

# Economic Hardship Off-Campus Employment for F-1 Students

## I. OVERVIEW

**What is Economic Hardship:** This F-1 employment benefit is intended to address situations where a financial need beyond the student's control arises, which was unforeseen at the time the student applied to UCSC and after all other potential employment opportunities have proven to be insufficient. The student should provide justification why this 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 the following:**

1. Loss of financial aid such as fellowships and other grants without fault on the part of the student.
2. Loss of on-campus employment such as GSR, RA or TA without fault on the part of the student.
3. Substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate.
4. Unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support, medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expense.

**Duration of employment:** Employment authorization is granted in increments of one year at a time; authorization ends if the student transfers schools and/or completes his degree. Continuing students can reapply each year to renew this work authorization if they meet the eligibility requirements.

**Who is eligible:** Continuing students who have maintained F-1 status for a full academic year (9 months) and can demonstrate severe economic need. Students must be able to provide documentation justifying the need for Economic Hardship.

**Restrictions:** Students must provide documentation of economic need by submitting evidence, such as affidavits, which detail the unforeseen economic circumstances that cause the request, and evidence the student has tried to find on-campus employment. A letter of justification and a list of income and expenses must be submitted with the application.

**Hours of Work:** Employment is limited to 20 hours per week during the academic term. It can be full time during the summer vacation period or other official term breaks.

**Benefits:** Employment does not need to be related to the student's major, it can be any type of job. Employment does not affect eligibility towards OPT. Students do not need a job offer to apply for this type of work permission.

**Cost:** \$340 processed through electronic transfer of funds or by credit card or debit card.

**Processing Time:** Once the application is received by the USCIS it could take up to 4 months before it's approved. Employment may not begin until you have received the EAD and the dates are valid.

**How do I get a Work Permit:** Go to the USCIS web site at: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> Use the menu bar on the left under New to U.S. Immigration click on the link **Learn about visiting the U.S as a visitor student or worker**. Click on **Employment Authorization** and click on **How to do I get a work permit**.

**Employment Authorization Document (EAD):** The EAD is a small card with your photo, fingerprint, signature and authorized dates of employment on it. It is issued by the USCIS. Your employer will need the EAD to hire you.

**Travel:** It's best not to travel *while the application is pending* at USCIS. However, if you must leave the U.S., travel with the following documents: Receipt Notice (Form I-797), SEVIS I-20 with a travel endorsement on page 3, F-1 visa and passport and if you have a job offer, bring that too.

## II. HOW TO APPLY for ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

**1. Attend the workshop** "Employment Options for F-1 Students" to obtain information about the process **OR** go to the ISSS web site to download the forms and obtain information at <http://oie.ucsc.edu/is3/students/employment.shtml>

**2. Student letter of justification:** Write a letter of explanation for economic problems with supporting evidence if any. The letter should describe the unforeseen hardship situation and need, and should attach backup documentation; for example, a letter from home telling of a change in family circumstances or proof of a currency devaluation in your home country. Explain why other employment options are unavailable or insufficient. Review the sample letter at: <http://oie.ucsc.edu/forms/econhardshipsampleletter.doc>

**3. List of income and expenses:** Prepare a list of assets, income and expenses to show economic need. Review the sample budget at: [http://oie.ucsc.edu/forms/is3/economic\\_hardship\\_sample\\_budget.doc](http://oie.ucsc.edu/forms/is3/economic_hardship_sample_budget.doc)

**4. Submit the letter and budget to ISSS:** The ISSS office will enter the proposed employment dates into SEVIS and we'll give you a new I-20. Forms can take between 2-5 working days to process.

### III. COMPLETE the I-765 FORM: APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION (E-file)

**1. Go to the USCIS web site at:** <http://www.uscis.gov/e-filing> Since form I-765 can be filed and submitted online this page offers a lot of information about common mistakes, supporting documents, fingerprinting and much more.

**2. I-765 Application for Employment Authorization E-file:** go to the menu bar on the right side and click on: **E-filing Guidance.** Once you have read the instructions, click on: **Login to your E-Filing Account.** Set up a profile, complete the I-765 application, choose (C)(3)(iii) *F-1 Student Seeking off-campus employment due to severe economic hardship.* Pay the fee and submit the application.

**3. Print your receipt notice.** The **Confirmation Receipt notice** will contain a Receipt Number associated with your application. Follow all of the instructions on the receipt notice. This receipt notice does not mean that the application was approved, but it does provide proof that the application was filed. Your application will be sent electronically to the USCIS for processing. A paper receipt, Form I-797, will be mailed to you within 1-2 weeks.

### IV. MAIL supporting documentation to USCIS within 30 Days of E-filing:

**After submitting your I-765 application through E-file, you must mail supporting documents to USCIS** before the end of the term *to the address listed on the Confirmation Receipt Notice.* Follow the instructions on your receipt notice carefully.

**Mail COPIES of the following documents within 30 days to the address listed on the receipt notice:**

- Confirmation of Receipt Notice
- SEVIS I-20 page 1 and page 3 with the proposed employment dates
- Passport identity page
- Front and back of the I-94
- Visa stamp
- Financial documents, your letter, budget and other justification

### V. APPOINTMENT at the APPLICATION SUPPORT CENTER, (ASC) within 30 Days:

The USCIS will schedule your biometrics appointment for you at the local Application Support Center, ASC. You will receive the ASC appointment notice in the mail with the date, time and location of your appointment. The ASC will collect biometric data such as electronic photographs, fingerprints and your signature. **Bring copies of the following documents to the ASC appointment: Receipt notice, I-20 and Passport.**

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** *The I-765 Employment Application can not be processed until you have appeared for your appointment at the ASC and have mailed all of your supporting documents to the USCIS within 30 days of E-filing. The application may be denied if you do not follow these procedures.*

### VI. AFTER THE APPLICATION HAS BEEN MAILED TO USCIS: processing time can take up to 4 months

**To check the status of the application:** Go to the USCIS web site <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>

### VII. EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATION DOCUMENT, EAD card:

Please bring or send a good quality copy of the EAD (front and back) with expiration date legible to the International Adviser. **International Scholar and Student Services**, 107 Classroom Unit, Santa Cruz, CA 95064. Phone: 831-459-3550, Fax: 831-459-3555, Email: [visa@ucsc.edu](mailto:visa@ucsc.edu), Web: <http://oie.ucsc.edu/is3/index.shtml>