

SEVERE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

OFF CAMPUS WORK AUTHORIZATION

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F-1 students who meet the following eligibility requirements are able to apply for a special work authorization card from USCIS (similar in appearance to an OPT work card) that allows them to work off-campus part-time during the semester, and full-time during breaks. The work authorization can be in any area, not just in their major field of study, and is in addition to any on-campus work (like GRAs) for which the student is already authorized.

The work authorization is in one year intervals, up to the expected date of completion of studies, but can be renewed each year by application to USCIS. The application is sent to USCIS for the decision, which normally takes about three months. Once a student is approved for the authorization, it is automatically voided if they change schools or drop out of legal F-1 status—even though the dates listed on the card still appear to be valid. Any change of program or degree level at the same institution does not cancel the work authorization.

To be eligible for this type of off-campus work permission, a student must:

- Have been in F-1 status for one full academic year.
- Be in good academic standing.
- Demonstrate that on-campus employment opportunities are not available or are otherwise insufficient.
- Demonstrate that the economic hardship was caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control.

The application must contain the following items:

- Letter of explanation
 - ~*Explain the unforeseen circumstances that arose AFTER your enrollment that caused you to have severe economic hardship.*
 - ~*Include a budget listing of all your expenses and sources of support, possibly comparing before and after the hardship.*
 - ~*Attach any additional proof necessary (can include letters from sponsors, death certificates, medical bills, newspaper articles explaining the situation in your country, and/or showing exchange rate fluctuations, etc.).*
 - ~*You may put 'Dear Immigration Officer' at the top.*
- Completed I-765 Form - Item #16 will be completed by an advisor in ISSS
- Check or money order for \$340 payable to "Department of Homeland Security"
- Copy of your I-20 with work recommendation from an advisor on p. 3
- Copy of I-94 card (front and back), passport photo page, and F-1 visa (if you have one)
- Two passport style photos

Remember: *CPT is another valid form of off-campus employment and has the advantage of enabling you to get experience in your major. Speak with an advisor to see if you have the option of using CPT for work authorization.*