

Graduate School of Engineering Policy on CPT for F-1 Students
Northeastern University - College of Engineering
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As defined by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security requirements for CPT authorization, CPT allows an international student on an F-1 visa to engage in practical training, paid or unpaid, that is an integral part of an established curriculum and is directly related to the major area of study. Employment for the sole purpose of earning money or to gain experience is not an appropriate use of CPT.

International students enrolled in a Master's Degree program who successfully complete the requirements for the [Cooperative Education](#) program may be eligible for CPT authorization to pursue Co-op Work Experience. *For students enrolled in a Master's Degree program, the Graduate School of Engineering does not approve as CPT work opportunities (paid or unpaid) obtained outside of the Cooperative Education program. (Exception is made for F-1 students enrolled in the Gordon Engineering Leadership Program for the purposes of completing the Challenge Project.)*

International students enrolled in a Doctoral Degree program who successfully complete the requirements for the [Cooperative Education](#) program may be eligible for CPT authorization to pursue Co-op Work Experience. The Graduate School of Engineering also approves CPT Internship authorization for international doctoral degree students under certain, restricted circumstances. For the GSE Policy on CPT Internship authorization for PhD students, see below.

CPT Internship Requests – Intl PhD Students

The Graduate School of Engineering at Northeastern defines an Internship as a special case of experiential learning that applies only to international PhD students. Eligibility is restricted to PhD students who have completed a minimum of two semesters of full-time registration, and who are pursuing a dissertation in which their dissertation advisor requires them to work at an outside organization in order to complete the research. Note that some companies or organizations refer to either paid or unpaid student work experiences as "internship;" however, in the College of Engineering, Internship has special meaning from an educational point of view. For immigration work authorization purposes, it is classified as Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for F-1 visa holders or pre-Academic Training (pre-AT) for J-1 visa holders.

An Internship must be integral (read: essential, vital, fundamental) to a student's research or dissertation and is generally a special arrangement with a research partner arranged by the student's faculty advisor – it is not a student-initiated opportunity, nor is it a co-op or other employment opportunity that is separate from the student's research. An internship can only be approved if necessary or required for the student's dissertation research in order to successfully complete the program of study. The faculty advisor is required to sign, verify, and document that this experience is integral to the student's dissertation research in order to obtain work authorization under CPT for F-1 status or AT for J-1 student status. Paid or unpaid internships have the same requirements.

CPT Internship requires authorization by the student's PhD Advisor, the Department Chair of the student's program, and one of the SEVIS contacts in the Graduate School. All signers are authorizing that the work experience is required for, and integral to, the student's dissertation research.

International students must be registered in course ENGR 9700 Doctoral Fieldwork, under their advisor, during each term in which they engage in the internship, including summer. This course is zero credits and has no tuition cost.

Students engaging in CPT Internship may not hold an SGA during any portion of the CPT Internship. Because the experience is by definition required for, and/or integral to, a student's dissertation research, CPT Internships are never authorized in a student's final semester. For students completing their program during any portion of Full Summer, the final semester is considered to be the Full Summer term.

[CPT Internship Authorization Request](#)