Post-Completion OPT is a benefit for F-1 international students that provides 12 months of employment authorization for practical training directly related to your major field of study.

**Academic:**

* You must complete all academic requirements for graduation *before* the OPT starts.
* Must not have worked more than **364** days of CPT.
* You should ideally **apply 90 days before your anticipated OPT**. Please contact [opt@miu.edu](mailto:opt@miu.edu) by before your 9th month of CPT to receive an OPT timeline.
* **You cannot have more than one grade that is in the range of “C, C+ or C-.”** If you have any one course in the “C” range, then your OPT application will not be submitted until your final course grade is known. If this happens it means you will not be able to apply at the ideal, earliest possible date that USCIS allows, and as such, you may have a gap between the date that your CPT ends, until your OPT has been approved).
* **You must get a “B- “or better in Algorithms.**
* **Pass all CPT reports**. Most students will have one more CPT report due after their OPT starts. If you aren’t sure if you need to submit another CPT report, you can contact [opt@miu.edu](mailto:opt@miu.edu), or your faculty advisor.
* Your **cumulative and CS GPA must be a least 3.0** or above.
* You must have earned at least **8 CPT credits**. This can be done in roughly 8 months of employment if you pass all your CPT reports. If you cannot get the 8 CPT credits you need, you would be required to take one extra 500 level course to replace those CPT credits.

**Finances:**

1. When you accept a job offer the Career Center processors will help you to set up your bank loan which will cover the balance owed in your MIU Student Account at that time. Your first loan payment will be due about 8 weeks after starting CPT employment.
2. Your monthly loan payments will NOT be calculated with any consideration given to the OPT financial requirements. This means that *you will need to determine on your own any additional, principal-only payments you will need to make on your loan to be able to reduce the balance to the required amount for OPT (see #3).*
3. You must have no more than **$30,000** left on your MidWestOne Bank loan **before your application can be submitted to USCIS**. You may view your current bank loan balance online at [www.midwestone.com](file:///C:/Users/hvorhies/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/XYRBO6CO/www.midwestone.com). If are not sure how to make a principal-only payment on your loan, please send an email to [opt@miu.edu](mailto:opt@miu.edu) for instructions.
4. If any additional charges are added to your Student Account after your bank loan is processed (i.e., tuition for repeat courses, health insurance fees, the OPT application processing fee, any fines, etc.), the accumulated balance within your **MIU Student Account must be paid in FULL before your application can be submitted to USCIS.**
5. While you are on OPT and STEM OPT, you remain in F-1 student immigration status so MIU’s Office of International Student Advising will continue provide you with immigration and advising support as well as assist you throughout the application process. Before you can receive an updated I-20 (*required before you can submit your application*) you must pay **$450 if applying for OPT/$600 if applying for STEM.** This fee will offset the expenses of mandatory SEVIS compliance and record management after your graduation.
6. You will also be required to pay **$470** using a credit card to “*US* *Department of Homeland Security*” as part of the OPT application process.
7. Once your OPT application has been submitted to USCIS, you MUST *continue to make your regular monthly loan payments.* If at least 2 weeks have passed after your OPT requested start date, and you still have not been approved, you may contact [opt@miu.edu](mailto:opt@miu.edu) to request to use a loan extension.

**Employment:**

* **The OPT Office cannot provide you with a timeline for OPT until you have started your CPT.** We cannot estimate when you will reach the maximum of 364 days on CPT (give or take a few days) until we know the date that you start CPT.
* **We will not approve changing or quitting CPT jobs during the first 12 months of employment**.That is critical, and it is a requirement of the program.
* If you are **laid off** or change jobs *due to no fault of your own* within the first 12 months of your CPT employment, you should contact the OPT team staff to re-calculate your available remaining time left on CPT and provide you with an updated OPT timeline.
* Due to the requirements above, it might not be possible to apply for OPT. Fortunately, the CPT program at MIU is very safe and allows for extensive practicum enrollment with Specialization.

