



F-1 Student Economic Hardship – Off-campus Employment

F-1 students who are experiencing financial hardship as a result of *unforeseen* circumstances while studying in the U.S. may be eligible to receive off-campus employment authorization from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services under certain conditions. If granted by USCIS, this form of work authorization allows students to work off-campus up to 20 hours per week while classes are in session and full-time during university vacation periods. It is granted in one-year increments, and it is renewable annually.

According to the immigration regulations, *unforeseen* circumstances may include *loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on the part of the student, substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate, inordinate increases in tuition and/or living costs, unexpected changes in the financial conditions of the student's source of support, medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expenses.*

To be eligible for economic hardship employment, the student must also demonstrate the following criteria:

- The student must currently be enrolled full-time in lawful F-1 status and good academic standing for at least one academic year, and must continue full-time study while engaged in off-campus economic hardship employment;
- The student must be able to provide documentation of the unforeseen circumstances that are beyond the student's control which caused the severe economic hardship;

Students who meet the above criteria and who are interested in applying for economic hardship work authorization should contact International Student and Scholar Services (ISS) to consult with an immigration advisor regarding eligibility. Students should bring their documentation for review during the appointment. If an immigration advisor determines that the student is eligible to apply, the advisor will issue a new Form I-20 with a recommendation for economic hardship employment authorization. The student will then complete an application and mail it to USCIS.

The complete application packet will include:

- **Letter written and signed by the student addressed to USCIS** describing the circumstances that support the request for economic hardship employment authorization *and* explaining why other on-campus employment options are unavailable or insufficient.
- **Supporting documentation** confirming these circumstances, for example, a letter from the student's department documenting the loss of a scholarship, exchange rate data showing a currency devaluation, or a letter from an accountant confirming unexpected business losses.
- **Completed USCIS Form I-765** (<http://www.uscis.gov/i-765>) Students should use an address where they can receive mail over the next one to three months.
- **Two identical color photographs.** All photos must meet the US Department of State specifications for full frontal/passport photos and must not be more than 30 days old when the application is filed.
- **I-765 Application Fee**, payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, **or request for fee waiver Form I-912.**
- **SEVIS I-20 Form** issued by International Student and Scholar Services (I3S) with recommendation for economic hardship employment authorization
- **Photocopies of all I-20s previously issued**
- **Arrival/departure record (I-94)**
- **Photocopy of the passport information page** and the page including the photograph if different
- **Photocopy of the visa stamp page** in the passport (except Canadian citizens, who have no visa)
- **Photocopy of any previous Employment Authorization Documents** if applying for a renewal

Once all the items listed above are prepared and the student makes a complete copy for his or her records, the application should be mailed to the current filing address as listed on the I-765 information page on the USCIS website.

If granted, it will take USCIS approximately 90 days to issue an EAD from the time of filing.

Students may not begin employment before receiving the EAD stating the approved validity period. Working prior to that time constitutes unauthorized employment.