



The University of Oklahoma
Office of International Student Services

Economic Hardship Employment Authorization Application Instructions

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) defines severe economic hardship as situations that are unforeseen and beyond the student's control, such as 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.

Eligibility Requirements

You are eligible to apply for employment authorization based on severe economic hardship if you:

- Have been in F-1 student status for one academic year (two semesters)
- Are in good academic standing and have maintained a full course load
- Can prove to USCIS that employment is necessary due to severe economic hardship caused by circumstances beyond your control that arose after obtaining F-1 status
- Have demonstrated that on campus employment is unavailable or otherwise insufficient to meet the needs that have arisen as a result of the unforeseen circumstances
- Can attest that employment will not interfere with your studies

STEP 1: Prepare Required Documents

1. Make an appointment with your ISS adviser at iadvise.ou.edu/iss. **We cannot process your economic hardship I-20 until you have met with your adviser.**
2. Write a letter explaining why you are applying for economic hardship work authorization. Include an explanation of the unforeseen economic circumstances. List your assets, income, and expenses. Include your educational objectives. The letter should be very detailed, but no more than one page.
3. Complete the Economic Hardship I-20 and Letter Request form at ou.edu/iss under the “Forms” section. For your requested start date, we recommend that you select a start date several weeks into the future as your Economic Hardship application will take about 90 days to be processed by USCIS. Attach a copy of the letter you wrote regarding your circumstances. Depending on your circumstances, your ISS adviser may write a support letter for you to include with your application.
4. We will send you an email when your updated I-20 is ready. Sign the updated I-20, make a copy, and include the copy with your USCIS application (see step 2).

STEP 2: Prepare your Application to USCIS

1. Complete Form I-765. The form is available online at www.uscis.gov/i-765.
 - a. You may use your personal address or the address of our office to receive your documents.
 - b. Under Eligibility Category, enter (c)(3)(iii).
 - c. If you do NOT already have a Social Security number, you have the option to apply for one with this form. For more instructions, refer to the “Apply for your Social Security Number While Applying for your Work Permit” handout on the USCIS website: www.uscis.gov/i-765.

2. Include supporting documentation that details the unforeseen circumstances (such as the letter you wrote explaining your circumstances, news articles, a letter from your sponsor explaining why they can no longer provide financial support, etc.).
3. Submit two photos to USCIS specifications. Photos must not have been taken more than 30 days prior to submission of your application and not previously used. We recommend using a professional U.S. passport photography service to ensure photos are correct. For instructions go to: travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/photos. Write your name and I-94 admission number on the back of photos. Do not cut or alter the photos in any way. We recommend you place your photos in a small envelope or plastic bag.
4. Pay the \$410 USCIS filing fee by money order, check, or by credit card. Make your money order or check payable to **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**. To pay by credit card, include a completed Form G-1450 (www.uscis.gov/g-1450) with your application.
5. Obtain a personal or cashier's check for \$410 payable to **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**. For instructions go to: (www.uscis.gov/forms/paying-immigration-fees). To pay by credit card instead, complete Form G-1450 and include it with your application: www.uscis.gov/g-1450
6. Include a photocopy of pages 1 and 2 of the I-20 showing the Economic Hardship recommendation.
7. Photocopy your valid passport photo page and passport expiration page.
8. Photocopy your student visa, or prior visa if you entered the US in a status other than F-1.
9. Photocopy your most recent I-94 (front and back of I-94 card or electronic printout at i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94).

STEP 3: Mail your Application to USCIS

1. **Remember:** You cannot work until you have received your EAD card and the start date is current.
2. **Recommended:** Make a copy of the entire application packet for your records.
3. Mail the application to the appropriate USCIS Service Center based upon the address you listed on the Form I-765.
 - a. For detailed application instructions, visit www.uscis.gov/i-765
 - b. The proper mailing address is available at www.uscis.gov/i-765-addresses under the heading of **"Foreign students"**.

Disclaimer: OU International Student Services is able to provide you with general guidance on maintaining your student visa status. However, any advice provided to you by our office, as well as the information in this packet, should not be construed as legal advice. Additionally, due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, USCIS may change its interpretation of these immigration regulations and eligibility requirements for benefits at any time. We will do our best to provide you with the most current guidance. Each case is fact-specific, and it is advised that you contact an experienced immigration attorney if any detail of your situation/application is unclear or complicated.

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