student's field of study and be directly related to their current academic program (plan of work/research/thesis)
- **Employment must not interfere with or delay the completion of academic program**
- Prior to approval of full-time summer CPT student must register/enroll for the subsequent fall semester
- Students must have completed a minimum of at least ONE semester in their curriculum (department) at NC State before being authorized for CPT
- CPT employment must be authorized by OIS through the issuance of a new I-20 **BEFORE** the student can begin off-campus employment
- Employment is employer/position/site/duty specific - for a specific company, between specific dates, at a particular location, and specified as part-time or full-time employment.
- CPT students **MUST** not be prevented from discussing their Co-op activities with their academic advisor because of a company's non-disclosure agreement

CPT is revoked or cancelled if the student violates his or her status, abandons his or her program, completes his or her program, changes nonimmigrant visa status, is suspended or on academic warning/probation, etc. No changes may be made to the CPT authorization without written pre-authorization from both OIS and the Co-op office.

## Limits

CPT may either be full-time or part-time (part-time Co-ops are limited to 20 hours of Co-op employment maximum per week **AND** full-time course registration). OIS defers to the academic department to provide the justification of how the proposed employment is an important or integral part of the student's degree program.

- **Full-time CPT during the fall or spring semesters is only possible if the practical training is a requirement of the student's degree program or an integral part of the student's thesis or dissertation.**
- Part-time CPT during the fall or spring semesters is possible with the recommendation from the academic advisor that the Co-op experience will supplement the student's full-time course load.
- International students at NC State are limited to a combined total of 20 hours of employment during the academic year (inclusive of on-campus and any CPT). Students may be eligible for employment beyond 20 hours per week under CPT during the academic year if the CPT is justified because it is a requirement of the academic program or integral to the student's thesis or dissertation.

CPT authorization is only possible with a recommendation from the academic advisor/DGP and confirmation that the practical training will not delay the student's degree completion. CPT authorizations are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If the academic advisor is not able to provide the recommendation, the student will need to apply for a different employment authorization, such as pre-completion OPT.

**Students who wish to engage in off-campus employment late in their program or after defending a thesis/dissertation should apply for Optional Practical Training. If a summer term is student's final term of enrollment required to satisfy program requirements, then summer is not considered a vacation term and full-time CPT will likely not be permitted.** If a student is not eligible for CPT, OPT may be an alternative and appropriate type of employment eligibility. USCIS processing times vary so applications should be submitted with sufficient time before the proposed beginning date of employment. OPT may not begin until a valid Employment Authorization Document is in hand.

*\*\*\*Do not assume that a CPT approved for a summer session will automatically be approved for the fall semester (or that a fall CPT will automatically be approved for the following spring semester.) Each semester of CPT is a separate authorization which requires a new application. Renewals or extensions (including issuance of a new I-20) must be completed **before** continuing to work beyond the authorized dates on the I-20.*

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ ID#: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Day Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Curriculum/Major: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Level:  BA/BS  MA/MS (Non-thesis)  MA/MS (Thesis)  PhD  
 (Expected) final semester (when academic **enrollment** requirements will be met) : \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Expected) date of final thesis defense (if thesis): \_\_\_\_\_  
 List previous semesters of CPT: \_\_\_\_\_

You must attach an offer letter that includes specific begin and end dates, job title and a job description from the company which outlines the duties and expectations. The offer letter needs to be on company letterhead. Generic letters will not be accepted. Please complete this form and give it (and your offer letter) to your academic advisor.

Company Name \_\_\_\_\_ Company Website \_\_\_\_\_

**Your** site of activity address at company:

Street/Building: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Company Supervisor – Name \_\_\_\_\_ Company Supervisor – Email \_\_\_\_\_

Company Supervisor – Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Company Supervisor – Fax \_\_\_\_\_

Position Title (of Co-op/CPT position): \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed Begin Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Proposed End Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Is this position Part-time (20 hours/week or less) or Full-time (more than 20 hours/week)?  PT  FT

Please describe in your own words the primary duties/activities/responsibilities of this position.

