



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 since your last I-20 was issued.
- You are currently in good academic standing and are carrying a full course load.
- 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 endorsed documents from ISSS.
4. Submit the Economic Hardship application and supporting documents to the USCIS Service Center.

5. Receive an Employment Authorization Document (“EAD card”) from the USCIS Service Center.
6. Bring a copy of your EAD card to ISSS.

What do I bring to ISSS, 210 Talbert Hall?

- International Student Data Form
- A cover letter from you addressed to the USCIS (*see address below*)
 - explaining your unforeseen economic hardship circumstances **AND**
 - explaining 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
- A photocopy of your current Form I-20
- Form I-538 (*attached*) with Section A completed
 - (#3) The “Student admission number” is the 11-digit number on your I-94 card; it is *not* your UB person number.
 - (#4) The “Date first granted F-1 status” is the date you first entered the U.S. as an F-1 student. This date is stamped on your I-20 and I-94 card.
- Form I-765 (*attached*)

What do I send to the USCIS?

- Original form I-765
- Photocopy of your current I-20 (page 1 and page 3 with Economic Hardship endorsement from ISSS)
- Photocopies of all previous I-20s (front and back)
- Your cover letter explaining your situation (*as described above*)
- Documentation of the unforeseen change in your financial circumstances
- Two (2) identical natural color photographs of yourself, taken within 30 days of this application (*see attached sample*)
 - Lightly print your name and admission number on the back of each photo using a pencil. Put them in an envelope and attach them to the application.
 - *We recommend that you have your photos taken at the:*
 - UB Law Library, 211 O’Brian Hall (Tel. 645-2204) (Specify that you need the same photos as for an OPT application)
 - AAA, 100 International Drive, Williamsville, NY 14221 (Tel. 633-3480)
- Photocopies of the biographic / picture page and U.S. visa stamp in your passport
- Photocopy of the front and back of your I-94 Card
- **\$380 application fee.** This should be a check or money order payable to the “**U.S. Department of Homeland Security.**” Write the 11-digit number from your I-94 on the front of your check or money order.

Where do I send my Economic Hardship application?

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

USCIS
Attn: AOS
2501 S. 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 completed application for your personal records.

How should I mail my application?

You should mail your complete application by a reliable, overnight mail delivery service (e.g. Federal Express, UPS). 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?

As processing times fluctuate, it isn't possible to predict the how long it will take for you to receive your EAD card. For this reason, we urge you to apply as soon as possible if you are experiencing economic hardship and feel that you qualify for this type of employment authorization. If your application is approved, your EAD card will be mailed to you at the address you listed in item 3 of Form I-765.

Please Note:

- Employment may not begin until you receive the EAD card.
- 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.
- 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).