



## Internship Guidelines for Graduate Students

**Last Updated:** 11 March 2026

**Background:** Many Master of Engineering (MEng) students consider internship opportunities during their graduate program in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering (CEE) at FAMU-FSU College of Engineering. Students in F-1 immigration status are required to complete certain steps and procedures to obtain legal employment authorization if the internship opportunity is not already automatically authorized under on-campus employment as defined at 8 CFR 214.1(f)(9)(i). Because USCIS uses broad interpretations of employment, even unpaid internships/training should be authorized in a student's government immigration record if occurring off-campus or causing the student to exceed the weekly work hour limits of their automatic on-campus employment authorization (20 hours per week in Fall, Spring, or first or final summer term). Federal regulations at 8 CFR 214.2(f)(10)(i) allow Department of Homeland Security Designated School Officials at the Center for Global Engagement (CGE) to authorize in a student's federal immigration (SEVIS) record curricular practical training (CPT) that is an integral part of a student's program of study and that takes place after the student had completed at least one academic year of study in the U.S.

The FSU CGE gives broad definitions of degree components that may be considered integral. These are:

**Source:** <https://cge.fsu.edu/international-students/current-students/employment/practical-training-f-1/curricular-practical-training-cpt>

**Option 1: Required Internship, Practicum, or Field Lab Training** – Some graduate academic programs include completion of training as a degree requirement or professional certification requirement. Students whose graduate program requires training must consult with their academic advisor to ascertain whether there is an enrollment requirement for the training or another method used to verify completion. Degree requirements for each academic program are detailed in the university's Graduate Bulletin | University Registrar (fsu.edu).

**Option 2: Internship, Practicum, or Field Lab Training as an Elective** – If a graduate academic program does not have a training requirement, there may be an elective requirement. A training course or directed individual study course may fulfill one or more of these elective courses. Students must consult with their academic advisor to identify the correct training course enrollment to satisfy their elective requirements.

**Option 3: Thesis or Dissertation Requires Training** – Students may need access to data, specialized tools, or specialized training off-campus to prepare for or to complete their thesis or dissertation. In this case, a student may be eligible for one semester or more of CPT for these purposes. Students



must consult with their academic advisor to identify the correct training course enrollment for this activity if they are not already at the thesis or dissertation stage. Otherwise, thesis or dissertation enrollment is required in the semester in which the student is engaged in CPT.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security requires all universities to report which degree components will require Curricular Practical Training authorization when new degree programs are added to their certification to sponsor F-1 students (Form I-17). Proposed regulation 90 FR 42602 will require regular reporting of this information for all academic programs offered.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this document is to outline how the CEE department plans to respond to these federal requirements related to CPT and provide some recommendations, so our international students remain eligible for internships. This applies mostly to MEng students, as MS and PhD students are normally funded by the department allowing students to engage in different projects and activities that foster their professional development. Option 3 would be suitable if an MS or PhD student requires training to complete their thesis or dissertation, and the training is approved by their major professor. The student will need to enroll in thesis or dissertation credits in the semester they do an internship and gain approval for CPT prior to beginning training.

**Recommendations:** In the past, the department has agreed to implement a “recommended” option, based on which the department recommends that students consider internships during their graduate program, but the internship DIS credits that students enroll during their internship would not count towards the graduate degree requirements. Since this alternative is not possible anymore, another approach has to be explored. Based on our current MEng degree requirements, students are expected to complete 15 credits of specialty/area courses, 12 credits of supplementary electives, and 3 credits of math/statistics courses. MEng students are allowed to take DIS and Supervised Research courses, as long as at least 21 credit hours (out of 30 required for graduation) are letter-graded on their transcript. Therefore, counting a DIS course that MEng students register for during their internships as a supplementary elective towards the degree requirements seems to be a logical alternative that would allow training opportunities to meet a specific degree requirement.

**Guidelines for Internship DIS Courses:** The following guidelines will be followed for internship DIS courses.

(1) **Course Creation:** Each student should submit a request to create a DIS course (CGN 5905) to the CEE Graduate Coordinator ([csmoore2@eng.famu.fsu.edu](mailto:csmoore2@eng.famu.fsu.edu)) in advance prior to applying for CPT approval from the CGE. Departmental approval is required as a part of the CPT application.

(2) **Number of Credits Enrolled:** Once a DIS course is created, students can enroll in the course and select the appropriate number of credit hours. The number of credits students can enroll for a



typical DIS course generally ranges between 1 credit and 6 credits. The following rules should be considered by students when registering for the internship DIS course:

- ❖ If a student intends to do a part-time internship during a given semester (working 20 hours per week or less), the student should register for 1 credit of internship DIS.
- ❖ If a student intends to do a full-time internship during a given semester (working more than 20 hours per week), the student should register for 2 credits of internship DIS.
- ❖ Note that on-campus internships may not require the CPT authorization. Please check with the CGE to see whether the CPT approval is needed.

(3) **Maximum Number of DIS Credits:** A maximum of 2 credits of internship DIS can be counted towards the degree requirements. Students can either do a full-time internship during a given semester and earn 2 credits or do two part-time internships during separate semesters and earn 1 credit per one semester of part-time internship.

(4) **Quality Control:** Since the department intends to count internship DIS credits towards the degree requirements, students are expected to develop new skills and/or get sufficient practical experience during their internship training. By the end of the internship, students are expected to compile a detailed binder describing all the major activities that were performed during the internship. The binder should be signed by the internship supervisor to confirm the validity of the activities that were performed during the internship. A complete and signed binder should be submitted to the CEE Department Chair, Dr. Lisa Spainhour ([spainhour@eng.famu.fsu.edu](mailto:spainhour@eng.famu.fsu.edu)), by the end of the internship. Students are encouraged to submit their binder to the department in a timely manner, so that the DIS credits can be applied towards the degree requirements.

**Note:** Similar procedures will be applicable to domestic MEng students who consider doing internships during their graduate program. However, domestic MEng students will not need to obtain any immigration-related approvals from the CGE. Moreover, the internship should be a new employment opportunity at the moment of requesting an enrollment in the internship DIS course (not a pre-existing job).