



Internship Guide for F-1 International Students

1 F-1 Internship Overview

An internship is practical work experience that allows you to apply what you learn in the classroom to real-world situations. It helps you develop professional skills in your field of study.

F-1 students must follow federal immigration rules. Not all internships are permitted — they must meet specific requirements and be approved by the International Office before you begin working.

There are two types of internships available to F-1 students:

- On-Campus Internships – work or training offered by the college or its departments.
- Off-Campus Internships(CPT). – work or training outside the college, usually with a company or organization.

Requirements to participate:

- Be enrolled full-time and maintain valid F-1 status.
- Internship must relate directly to your field of study.
- Obtain all required approvals before starting.

Note: Starting without authorization can violate your visa status.

2 On-Campus Internship

An on-campus internship is any paid or unpaid position that takes place at Missouri Valley College or at a location formally affiliated with the College. This includes roles within College departments, offices, and approved programs.

Examples Include:

- Working in an MVC office, department, or program.
- Assisting with campus projects, events, or department initiatives.
- Participating in research or academic work supervised by MVC staff or faculty.

Eligibility and Requirements:

- Be an F-1 student with valid status.

- Be enrolled as a full-time student during each semester.
- The internship must relate to your program of study.
- Complete the approval process with your Advisor, Dean, and International Office.
- You may work up to 20 hours per week during the semester, and full-time during official breaks if approved.
- Maintain good academic standing and ensure the internship does not conflict with your coursework.

Note: You do not need federal work authorization, but you must get International Office approval before you start the internship.

3 Off-Campus Internship (CPT)

- An off-campus internship is any paid or unpaid work outside Missouri Valley College with a company, organization, or other external site.
- Curricular Practical Training (CPT) is a type of work authorization for F-1 students that allows you to gain practical experience off campus when the training is a required or integral part of your academic program.

Examples:

- Internship at a company or organization in your field.
- Practical training or hands-on experience required for your degree.
- Internship course for academic credit off campus.

Eligibility & Requirements:

- Be an F-1 student in valid status.
- Complete one full academic year of full-time study at MVC (exceptions for some graduate programs).
- Internship must be integral to your curriculum and directly related to your major.
- You must have a specific job offer before applying for CPT. The offer must include the company name, your position title, a description of your duties, your weekly work hours, and the exact start and end dates.
- Obtain CPT authorization from the International Office (new I-20 issued).
- Maintain good academic standing and ensure the internship does not interfere with your studies.

Note: CPT is a pre-completion work authorization. Follow all MVC and International Office procedures. Unauthorized work can affect your F-1 status.

4 CPT Rules & Authorizations

Important:

When completing an off-campus internship under CPT, both your work hours and timing are essential for maintaining F-1 status and maintaining OPT eligibility.

Weekly Hours:

- Part-Time CPT: 20 hours per week or less during the semester. You may attend classes while interning, and OPT eligibility remains unaffected.
- Full-Time CPT: More than 20 hours per week, usually during summer. Twelve or more months of full-time CPT eliminates OPT eligibility.

Timing:

- Semester CPT: Used during the fall or spring semester while you are enrolled in classes.
- Summer CPT: Used during the summer term and often approved for full-time work since you have fewer or no classes.

Work Location and Authorization:

- Work only for the employer and at the location approved on your CPT.
 - Any changes to your employer, work location, job duties, hours, or CPT start/end dates require a new CPT authorization.
 - Begin work only after CPT approval is reflected on your I-20.
 - You must stop working as soon as your CPT end date is reached. If you plan to continue working, you must receive a new CPT authorization.
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5 Applying for an Internship

- The application process for both on-campus and off-campus internships generally follows the same structure and requirements.
- Off-campus (CPT) internships require an additional step, as your I-20 must be updated with CPT authorization before you are permitted to begin any work.
- Please review and follow each step carefully to ensure your internship is properly authorized and your F-1 status remains in full compliance.

Step 1: Complete the Internship Handbook

- The handbook includes all forms and instructions for approval.
- Complete all sections before collecting signatures or submitting.

[Click here to access the handbook](#)

Step 2: Collect Employer Documents

- Ask your employer for a hiring letter that includes:
 - Internship start and end dates
 - Weekly work hours
 - Job title
 - A brief description of how your work relates to your major

Step 3: Obtain Advisor and Dean Signatures

- Take the handbook and employer documents to your Advisor and Dean.
- Include your workplace supervisor's signature if required.
- This confirms that your internship aligns with your academic program.

Step 4: International Office Review

- Take all signed forms to the International Office for final review and approval.
- This ensures your employment is authorized and your F-1 status remains in good standing.

Step 5: Final Submission

- Submit Appendix C to the Registrar's Office.
- Return other forms to your Advisor if necessary.
- If the internship counts for academic credit, your Advisor will set up a Canvas course to track your progress and assign credit.

Step 6: CPT Authorization (Off-Campus Internships Only)

- The International Office will issue a new I-20 showing your CPT authorization.
- You may begin work only after:
 - a. Receiving your new I-20 with CPT approval
 - b. The CPT start date has arrived.

6 Traveling While on CPT

If you plan to travel outside the U.S. while participating in Curricular Practical Training (CPT), you must have the correct documents to ensure you can re-enter the country.

Required Documents for Re-Entry:

- Valid passport
- Valid F-1 visa
- I-20 with a recent travel signature from the International Office
- I-20 showing CPT authorization
- Job offer letter (recommended for reference when re-entering)

Travel Signature:

- Obtain a travel signature from the International Office on page 2 of your I-20 before leaving the U.S.
- The travel signature is usually valid for up to 12 months while you stay enrolled and in good standing with your F-1 status.
- A new signature may be required if your current one is close to expiring.

Note: Always contact the International Office before making international travel plans to confirm that your documents are valid and that your CPT authorization remains active for re-entry to the U.S.

7 **FAQ: On-Campus**

Q1. When can I start working?

You may begin working once your Advisor, Dean, and the International Office have approved your internship.

Q2. Do unpaid on-campus internships need approval?

Yes. The Dean, Academic Advisor, and International Office must approve the position before you start.

Q3. Can I change my position or department on campus?

Yes, but you must inform your Dean or supervisor before changing your role, hours, or responsibilities.

Q4. How many hours can I work?

You may work up to 20 hours per week during the semester and full-time during official breaks.

Q5. Does on-campus work affect my F-1 status?

No, as long as you follow the work-hour limits, maintain full-time enrollment, and keep your I-20 information up to date.

Q6. Do I need a new I-20 for on-campus work?

No. On-campus employment does not require a new I-20, but you must keep your personal information and enrollment status current.

Q7. Can I work multiple on-campus jobs at the same time?

Yes, you may hold more than one on-campus position, as long as your total combined hours do not exceed 20 hours per week during the semester.

8 FAQ: Off-Campus

Q1. When can I start working?

You may begin working only after receiving your new I-20 with CPT authorization and once your CPT start date has arrived.

Q2. Do unpaid internships require CPT?

Yes. Any off-campus internship related to your academic program requires CPT authorization, even if the position is unpaid.

Q3. Can I change employers or locations?

Yes, but you must receive new CPT authorization and an updated I-20 before starting the new position.

Q4. What if I want to work more hours?

Changing from part-time (20 hours or less) to full-time (more than 20 hours per week) requires new CPT authorization.

Keep in mind that 12 months or more of full-time CPT eliminates OPT eligibility at the same degree level.

Q5. Does part-time CPT affect OPT?

No. Part-time CPT does not affect OPT. Only 12 months or more of full-time CPT cancels OPT at the same degree level.

Need Help? Contact Us

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