

## **MENV Capstone Program**

### **Guidance for International Students**

### **March 2022**

The Capstone project is a central pillar of the Masters of the Environment (MENV) degree. All MENV professional graduate students at the University of Colorado Boulder must successfully complete a 5-credit hour Capstone Project and three accompanying one-hour courses, Capstone Innovation Lab 1 (CIL 1), Capstone Innovation Lab 2 (CIL 2), and Capstone Innovation Lab 3 (CIL 3) as part of their degree requirements. CIL courses are designed to help guide students from the project planning phase through synthesis, analysis, and the production of professionally oriented work products and services. The CIL sequence consists of a 1-credit courses in the first fall semester; in the first spring semester, at the start of the Capstone process; and in students' second fall semester to coincide with the conclusion of the Capstone process. The five credits that constitute the Capstone Project are undertaken over the summer.

For more information regarding the MENV Capstone Program, please reference the MENV Capstone Handbook.

International students should be aware of the guidance below, provided to MENV by the campus [International Student and Scholar Services \(ISSS\)](#) offices.

### **Guidance for Students in F-1 Status**

[Curricular Practical Training \(CPT\)](#) applies to completion of the Capstone project. For the purposes of CPT, the Capstone project is considered to be the equivalent of an "internship." There is a distinction between "on campus" and "off campus" work for the purposes of CPT. Curricular Practical Training (CPT) must be obtained prior to participating in off-campus work as part of Capstone. Students cannot begin their off-campus Capstone work activities until they are in their authorized period of CPT. ISSS recommends students apply for CPT no later than 2 weeks prior to their requested Capstone start date, but can apply as early as their Capstone project is assigned.

CPT regulations include a rule that a student must have completion of two full semesters of graduate school prior to the Capstone/internship. When a student begins the "off campus" component of their Capstone work at the start of the Summer semester, this requirement is met.

### **CPT applies for both paid and unpaid Capstone projects.**

In some cases, a student may need to begin "off campus" work on their Capstone during the Spring semester. The regulations state that "[e]xceptions to the one academic year requirement are provided for students enrolled in graduate studies that require immediate participation in curricular practical training." [8 CFR 214.2\(f\)\(10\)\(i\)](#)

### Important things to note about this exception:

1. This exception only applies to students enrolled in graduate studies that *require* immediate participation in internships, practicums, or other experiential learning.
2. This exception is not available for students enrolled in undergraduate studies, or to graduate students whose studies do not *require* immediate training.
3. This exception is available only for curricular practical training, not optional practical training.

Based on the ISSS understanding of the nature of the MENV Capstone activities in the Spring semester, ISSS advises that CPT would generally not be needed because this is a planning period that generally does not require an off-campus component. CPT authorization would be needed in the summer when the students begin their internship-like activities off-campus. If something changes and a student does need to begin their internship-like activities off-campus during the spring semester, then CPT authorization would be required and the exception to the academic year stated above would apply.

### How to Submit Documentation for CPT

*The following information is advice provided by an MENV international student based on their research, and is provided for your convenience. Please double-check all requirements with ISSS to ensure that you are going through all of the correct steps. This information is provided in good faith with no guarantee that it is fully accurate and up-to-date.*

Students may follow these steps to set and activate the Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for International Students (specifically and applicable for F1 Visa).

1. The Capstone Project falls under the following assumption:

- Your degree must require an internship and that requirement is clearly documented in the University Catalog. (For this purpose, the Capstone project qualifies as an internship.)

2. Each student must complete the CPT Request (available in [MyISSS portal](#)). In this portal, we will be asked “How is this internship an integral part of your academic major curriculum” and we must choose the option “This internship is required by my academic major curriculum” based on point 1 described above.

3. Additionally, in the same portal you will need to upload the CPT Offer Letter. [Attached please find a sample letter](#), as well as the [document made by CU with the requirements with which the letter needs to comply](#). **It is the student’s responsibility to confirm with ISSS that all of the information in the letter meets current requirements.** The letter must be signed and dated by the employer.

4. After that, it will be requested to list a Graduate Program Advisor and provide their email address. After the student is done with the process and documentation the Advisor will need to sign the form. Graduate Program Advisor will also need to select that your "internship" is a requirement as stated in the University Catalog and will be asked to include the website for where this requirement is stated. Your Graduate Program Advisor will need to link [this website](#) showing that the Capstone Project (and hands-on experiences) is a requirement for all MENV students.

For this purpose, you may list Kimberly Kosmenko as the Graduate Program Advisor (in her capacity as Capstone Lead.)

**MENV strongly encourages students to speak to ISSS to learn more about CPT, and to ensure that they are following the appropriate pathway. [Please use this link to schedule an ISSS advising appointment.](#)**

## **Guidance for Students in J-1 Status**

ISSS has an [Academic Training handout](#) for J-1 students. The students in J-1 status can reach out to Kim Schorr (Kimberly.Schorr@colorado.edu) to discuss academic training.

## **MENV Contacts**

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