

Economic Hardship Employment for Students in F-1 Status

As a student in F-1 status, you are eligible to apply for permission to work off-campus if there has been an **unforeseen** change in your financial situation since arrival in the U.S. Documentation must be provided to the Office of International Programs and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services before authorization can be granted, which typically takes about two to three months.

Please note that this type of employment authorization is very difficult to obtain. It is unlikely that you will earn enough money to cover the cost of the full-time undergraduate study required to maintain your student status.

Keep in mind that it is illegal to begin to work in anticipation of being granted permission to do so; you must have permission first.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for employment authorization based on economic hardship, you must:

1. have been in F-1 status for one full academic year;
2. be in good academic standing, and carrying a full course of study and acceptance of employment will not interfere with your studies;
3. demonstrate that the employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship due to unforeseen circumstances beyond your control; and
4. show that employment opportunities on campus are either unavailable or insufficient to meet your needs.

If employment authorization is granted (for one year or for the remainder of your academic program, whichever period is less), you will be able to work off campus for up to 20 hours per week when school is in session and full time during vacation periods. Economic hardship employment authorization allows you to work in any jobs, related or not related to your studies.

Application Procedures

To apply for employment authorization, please bring the following items to the Office of International Programs:

1. A letter and supporting documentation describing in details the unforeseen circumstances in your financial situation.

Immigration regulations provide that the 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 condition of the student’s source of support, medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expenses.”

2. Completed Form I-765; use an address where you can receive mail over the next one to three months
3. Two identical color passport photographs (<http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/I-765instr.pdf>)

Photographs may be taken at the Rite Aid Drug Store at 701 Lancaster Avenue in Bryn Mawr (Phone: 610-527-3603). You should print your name and SEVIS ID # lightly in pencil on the back of the two photographs.

4. A personal check of \$340 payable to "USCIS"
5. Copies of all previously issued and current Form I-20s (OIP will issue you a new I-20 for practical training and make a copy for your application to the Texas Service Center)
6. A photocopy of the front and back of your I-94 card (white card, usually stapled in your passport)
7. A photocopy of your passport information page (and the page including your photograph, if different)
8. A photocopy of the visa page in your passport (except Canadian citizens, who have no visa)
9. if you have had a previous period of optional practical training, a photocopy of your Employment Authorization Document (photo ID card) authorizing your previous practical training
10. If you would like to receive an email or text message notifying you of receipt of your application to the Texas Service Center, complete Form G-1145 at <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/g-1145.pdf>

After reviewing these documents to confirm your eligibility, OIP will update your information in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) recommending the requested period of employment based on severe economic hardship and generate a new I-20 for you. You then submit your application by mail to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service for processing. You will first receive a Notice of Action (receipt) with your case number. You can then track your case on-line at <https://egov.immigration.gov/graphics/cris/jsps/caseStat.jsp>

If your case is approved, an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will be sent to you.

Social Security Numbers and Taxes

If you plan to work in the U.S., you must have a Social Security Number. Please visit OIP for instructions on how to apply for a Social Security Number. The Social Security Administration will process your application and a number will be sent to you in about two weeks.

In general, F-1 students who have been in the U.S. in less than five years are exempt from social security (FICA) and Medicare taxes. You should be sure to bring this to the attention of your employer because many employers are not familiar with this provision of the tax laws. If you need more information about the F-1 social security and Medicare tax exemption, please see Internal Revenue Service Publication 519 U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens (available for downloading at <http://www.irs.gov/>).

Students in F-1 status are subject to all other taxes that may apply: federal, state and local, but check Publication 901 U.S. Tax Treaties to see if your country is one of the few that has a tax treaty with the U.S. allowing students to exclude a limited amount of earned income from federal taxation.