

Severe Economic Hardship

Who can apply for permission to work based on economic hardship?

To be eligible to apply you must meet all of the following requirements:

1. F-1 status as a full time student for at least one academic year (two semesters)
2. Currently in good academic standing
3. On-campus employment is unavailable to you or otherwise insufficient to meet your current needs
4. Off campus employment is seen as necessary to avoid severe economic hardship due to unforeseen circumstances beyond your control.

What is a “severe” economic problem? A “severe” economic problem is one that would prevent you from completing your educational program.

What does “unexpected” economic problem mean? An unexpected problem is one that you could not have predicted when you provided the financial documents for the I-20. This might include sudden and significant changes in exchange rates, natural disasters that result in loss of business or family income, war, political change which freezes bank accounts, etc.

What is not considered an unexpected financial problem? Uninsured medical bills, brother or sister starting college, shift in exchange rate which is part of a long-time pattern, parent’s retirement, etc., are not unexpected financial problems.

How much can I work? You will be eligible to work off campus up to 20 hours per week when school is in session and more than 20 hours per week during the summer and when school is not in session. Approvals are given for one year and then a renewal is required.

Do I have to register as a full-time student? Yes, although you have financial difficulty, you must register for at least 12 credits in the fall and spring semesters. If you transfer to another school your off campus work approval will become invalid.

HOW TO APPLY

1. **Gather documents and write a letter** explaining how your situation is unexpected and beyond your control. You will need to provide supporting evidence (news articles, bank statements, letters from sponsors, etc.) Your application is decided based on the documentation you provide. You need to give as much supporting evidence as possible and explain your situation clearly.
2. **Make an appointment with your International Student Advisor** to discuss the situation and review the documents you plan to send to USCIS. Although the International Student Office cannot give the work permit, we are required to review your application and determine whether the application is valid. (See page 2 for list of items to send and address)
3. **Mail the application to USCIS; it may take three to five months or in some cases longer** to receive an answer.

Office of International Student Services

