Curricular Practical Training (CPT) – Statement of Purpose
For Graduate International Students in Computer Science

April 25, 2019

The Computer Science Department attempts to work with international students to provide them with opportunities to undertake appropriate Curricular Practical Training (CPT) at UMass Lowell.

Legal Disclaimer
F-1 and J-1 status students are specifically warned NOT to commence any paid or unpaid off-campus work, internship, co-op, volunteer, or other similar experience without the PRIOR legal authorization from the International Students & Scholars Office (ISSO), https://www.uml.edu/ISSO/Contact/ through the issuance of a new Form I-20 or Form DS-2019. Students found to be in violation will lose their legal F-1 or J-1 status.

This document addresses the F-1 Curricular Practical Training off-campus work authorization. J-1 international students should contact ISSO for guidance specific to J-1 off-campus academic training, https://www.uml.edu/ISSO/Contact/.

The rules governing all forms of work by students on F-1 status are defined by the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) and are subject to change at any time. Final authority to approve or deny requests for all forms of Curricular Practical Training rests solely with the International Students & Scholars Office (ISSO), http://www.uml.edu/ISSO. Students are strongly encouraged to review the Employment section of the ISSO website, https://www.uml.edu/isso/ and contact ISSO during their Advising Hours, for clarification on any and all issues related to this matter, https://www.uml.edu/ISSO/Contact/.

“Curricular” Practical Training regulations are specific to a student’s academic program. CPT policy may differ per academic institution or even per academic program within the same institution.
REQUIREMENTS FOR F-1 Graduate Student
CPT PARTICIPATION in Computer Science

Below are general guidelines for CPT participation:

- Graduate Full-time CPT is only approved during the summer. Since the Computer Science Department does not have a full-time graduate co-op program, full-time CPT will not be authorized during any fall or spring semester.

- Student must maintain full-time status during fall and spring while on part-time CPT. Any student found to engage in any CPT employment outside of the employer and CPT dates listed on their CPT I-20 Form will be subject to automatic termination of their F-1 status and will be required to apply for Reinstatement of legal F-1 status. USCIS does not typically approve Reinstatement requests based on unauthorized employment.

- Twelve or more months of aggregate, full-time CPT disqualifies a student for Post Completion Optional Practical Training (Post OPT).

- CPT will not be authorized in a student’s last semester. There will be no exceptions to this rule, including thesis/dissertation students.
  
  - Students are encouraged to plan accordingly and to work with the ISSO on applying for Pre Completion Optional Practical Training (Pre OPT) in their last semester. USCIS reviews transcripts carefully during Post OPT, H-1B and Permanent Residency petitions. They closely monitor cases with multiple and long-term CPT authorizations, including last semester CPT. Student and their academic program may be asked to provide comprehensive documentation on how the CPT experience(s) were integral to their degree. This becomes difficult to explain and defend for last semester CPT.

- You must propose to do work that involves furthering your knowledge of computer science, in an area closely related to your field of research or courses you have taken.
To participate in this program, international students on F-1 status must meet ALL of the following requirements.

- You must be a matriculated student (not in a Pathway program);
- You must have successfully completed two full semesters (spring and fall or fall and spring) at UMass Lowell. Summer and intersessions do not count;
- Masters students must have earned at least 18 credits that count towards their Computer Science degree, independent of required pre-requisite courses, if any;
- MS Thesis and Doctoral students must have successfully completed all coursework credits required for UMass Lowell Computer Science degree (24 credits and 18 credits, respectively). Approval of their Thesis/Dissertation Committee and/or Graduate Committee is needed. Written evidence that the CPT work experience will be integral to their Thesis/Dissertation topic must be provided to the student’s thesis/dissertation advisor with a copy to the Graduate Coordinator and Department Chair. In case of a USCIS audit, the Computer Science Department will need to defend how the CPT experience(s) is/are “integral” to the student’s Thesis/Dissertation;
- Student must present a job offer letter and job description to the faculty member approving the CPT prior to them approving CPT. Student will provide the faculty member the name, email, and phone # of their direct supervisor;
- MS thesis students or coursework students will be limited to one summer of full-time CPT and one semester of part-time CPT during academic year;
- Doctoral students' CPT requests will be evaluated by their dissertation advisor after the student has fulfilled the aforementioned requirements;
- Graduate students must have a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0, and be in good academic and judicial standing; and
- Students on a TA, RA, TA/RA or any other on-campus employment will not qualify for any type of off-campus work authorization, including CPT.

PROCEDURES FOR PARTICIPATION
- You must complete all the forms required by UMass Lowell's International Students & Scholars Office (http://www.uml.edu/ISSO) as listed on their
CPT Employment section, [https://www.uml.edu/ISSO/Employment/](https://www.uml.edu/ISSO/Employment/);

- You must register for COMP.5930, a 1-credit course for each semester that you engage in CPT;
- CPT work authorization/Form I-20 will be issued on a per semester basis. CPT should be authorized before the Add/Drop period of any given semester;
- At the end of each CPT, students are required to submit a final 1000-word report to the instructor of COMP.5930, answering the following questions:

  Please note that your company name, address, supervisor and job description will have been provided to the UMass Lowell faculty member prior their approval of each CPT. The faculty member who approves CPT is legally required to evaluate the job and job description PRIOR to each CPT approval. This is especially true for continued, multiple CPT approvals.

  o For the Post-Completion Report from student to the UMass Lowell faculty who approved the CPT and who will grade each CPT experience, student will provide:
    1. Company’s name;
    2. Company’s address/location of your job site;
    3. Copy of internship offer letter on company letterhead and signed by company official. The letter needs to be dated within the last four weeks. The letter should also contain the anticipated internship dates, whether it’s paid or unpaid, full-time or part-time;
    4. Job Description from company;
    5. Reaffirm Supervisor’s name, job title, phone # and email – the UMass Lowell faculty may contact them for a written evaluation as part of the grading process;
    6. What tools, technologies did you have to use? In what ways?
    7. What new tools/technologies did you learn/master?
    8. What challenges did you encounter? How did you overcome those?
    9. Summarize the professional and personal value you extracted from this work experience; and
    10. How is the CPT work experience integral to your degree?

   Thesis/Dissertation students must submit additional paragraph(s) on how it continues to be relevant to their thesis/dissertation.
This may be used as part of their thesis/dissertation review and defense.