Please briefly describe below (or on attached paper) your academic objectives and goals for this Co-op position, and how it is a practical application and extension of the theoretical coursework that you have taken.

**\*\*Masters non-thesis students planning to do a part-time Co-op during the academic semester (fall/spring) must register for a full-time course load. Please list the course numbers and credits that you will be registered for during the Co-op rotation here:**

I certify that I have read and understand the requirements for CPT; I believe that I am eligible for CPT; the application I am submitting is correct and complete; this proposed/requested Co-op is integral to my academic program; **I have read and understand the "LIMITS" section of this packet (pg. 2) and understand the hours limitations of CPT employment and this employment conforms to those limits;** I will discuss the Co-op activity with my academic advisor, and I will submit the Summary Report to my advisor, Co-op office, and OIS.

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Academic Advisor's Recommendation Form for CPT (F-1 Co-op)**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID#: \_\_\_\_\_

The above student is requesting Curricular Practical Training (CPT) - Co-op in his/her field of study. In order for OIS to authorize the CPT, it is necessary for us to ascertain the student's eligibility to engage in off-campus employment at this point in his/her program (please see footnote below). Please review the student's application, Co-op offer letter and check the boxes below and sign this form. Thank you.

**UG Advisor/DGP Certification (must initial):**

I certify that the student named above has maintained fulltime enrollment and is making good academic progress. I have read the student's job description, support the student's academic objectives, and recommend this CPT/Co-op. **This Co-op position will not delay this student's degree completion and is within the employment LIMITS allowable for international students (if necessary, please review the LIMITS section on page 2 of the CPT instructions).** The student is not prevented by contract from discussing the work with me and the student is expected to provide me with a copy of the summary report, and incorporate the lessons learned from the Co-op position in his/her academic program/thesis. \_\_\_\_\_ **(UG Advisor/DGP initial here)**

(Expected) final semester (when academic **enrollment** requirements will be met) : \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Expected) date of final thesis defense (if thesis): \_\_\_\_\_

**Please confirm below how the proposed practical training is an important part of the student's academic program and extension of the coursework the student has already taken.** You may also offer any additional comments or restrictions at the bottom of this form. (If you determine that this opportunity is beneficial, but not an important part of the student's current academic program/thesis, please encourage the student to consider Optional Practical Training instead.)

**UG Advisor/DGP please check the applicable box below (please choose at least one option):**

- This (part-time or full-time) employment is a required part of the degree program.
- This (part-time or full-time) employment is an integral component of this student's thesis (please state thesis topic):  
\_\_\_\_\_
- This part-time (may be full-time during vacation semester) employment is an extension of coursework this student has already completed (please list at least 3 courses that the student has already completed below) and will supplement a full-time course load for this student (employment is limited to part-time during fall/spring semesters but may be full-time with COP 500 enrollment during summer if summer is not student's final term of required enrollment in academic program)  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Advisor's Signature (Primary Coordinator of Advising for undergraduates or Chair of Thesis Committee):**

Advisor's/Chair's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Dept: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Advisor's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comment:

**Signature from Director of Graduate Programs (DGP) - required for all Graduate Students:**

DGP Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Dept: \_\_\_\_\_  
 DGP Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Curricular Practical Training is intended for required internships, cooperative education experience, off-campus research necessary for a thesis or dissertation, etc. Please consult the OIS website or an OIS advisor for more information, questions, or concerns. Thank you for your assistance – please return this form to the student or fax (515-1402)/e-mail (ois@ncsu.edu) to OIS. Updated Feb 2011*

## Supplemental CPT Information for Employers

Thank you for your interest and support in hiring one or more international students from NC State to engage in a Co-op position with your company. The Office of International Services (OIS) at NC State is very supportive of those students who are both interested in and meet the eligibility requirements to engage in Co-ops as an integral component of their academic programs and we appreciate your participation in this important educational experience. OIS works closely with the Co-op office at NC State to authorize Co-ops for more than 250 international students each year. Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a type of off-campus employment authorization that international students in F-1 status may request in order to engage in required internships, paid activities that are integral to their research, or cooperative work-study arrangements that provide an integral component to their academic program. In order for the international Co-op student to engage in CPT, the following conditions (in addition to requirements the student must meet or obtain), must be true:

