

Background

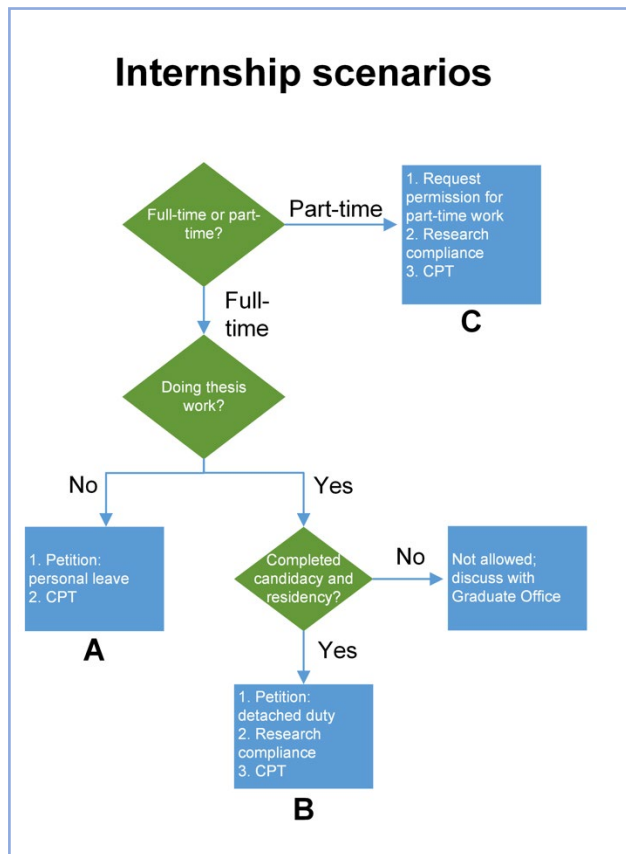
According to Institute policy, graduate students are expected to be 100% committed to graduate studies, and should be continuously enrolled full-time, year-round, until they complete their degree program. Students should not engage in activities that conflict with their full-time efforts toward obtaining the graduate degree.

Nevertheless, the Graduate Studies Office recognizes that students in some disciplines can benefit from internships that provide opportunities for professional development. Internship plans must be supported by the thesis advisor and option representative, and subsequently approved by the Graduate Dean. The following outline is intended to help students navigate the approval process.

Students interested in learning more about internships are advised to contact [Career Advising and Experiential Learning](#). Students should contact the [Graduate Studies Office](#) early in the process to make sure the plan is consistent with graduate program policy and to discuss the approval process.

Navigating the internship approval process

Depending on the particular internship and student situation, there are a number of issues to resolve, including conflict of interest and intellectual property issues, and immigration issues for international students. Therefore, there are several distinct mechanisms for a graduate student to do an internship. The following flowchart is helpful in determining which mechanism is appropriate. In the majority of cases, students do a full-time internship while taking a personal leave of absence from the graduate program (scenario A in flowchart).



Full-time internship:

- In the typical situation (scenario A), the student takes a personal leave of absence during the internship. With a leave of absence, most concerns with conflict of interest and intellectual property are not relevant, but the [Office of Research Compliance](#) and the [Office of Technology Transfer & Corporate Partnership \(OTTCP\)](#) can be consulted for guidance on evaluating internship contracts. Approval process: the student submits a petition for a personal leave of absence; an international student must additionally work with [International Student Programs \(ISP\)](#) to obtain authorization for [Curricular Practical Training \(CPT\)](#) prior to starting the internship.
- In some cases (scenario B), the student may be eligible for detached duty instead. Detached duty is granted only in cases where the internship work is clearly part of the thesis. For example, the student may be going to a national laboratory to use specialized equipment that is critical for the thesis project. Detached duty requires completion of candidacy and the residency requirement (12 terms). In addition, detached duty requires an evaluation of the internship terms for conflict of interest and intellectual property issues. This evaluation is carried out by the [Office of Research Compliance](#) (Grace Fisher-Adams) in consultation with [OTTCP](#). Approval process: the student contacts Research Compliance (orc@caltech.edu) to work out potential conflicts of interest and intellectual property issues; afterwards, the student submits a petition for detached duty, justifying how the activity fulfills the required criteria; an international student must additionally work with [ISP](#) to obtain [CPT](#) authorization prior to starting the internship.

Part-time internship:

Part-time internships (scenario C) are performed while the student is fully enrolled. These requests are scrutinized because enrolled students are expected to work full-time on graduate studies.

- In no case is more than 8 hours per week allowed.
- If the internship provides a stipend, the total annual income to the student cannot exceed the graduate program maximum, which equals \$10,000 over the minimum Institute stipend for graduate students.
- The [Office of Research Compliance](#), in consultation with [OTTCP](#), will evaluate the internship terms for conflict of interest and intellectual property issues.
- Approval process: the student contacts Research Compliance to work out potential conflicts of interest; the student contacts the Graduate Studies Office to request permission for part-time work; an international student must additionally work with [ISP](#) to obtain [CPT](#) prior to starting the internship.