

# Economic Hardship

## F-1 OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT Due to ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

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### What is Economic Hardship employment authorization?

Economic Hardship Authorization is permission granted to F-1 students by the 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 to apply for economic hardship, 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 courseload
- 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?

- ✓ First, submit an Economic Hardship application and supporting documents (see below) to the OIE
- ✓ When your application is complete, the OIE will enter your EH application into the SEVIS system, and will produce a new I-20 with the EH recommendation
- ✓ Pick up your endorsed documents from OIE
- ✓ Submit the EH application and supporting documents to the USCIS Service Center
- ✓ Receive an Employment Authorization Document (“EAD card”) from the USCIS Service Center

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## What do I bring to the OIE?

- The Economic Hardship application
- 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 photocopy of your current Form I-20
- Completed Form I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization), using the code: "(c) (3) (iii)" for item #16 on the form (attached to EH application)

The OIE will review your application and enter your information into the SEVIS system. A new SEVIS I-20 will be produced with a recommendation for economic hardship work permission on page 3. Processing time at the OIE is 3 – 5 business days. After you have received the recommendation from the OIE, you must send your application the USCIS.

## What do I send to the USCIS?

- ✓ Original form I-765
- ✓ Original I-765 Signature Card
- ✓ Photocopy of your current SEVIS I-20 (page 1, and page 3 with endorsement from the OIE)
- ✓ Photocopies of all previous I-20s
- ✓ 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
  - 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.
- ✓ Photocopies of every page of your passport (Including blank pages)
- ✓ Photocopy of the front and back of your I-94 Card

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- ✓ **\$175 Application Fee.** This should be a check or money order payable to “USCIS.” 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:  
**INS Service Center**  
P.O. Box 87765  
Lincoln, NE

**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. Airborne Express, Federal Express). 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?**

EAD processing time at the USCIS Nebraska Service Center is estimated at 8-12 weeks. As processing times fluctuate, you are encouraged to apply as soon as possible if you are experiencing economic hardship and feel that you qualify for this type of employment authorization. You cannot begin employment until you have received your EAD.

If your application is approved, your EAD will be mailed to you at the address you listed in item 3 of Form I-765. Please report the outcome of your application to the Office of International Education. Send or bring a clear copy of your EAD to the OIE, Student Services 1900.

#### *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 full-time (40 hours per week) during school breaks and vacation periods
- 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 universities, or if you violate your F-1 status in any way (e.g. not registering as a full-time student).