**Application Process:**

* You should contact us as soon as you start your CPT employment so that we can provide you with your ***OPT Timeline*.** Your timeline will include important dates and deadlines, including the date you are to contact the OPT Office to start your application process. Please do not contact the OPT Office requesting to start your application process before this date.
* We will provide you with a guide for completing the application online, and the guide will include details regarding documents that you will need to gather and prepare.
* You will use the guide to create a DRAFT of the Form I-765 and you will upload the required documents to your I-765 online – but you will skip the part that asks you to upload your “Certificate of Eligibility for Non-Immigrant Student Status,” otherwise known as the **OPT I-20**. **We will not issue you this I-20 until we have reviewed your I-765, you have made any necessary changes that we suggest, and we have confirmed your bank loan balance, student account balance and payment of the OPT fee to MIU. DO NOT submit your application online without this I-20. If you do not include this NEW, updated OPT I-20 with your application, it with your application you will be DENIED.**

**Other points about OPT:**

* If you already have an EAD card, have applied for OPT under a previous SEVIS ID, or have received and used OPT benefits at a lower degree level, please be sure to let us know! These are important details that need to be included in your OPT application!
* **Traveling** internationally during the OPT application process is **never recommended**, as it poses certain risks and can greatly increase your chances of receiving an RFE (Request for Evidence), which can significantly delay your approval. However, if an emergency situation occurs and you find that you must travel during this time, we encourage you to contact a DSO as soon as possible for advice on how to minimize these risks.
* **You MUST be physically present in the U.S.** when your application is submitted and received by USCIS.
* Traditional USCIS processing time is around 90 days, but occasionally processing times have been known to exceed 110 days, in some cases, even longer. The following website lists current USCIS processing times: [Processing Times (uscis.gov)](https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/).
* Please note that after a total of **90 days unemployed** during the first year of OPT, you will be in violation of your F-1 status if you are still in the U.S. We recommend that students contact a DSO *BEFORE* reaching 90 days of unemployment so that we can advise you of your options.
* It is recommended that you discuss and plan with your employer for a potential a gap in your employment when your CPT ends, until your OPT is approved, in case you experience such a delay. It is also strongly advised that you save enough extra money to be able to cover your living expenses and your regular monthly loan payments if you experience such a gap in employment.

**STEM OPT Extension:**

* Students on **OPT and STEM** must submit a **report every 6 months** to verify employment and address, even if no changes have occurred. You will receive emails from ICE reminding you when these are due, so check your emails often!
* While on STEM you are allowed a combined (time unemployed on OPT + time unemployed on STEM) total of **150 days of unemployment.**
* Please refer to the following link for basic info about the first 12 months of OPT:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/training-opportunities-in-the-united-states>

* After 12 months of OPT there is a possible STEM extension of another 24 months.
* You **must apply for graduation, graduate, and receive your diploma before applying for STEM OPT**. We must have a copy of the diploma for the STEM OPT application.
* The STEM employer MUST be E-verify compliant; There MUST be a DIRECT relationship between the employee and the employer so that the employer can exercise control over the activities of the employee and can execute the Training Plan. Therefore, only the E-Verified employer that provides the actual training relevant to the student’s qualifying STEM degree is authorized to sign and complete Form I-983.
* Related to this: Please see USCIS requirements for STEM OPT if you work for a staffing company at a client site: <https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/optional-practical-training-extension-for-stem-students-stem-opt#_Eligibility_for_the>
* If you are approved for the 24-month STEM extension, OPT is out of status after a combined total of 150 days without employment. The 150 days without employment includes any days without employment in the initial year of OPT. This means the 90 from OPT initial and an additional 60 with STEM.
* MIU charges a **$600** STEM OPTapplication processing fee which must be paid prior to the submission of your application. This fee is in addition to the **$470** application fee to the US Department of Homeland Security.
* You can apply for STEM as early as 90 days from your OPT expiration date. Your STEM application must arrive no later than the day that your OPT expires. You would then be legally allowed to continue working (for up to 180 days) while USCIS processes your STEM application.

Please contact the OPT team staff at [opt@miu.edu](mailto:opt@miu.edu) if you have any additional questions.

If you are on campus, you may request an appointment to speak with someone on the OPT team in Verrill Hall. The OPT team DOES NOT accept walk-ins.