

## Economic Hardship Employment

### Definition of Economic Hardship:

severe economic hardship caused by circumstances that were unforeseen and beyond your control. The application procedure involves a recommendation from the Office of International Affairs, and authorization from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

### General Guideline

- For this type of work permission, only your financial need is a factor in the application. The value to you of the work experience does not count, nor does the employer's need for someone with your abilities.
- You may be employed up to 20 hours per week when school is in session and full-time during breaks and your annual vacation semester. This limitation is strict, and if your need appears too great to be met by employment for the number of hours you can work, USCIS will probably not grant you this type of work permission.
- To apply to USCIS for this type of employment authorization, you must be a full-time student in good academic standing at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, and you must have held valid F-1 student status for at least one full academic year, i.e., two academic semesters.
- Your employment may not interfere with you carrying a full course of study.
- You may apply for this type of employment authorization without a job offer. Even if you *have* a job offer, no letter from your employer is required for the application.
- USCIS authorizes this type of employment for one year at a time.
- *You may begin work only when you have received Form I-766, Employment Authorization Document, known as the EAD, from USCIS. The EAD is a small card with your photograph and the start and end dates of your employment authorization.*
- Use of this type of work authorization does not affect your eligibility, later on, for F-1 [OPT](#) or [CPT](#) permission based on your program of study.

### Applying for Economic Hardship

#### Step 1. Processing with OIA

Letter of explanation. Draft a one-page letter to USCIS explaining the nature of your severe economic hardship and the unforeseen circumstances that have caused it. According to government regulations, "these circumstances may include loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on [your] part, 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 your source of support, medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expenses." You must be able to document the circumstances. For example, if the person financing your program of study cannot make the promised amount of support available to you, you require documentation of why this is so. In your letter, indicate the extent of your need in general terms. For example, if you receive substantial scholarship support from the University of Michigan-Dearborn and need to generate some income to help cover living expenses, state

that in your letter. You should also state what hardship would ensue to you if your application for this employment authorization is denied. Address the draft to the current mailing address found at the bottom of this page.

When your letter and support documents are ready, make an appointment with your adviser at the Office of International Affairs (OIA) for review. Your adviser will determine whether your situation renders you eligible for this kind of employment authorization. He/she will also review your documents to see whether you have presented your case convincingly. (Please be patient; the process may take more than one communication with OIA because we want to make sure you succeed.)

Once you have received approval from your OIA adviser, please continue by completing and submitting the following forms to your adviser.

1. Request for Work Authorization I-20 by email to OIA, [umdoia-international@umich.edu](mailto:umdoia-international@umich.edu)
  - note that you are applying for Economic Hardship
2. Form I-765, "[Application for Employment Authorization](#)". Do not submit this form electronically. Print a hard copy to give to the OIA for review. You will receive this application back with your new I-20 by email for mailing to USCIS. Please carefully read and follow the directions on form I-765, and also note the following:
  - Make sure to mark one of the boxes where it asks, "I am applying for..."
  - Print neatly, your entire name as it appears on your passport and I-20.
  - Enter your current U.S. address. We recommend that you include the last 4 digits to the end of your zip code to help with mail delivery of the EAD card. Check [the U.S. Postal Service website](#) to look up your full zip code. If you decide to use a friend's address, where your name is not on the mailbox, you should write "c/o" (for "in care of") and your friend's name all on the same line with the street address.
  - Enter the serial number from your I-94 Departure Record card or [I-94 Electronic Entry Record](#).
  - Enter "F-1 Student."
  - Enter (c)(3)(iii).
  - Make sure all questions on the form have an answer. If a question is not applicable to you, write n/a (for "not applicable").

The process takes about five business days. When the OIA employment recommendation I-20 is ready, you will receive an email with the digitally signed I-20. You need to print the I-20 form and then sign the form before you use it for the application.

## Step 2. Documentation to Assemble

Gather the following items for your application once you receive your new Form I-20 with the Economic Hardship recommendation from our office. Letter of explanation with support documentation

1. Form I-765, "Application for Employment Authorization," with fee and photographs stapled to it (see items #2 and #3 below).
2. Two photos to the standards of the [Department of State specifications](#). These pictures are passport-style photos in color. On the back of each photo, print your name lightly with a pencil. Put the photos into a small plastic bag or envelope and paper-clip them to the top of Form I-765.
3. A check for the filing fee (see the [USCIS website](#) for the current fee) payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security." You may use a [personal check or a money order](#). Paper-clip your completed and signed check to the front of the I-765.
4. A Form I-20
5. A photocopy of your I-94 (front and back).
6. Photocopies, front and back, of ALL I-20 forms and any previous EAD(s) issued to you.
7. Photocopies of the identity pages of your passport. This includes the page that has your photograph and biographic information.
8. Optional document: [Form G-1145, "E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance,"](#) if you want to be notified by email and/or text message when your application is received.

### Step 3. Mailing Your Application

Applications from Michigan go to a USCIS Lockbox facility in Chicago, Illinois. The address to use is:

USCIS Chicago Lockbox

**U.S. Postal Service (USPS): (certified mail with return receipt)**

USCIS

PO Box 805373

Chicago, IL 60680

**FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:**

USCIS

Attn: I-765 C03

131 South Dearborn - 3rd Floor

Chicago, IL 60603-5517

Use the U.S. Postal Service's certified mail, return receipt requested.

*Before you mail, make photocopies of your entire application plus supporting documents, and keep them with your mailing receipt.*

### Step 4. Tracking Your Application

If you filed Form G-1145 (see above), you should receive an initial email or text from the USCIS Lockbox in Arizona confirming that your application was received and providing you with a receipt number.

Approximately 4-6 weeks after mailing your application, USCIS will send you by mail an official notice of receipt on Form I-797. That notice will also give you your receipt number. You can check for updates and sign up to receive email notifications when updates are made to your case online at the [USCIS Case Status website](#).