

Economic Hardship Employment

Off-campus employment for F-1 students experiencing severe, unforeseen economic hardship

What is economic hardship employment?

Economic hardship employment allows current F-1 students who experience an *unforeseen* financial hardship while studying in the United States (U.S.) to obtain off-campus employment authorization from the US Citizenship and USCIS under certain conditions. Economic hardship employment can help in difficult instances to supplement a student's income and/or sponsorship. Economic hardship employment authorization will not allow an F-1 to earn enough to bear the cost of full-time course of study required to maintain F-1 student status. It is a supplement to the student's income and should not be the sole source of support.

Who is eligible for economic hardship employment?

To be eligible for economic hardship employment, an F-1 student must meet the following conditions per federal regulations:

- Completed at least one full academic year of study (full-time enrollment in the fall and spring semesters) and be in good standing with ECC.
- Prove to USCIS that employment is necessary due to severe economic hardship caused by circumstances beyond his or her control that arose after obtaining F-1 status. Examples of unforeseen economic hardship 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."
- Be capable of continuing full-time study while engaging in economic hardship employment.

Economic hardship employment is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session and 40 hours per week during official school breaks. Students may work in any field and, unlike OPT or CPT, the job does not need to be related to the student's course of study. Authorization is granted in one-year intervals, up to the expected date of completion of studies. Students must reapply to USCIS each year to renew work authorization; authorization becomes invalid if a student transfers to another school.

Economic hardship employment requires a student to apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card from USCIS and receive the EAD before employment begins. Students must be able to demonstrate the unforeseen economic hardship and receive the recommendation of the Center for Global Engagement in order to apply for economic hardship employment.

Important reminders about economic hardship employment:

- If an application is preliminarily approved, the Center for Global Engagement will inform USCIS and will issue a new Form I-20 with work authorization. Students cannot begin work until they receive an EAD card.
- Apply for a social security number only after receipt of the EAD card and a job offer.
- It is the student's responsibility to comply with all immigration regulations which apply to F-1 students, including employment regulations. Working without the proper authorization is a serious violation of F-1 status. Failure to comply with regulations means students may not be eligible for benefits normally granted to F-1 students and may jeopardize a student's stay in the US.

Economic Hardship Employment Request Form and Checklist

Federal regulations allow for an F-1 student in good standing to engage in economic hardship employment upon meeting certain eligibility requirements. Please complete the following form and bring the required documents to your appointment with the Center for Global Engagement.

Name: _____ Student ID: _____
Address: _____ City: _____
State: _____ Zip Code: _____ Phone: _____
Email: _____ Start Date at ECC: _____
Anticipated Graduation Date at ECC: _____ Program of Study: _____

Economic Hardship Employment Checklist:

1. Schedule an appointment to meet with the Center for International Education and Programs and bring the following documents:

- Completed form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization available at www.uscis.gov. Use code "(c)(3)(iii)" in the eligibility category boxes on the form and use an address where you can receive mail over the next one to three months.
- Letter written by you addressed to USCIS in which you describe in detail the circumstances that support your request for hardship employment authorization and a statement explaining why other employment options are unavailable or insufficient.
- Supporting documentation of the economic hardship, such as a letter detailing a sponsor's loss of employment, proof of currency devaluation or loss of a scholarship.
- Money order or cashier's check for the I-765 filing fee; check www.uscis.gov for the most current fee.
- Proof of registration for the current term, or if during the summer session, the following semester.
- Official ECC transcript (request online at www.elgin.edu/accessecc).
- Copies of your current immigration documents: passport, visa, I-94 (available online at i94.cbp.dhs.gov), all previous I-20s.
- Any current or past EAD cards.
- Two passport style photos taken within the last 30 days.
- Any other documentation that supports your need for economic hardship employment.



2. At the appointment with the Center for Global Engagement, the DSO will review your application and discuss your situation. If employment is recommended, the DSO will give you a new I-20. Applications from Illinois need to be mailed to a USCIS Lockbox facility in Phoenix, Arizona. The address to use is:

U.S. Postal Service (USPS):
USCIS
Attn: NFB
P.O. Box 21281
Phoenix, AZ 85036-1281

FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:
USCIS
Attn: NFB (Box 21281)
1820 E. Skyharbor Circle S
Suite 100
Phoenix, AZ 85034-4850

If you use U.S. Postal Service, send via certified mail and request a Returned Receipt.

USCIS processing time is about three months. Ensure you make a copy of everything prior to mailing your documents.

I certify I have read this form and the instructions and certify that all information is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Student Signature

Date

**This information is subject to change without notice.
For individual questions, please contact the Center for Global Engagement for an appointment.**

For office use only:
EHE recommended: Yes No
Date I-20 given to student: _____

Date entered into SEVIS: _____
DSO Approval Signature: _____

Center for Global Engagement at Elgin Community College | 1700 Spartan Drive, B105 | Elgin, IL 60123
Email: international@elgin.edu | Phone: +1.847.214.7809 | Fax: +1.847.931.4897