Please check all four of the boxes below:

- This Co-op (or internship) position is **temporary** (one semester or one academic year) and educational in nature and the student worker **will not** be in a permanent, professional, full-time position
- This Co-op student **will not** displace a US citizen employee
- This Co-op student **will not** be prohibited from discussing with his or her academic advisor at NC State the nature, scope, activities and objectives of the Co-op activities at the company and how it relates to the student's academic program or thesis research. The site supervisor or other company manager **may** work with the Co-op student and/or academic advisor to make sure that any confidential personal or proprietary information is adequately protected before it is shared with the academic advisor or used in the student's research or thesis, but the academic advisor must be sufficiently familiar with the Co-op activities to certify its relevance and benefit to the student's academic program.
- It is understood that **Co-op / CPT is generally authorized on a semester-by-semester basis** and is not authorized in advance for the full employment duration if the proposed employment goes beyond one academic term; in such a case the student will need to apply and qualify for a Co-Op / CPT extension.

**Signature of Manager, Supervisor, HR representative, or other authorized company representative certifying the statements above:**

Company: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional comment (optional):

  
  

*CPT is intended for required internships, cooperative education experience, off-campus research necessary for a thesis or dissertation, etc. If a non-disclosure agreement or other restriction prevents a student from discussing the Co-op activities with the academic advisor, OPT may be an option - or the company may wish to pursue an employment visa for the student. CPT will be authorized only if it is an important component and contributes to a student's current academic degree program and the academic advisor is familiar with the student's Co-op activities. Please consult relevant government publications (or consult a qualified specialist) for information and forms regarding employment eligibility verification, social security and tax withholding, and other employer responsibilities. A student's original SEVIS I-20 form with the CPT noted on page 3 can be used along with a valid foreign passport to complete the Form I-9. For more information, please contact OIS at [ois@ncsu.edu](mailto:ois@ncsu.edu). Thank you again for your assistance.*

Please Fax to: **CPT Manager, OIS, NC State University** **FAX: (919) 515-1402**

Name of Student (Co-op employee): \_\_\_\_\_ Company: \_\_\_\_\_

# Student Guide to Cooperative Education



## Application Process

- ❑ Submit a completed application to the Co-op office, 300 Clark Hall.
- ❑ Make an appointment to meet with a Co-op coordinator.
- ❑ Complete the on-line resume entry via the Co-op System @ [www.ncsu.edu/co-op\\_ed](http://www.ncsu.edu/co-op_ed). Click on “Student log-in” on the left hand side and use your unity ID and password to access the Co-op system. Follow the prompts to enter and save your information. **Your resume must be on-line prior to your scheduled appointment with your coordinator.**

## Meeting with Co-op Coordinator

If you have not already accepted a position with a company, we encourage you to meet your assigned Co-op coordinator. Your first individual meeting will further introduce and clarify the Co-op process, review guidelines, and provide feedback on your resume. It is in your best interest to schedule your first Co-op meeting at least one full semester in advance of the semester in which you wish to begin the Co-op.

## Interviews

The Co-op Office has a strict policy regarding interviews as we view this as an essential element of the Co-op process. Failure to keep an interview with a company is a very serious matter. In the event that an interview cancellation is absolutely necessary, you must notify the Co-op office at least 24 hours in advance. Failure to follow this policy will result in a mandatory meeting with your coordinator. A written letter of apology to the interviewer must be approved by the Co-op coordinator and sent within one week of the missed interview. You will not be allowed to interview with any company until the above process is completed. Students who miss a second interview will automatically be dropped from the Co-op program.

## Job Availability

- The Cooperative Education Program is optional on the part of the student and on the part of the employer.
- Although an attempt is made to place every student and fill every job vacancy, there is no guarantee that a job will be available initially or on a continuing basis.
- An accepted offer is a contractual agreement that must be honored for the student to remain in the Co-op Program. After accepting an offer, the student must withdraw from consideration for other Co-op positions.

