

Severe Economic Hardship

DISCLAIMER: GCC ISO provides this guide for general information only. Information in this document does not constitute legal advice. Because immigration rules and interpretations can change, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Department of State (DOS) may modify eligibility requirements or interpretations at any time.

Who can apply for economic hardship?

You may apply for economic hardship if you have been in F-1 status for at least 9 months (one academic year), have lost your original source of funding due to unforeseen circumstances, and are unable to support your studies on your own. You cannot apply for economic hardship if you lost your original source of funding due to your own actions (for example, losing an academic scholarship because of poor grades).

According to regulations at 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(ii)(C): *“If other employment opportunities are not available or are otherwise insufficient, an eligible F-1 student may request off-campus employment work authorization based upon severe economic hardship caused by **unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control**. These circumstances may 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 condition of the student's source of support, medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expenses.”*

It is important to know that normal increases in living costs are not considered severe economic hardship. For example, it is normal for tuition and rent to go up by about 4–6% each year. To qualify as severe economic hardship, rate increases must be abnormal and not caused by your own choices. For example, higher costs may not be considered “hardship” if you are experiencing them because you moved to a more expensive apartment or chose to live alone when you could have had a roommate.

Economic hardship can be granted up to one year at a time but cannot be authorized past the end date of your I-20. The application takes several months to be approved and may not be a good option if you are finishing your program soon. You can check [current processing times](#) for I-765 applications at the Potomac Service Center; use the category "Based on a request by a qualified F-1 academic student [(c)(3)]" to see the correct processing times. If you have less than one year left to complete your program, please make a general immigration advising appointment to discuss if this application is right for you.

What happens after I apply for economic hardship?

If approved, you will be given a work authorization permit (EAD card). This will allow you to work off-campus up to 20 hours a week, in addition to any on-campus job you have. Remember that you must always maintain your status by enrolling in a full course of study and making satisfactory progress towards the completion of your program. Your work authorization is cancelled if you do not maintain your status.

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I am not eligible for economic hardship. What can I do?

International students in F-1 status may work on-campus for up to 20 hours a week without permission. You can check for [on-campus positions](#) that do not require federal work-study awards. As an international student, you do not qualify for the federal work-study program. You may also look for jobs with food services on campus, such as Starbucks. In addition, you may want to find ways to lower your personal costs, such as sharing a room or using public transportation. While working, you must always keep your student status by keeping full-time enrollment and make good academic progress.

I am eligible to apply for economic hardship. How do I apply?

To apply for economic hardship, gather the following documents:

- Check for \$520* or completed [G-1450](#) to pay by US-issued credit or debit card. Please see the [Filing Fees](#) page for guidance on “How to Write Your Check.” **Applications for this type of application may not be filed online at this time.**
- Completed paper (PDF) [Form I-765](#). Severe Economic Hardship applications cannot be filed online. Download the blank form to your computer before completing it – the browser version will not save your answers. Fill out as much of the form as you can. If you are unsure of an answer, leave it blank, and you will complete it at your appointment. In Number 27, use code: **(C)(3)(iii)**.
- A personal statement describing the loss of your original source of funding. This letter is very important. Provide as much detail as possible and include a budget of monthly expenses.
- Supporting documentation (i.e. proof from a funding source indicating they can no longer fund you).
- Copies of your personal bank statements. You should provide statements for at least the last 3 months.
- Copies of all I-20s issued to you.
- A print-out of your [Form I-94](#)
- A copy of your F-1 visa page and your passport page
- 2 passport style photos
- Copy of transcripts/progress reports from all schools attended

When you have gathered all materials, email your **draft I-765 and personal statement** to gcciso@glendale.edu to be cleared to make an appointment. You may then meet with the immigration advisor to complete the process. At the appointment, you will be given a new I-20 and support letter needed to complete your application to USCIS.

*Fee waiver applications are also available but will delay your application by 1-2 months. Please discuss this option with our immigration advisor if you are in need. Please visit the [USCIS Fee Waiver](#) page to learn about the process.