



University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

Office of International Education
International Student and Scholar Services

F-1 OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT Due to ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

What is Economic Hardship employment authorization?

It is permission granted to F-1 students by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to work off-campus on the basis of “severe economic hardship due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the student’s control” [8CFR 214.2(f)(9)(ii)(c)].

Who is eligible for Economic Hardship employment authorization?

To be eligible for Economic Hardship employment authorization, you must **document** that:

- You have been in valid F-1 status for at least one academic year (two semesters).
- You are experiencing economic hardship based on unforeseen circumstances (*see below*) that arose after you obtained F-1 status.
- You are currently in good academic standing and are carrying a full course load. Note: Part-time Canadian border commuter students are not eligible for Economic Hardship work authorization.
- Employment opportunities on campus are unavailable or insufficient.
- Acceptance of employment will not interfere with your full-time study.

What are “unforeseen circumstances”?

- Loss of financial aid or on-campus employment resulting from circumstances beyond the student’s control
- Substantial fluctuations in the exchange rate or value of home country’s currency
- Unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student’s financial sponsor
- Unexpected medical bills
- Other substantial and unexpected expenses

How do I apply?

1. First, submit an Economic Hardship application and supporting documents (*see below*) to ISSS.
2. When your application is complete, ISSS will enter your Economic Hardship application into the SEVIS system, and produce a new I-20 with the Economic Hardship recommendation.
3. Pick up your new I-20 from ISSS.
4. Submit the Economic Hardship application and supporting documents to the USCIS Service Center.

5. If approved, you will receive an Employment Authorization Document (“EAD card”) from the USCIS Service Center.
6. Bring a copy of your EAD card to ISSS.

What documents do I bring to ISSS to request the Economic Hardship I-20?

- [International Student Information Form](#)
- A cover letter from you addressed to the USCIS (*see address below*). Note: ISSS will provide you with a template letter to follow. Your letter should:
 - explain your unforeseen economic hardship circumstances

AND

 - explain your efforts to obtain on-campus employment
- Evidence / documentation of your economic hardship. Examples of such evidence include:
 - Copies of past and present currency exchange charts showing the devaluation of your country's currency
 - Proof (signed letters, affidavits, bank statements) of unexpected changes in the financial situation of your sponsor
 - Copies of medical bills or other substantial and unexpected expenses
 - A letter from your department verifying that your assistantship has been unexpectedly terminated
- Documentation of your current expenses. For example:
 - Proof of tuition bill payment
 - Apartment lease or cost of living on campus
 - Utility bills
 - Any other significant expenses (books, medical expenses, etc.)
- Completed [Form I-765](#)
- Completed [Form G-1145](#)
- Requested employment start and end date. This information can be sent via e-mail to the ISSS Advisor assisting you with your Economic Hardship application.

What do I send to the USCIS?

- **Original [Form I-765](#)**. Note: Be sure to submit the original document with your signature in BLUE ink.
- **Form G-1145** (*E -Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance*)
- **Application fee of \$410.**
 - This should be a check (from a U.S. bank) or a U.S. money order payable to the “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”.
 - Write the 11-digit number from your I-94 on your check or money order.
 - Don’t forget to sign and date the check. (*See attached example of a properly written check.*)
 - If you intend to file for a Fee Waiver (Form I-912), then we recommend that you carefully review the eligibility requirements found on the [USCIS website](#). If you request a fee waiver and are denied, you will be required to submit a new application with the appropriate fee. This will add significant processing time to your application.
- Photocopy of your new I-20 (page 1 and page 2 with Economic Hardship endorsement from ISSS)
 - Don’t forget to sign and date the Student Attestation section of your I-20.
- Photocopies of all previous I-20s

- Your cover letter explaining your situation (*as described above*)
- Letter of support from ISSS. Your ISSS advisor will provide this letter after you submit a complete application to ISSS.
- Documentation of the unforeseen change in your financial circumstances
- Two (2) identical natural **color photographs** of yourself, taken within 30 days of your application and not previously used for another purpose.
 - Please see attached specifications for the photos. **Note: If your photos do not meet USCIS requirements exactly, your EAD card will not be issued.**
 - In pencil, write your name and I-94 number lightly on the back of each photo.
Note: We recommend that you have your photos taken at the:
 - *UB Law Library, O'Brian Hall 211(Tel. 645-2204) (Specify that you need photos for an OPT application)*
 - *American Automobile Association (AAA), 100 International Drive, Williamsville, NY 14221 (Tel. 633-3480)*
- **Photocopy of your current, valid passport** (biographic and photo pages) and **U.S. visa stamp** in your passport. If your passport has expired, please go to ISSS, Talbert Hall 210 for advice.
- **Photocopy of the front and back of your newest I-94 Card OR print-out of your electronic I-94** (available at www.cbp.gov/i94).

Where do I send my Economic Hardship application?

Send your application to: Via express courier (e.g. FedEx, UPS):

USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 South State Hwy. 121 Business
Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

Via U.S. Postal Service (regular mail):

USCIS
PO Box 660867
Dallas, TX 75266

Before mailing your application to the USCIS, be sure to photocopy your complete application for your personal records.

How should I mail my application?

You should send your complete application by a **reliable, express delivery service** (e.g. UPS, FedEx) to the USCIS Service Center address above. Utilizing an overnight mail service will enable you to track your application and its delivery. Please save your receipt.

How long will processing at the USCIS take?

[Processing time at the USCIS](#) is estimated to be 6-12 weeks. However, processing times vary widely, depending on the time of year and workload at the Service Center to which you send your application.

You cannot begin employment until you have received your Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from the USCIS and the “start date” printed on the EAD card is effective.

Please Note:

- Economic Hardship Employment Authorization is limited to 20 hours per week when school is in session and 40 hours per week during school breaks.
- Economic Hardship employment authorization is normally issued for one year. You may submit a request to the USCIS for renewal of work authorization by following the same procedures outlined in this handout. The earliest you may request a renewal is 120 days before your current EAD expires. Please remember to send a copy of your current EAD along with the other documents listed above to the USCIS.
- Employment authorization is automatically terminated when you graduate, transfer to another university or violate your F-1 status in any way (e.g. not registering as a full-time student).