## Job Offers

When you receive a job offer, we encourage you to discuss it with your Co-op coordinator before making a final decision. It is your decision whether or not to accept the position. ***Once you accept a position, you must honor your decision and withdraw from the interviewing process. Failure to do so may result in suspension from the Co-op Program.***

## Pre-work Conference

After accepting a position, call the Co-op office to schedule a pre-work appointment (919-515-2300). To maintain full-time student status and fulfill your agreement with the Co-op office, you must register and pay for the Co-op registration fee each semester or summer you work with the Co-op employer. F1-Visa students must bring the following information to the pre-work appointment:

- ❑ **Signed Plan of Work & Study form (undergraduates only)**
- ❑ **Manager’s name and phone number**
- ❑ **Employer’s/Work Site’s Mailing Address**
- ❑ **Employment Offer Letter**
- ❑ **Adviser’s Recommendation Form**
- ❑ **International Student Application for Co-op/CPT Registration**

## Registration

Upon being hired as a Co-op by a company or agency you must register for the appropriate Co-op course each semester or summer period while employed at the company or agency in any capacity, other than permanent full-time, until graduation or official withdrawal from the University. Failure to take responsibility for registration and payment of

registration cost might jeopardize your participation in the Co-op Program. Campus facilities, services and activities are open to all registered Co-op students.

### **Registration Cost**

The registration cost for Co-op courses, as set by the University, are currently:

<b>COP 100, 200, 300, 400, 500 (Alternate Full-Time)</b>	<b>\$430</b>
<b>COP 101, 201, 301, 401, 501 (Parallel Part-Time)</b>	<b>\$215</b>

### **Continuing GPA Requirement**

Between alternating work periods, you are required to be enrolled in classes full-time. An undergraduate student must maintain a 2.0 overall GPA to remain in the Co-op Program. Graduate students must be in good standing with the University and have a GPA of 3.0 or above. If your GPA drops below the Co-op requirement, both the employer and you will be notified by the Co-op office. Employer GPA requirements will prevail when they are stricter than the University requirements.

### **Work Report, Post Work Conference, Grade for Co-op**

An Incomplete (IN) grade will be awarded for each Co-op (COP) course until a work report signed by the academic adviser or the Director of Graduate Programs for your major is received and a post-work conference is held with the Co-op coordinator, usually within 30 days of returning to campus. Upon meeting these requirements, the students will be awarded a Satisfactory (S) grade; otherwise an Unsatisfactory (U) grade will be recorded at the end of the following semester. An incomplete grade can delay graduation. Any student out on work rotation during the semester of graduation should turn in the work report and schedule the post-work conference to ensure the Co-op grade will be reported to Registration and Records in time for graduation.

## **Preparing for Co-op Interviews**

### **Telephone Etiquette**

- The phone number on your resume should be the number you most frequently use.
- Record a professional message for your voicemail.
- Answer your telephone in an appropriate manner.
- Do not ask prospective employers to hold while on a telephone interview in order to answer another phone call.
- Make sure you are in a quiet environment without distractions while interviewing on the telephone.

### **Prior to Interviewing**

- Research the company.
- Identify and review the positions for which you are interviewing. Be prepared to talk about your interests.
- Practice your interviewing skills. You are encouraged to meet with your coordinator for additional interviewing tips.
- Attend interviewing workshops offered by various campus resources.
- Have several questions ready to ask the interviewer.
- Questions regarding salary are inappropriate during a Co-op interview.

### **Interviewing Tips**

- Allow ample time to arrive early to the interview.
- Dress for a professional interview; never wear jeans or shorts. You can discuss appropriate dress prior to the interview with their coordinator.
- Make eye contact and offer a firm handshake when introducing yourself to the interviewer.
- Never criticize former or current employers or professors.
- Always be honest in representing yourself.
- In closing the interview, reiterate your interest in the position and find out what the next step will be.
- Send a thank you note or email to the interviewer within 24 hours. If you do not have the contact information for the interviewer, ask your Co-op coordinator to forward it to that person.