

Broadcast Message: Guidance for Designated School Officials regarding Curricular Practical Training

To: PDSOs and DSOs at SEVP-certified Schools

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General Information

On August 12, 2026, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) issued [Broadcast Message 2608-01](#). This broadcast informed all Designated School Officials (DSOs) that SEVP has observed a rise in Curricular Practical Training (CPT) authorizations that appear to violate regulatory requirements which permit CPT only where the training is an integral part of an established curriculum. Accurate and timely reporting by schools and students allows SEVP to manage the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), a critical tool in SEVP's mission to protect national security and ensure the integrity of the nation's educational and cultural exchange programs. Failure to comply with SEVP regulations may result in an institution losing certification to enroll foreign students.

The guidance below provides additional information on how CPT operates as an integral and required part of an educational experience.

1. How is CPT defined in regulation?

A foreign student may be authorized by a DSO to participate in a CPT program that is an integral part of an established curriculum. Curricular practical training is defined as alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education or any other type of required internship or practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with the school.

2. How is CPT different from Optional Practical Training?

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is training that is not an integral part of a student's established curriculum. OPT is not intended to fulfill requirements of a student's program of study and successful program completion does not require participation in OPT; it is optional. In contrast, CPT fulfills an integral element of an established curriculum and successful completion is contingent on participation in CPT. As [defined](#) by Merriam-Webster, "integral" means "essential to completeness" as in, "an integral part of the curriculum."

3. Can CPT be offered as a part of an elective course?

In any instance where an elective course is optional, making the CPT optional, the integral and required aspects of CPT would not be met. CPT is an integral part of an

established curriculum and the practical training is required for *all students* participating in that curriculum, regardless of citizenship.

4. Because CPT is allowed only where the training is an integral part of an established curriculum, does that mean that all students enrolled in the established curriculum must participate in and complete practical training?

Yes. Unlike OPT, participation in CPT is not optional for any student participating in an established curriculum that the school has determined requires CPT as an integral part of the educational experience. This means that all students — foreign and American — are required to participate in practical training if they are enrolled in an established curriculum where practical training is integral. While auditing and investigating schools to ensure compliance, SEVP has noted that some institutions have described CPT as if it is optional practical training and not integral, despite clear regulatory requirements. SEVP has also discovered that some institutions have not required all students enrolled in the same established curriculum to participate in practical training, despite clear regulatory requirements that CPT is permitted only where the practical training is an integral part of an established curriculum. Prior [broadcast messages](#) have clearly made this distinction between CPT and OPT and reminded DSOs of the integral and required elements of CPT.

5. Are foreign students required to proactively request CPT authorization from their DSO?

Yes. Foreign students must make an official request for authorization for CPT to their DSO so that the school can confirm that the student is participating in an established curriculum where practical training is integral, make a determination that the training is directly related to the student's major area of study, and update the student's SEVIS record to ensure that DHS can conduct proper oversight as required under federal law. A DSO's failure to maintain these verification and record-keeping requirements may face significant SEVP sanctions. 8 C.F.R. §§ 214.2(f)(10)(i); 214.3(l)(2); 214.4(a)(2).

6. Must all CPT be conducted by sponsoring employers that have established cooperative agreements with the school?

Yes. Schools should only enter into cooperative agreements with legitimate, bona fide employers who are able to provide a quality practical training experience to students.

CPT students should have access to practical training managed by an employer who has entered into a cooperative agreement with a school where it is agreed the employer will sponsor the school's students for specific training such as an alternative work/study, internship, cooperative education or any other type of required internship or practicum that is specific to the student's major area of study. Students are not

expected to obtain EADs for this training which is an integral and required part of the curriculum.

7. As a DSO, what are my options if I believe I am being pressured by school leadership to make questionable, improper, or otherwise noncompliant decisions and attestations on behalf of foreign students?

DSOs serve a critical role in upholding the integrity of the nation's foreign student program and serve as important partners with the federal government. If you believe you are being asked, directed, coerced, or otherwise pressured to make attestations you feel do not comply with regulations, we want to hear from you. The new SEVP tipline serves as a confidential avenue for you to relay these concerns for further review by SEVP and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). Please contact the SEVP Response Center (SRC) via phone at 703-603-3400 or 1-800-892-4829 or via email at SEVP@ice.dhs.gov. The SRC is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, except for federal holidays.

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