



Economic Hardship (EH)

Economic Hardship is authorized, if other employment opportunities are not available or are otherwise insufficient. Students may apply to USCIS for off campus employment work authorization based upon severe economic hardship caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control. The AAU International Student Office does assist students with preparing and filing the application with USCIS. Students may not begin to engage in employment until USCIS approved the application and students received the Employment Authorization Document (EAD/Form I-766).

Conditions and Limitations

1. Students must have been enrolled as a full time F1 student for one academic year prior.
2. Students must be enrolled full time and maintain a good record of full-time student status in a degree seeking program with a minimum GPA of 2.0. Students enrolled in the personal enrichment program do not qualify for Economic Hardship.
3. The employment authorization is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session and can be full-time during official school breaks.
4. Employment does not have to be related to major field of study.
5. The employment authorization may be granted for one year at a time. Students who are interested in filing a second or third application for work authorization based on economic hardship, must submit a new application to USCIS and pay the appropriate fee each time. We recommend filing a new application 3-4 months prior to the current EH expiring in order to prevent an interruption of employment.
6. The employment authorization is automatically terminated, if students fail to maintain status or transfer out.
7. Students must prove to USCIS that employment is necessary due to severe economic hardship based on circumstances beyond their control that arose after obtaining F-1 status. These circumstances may include:
 - Loss of financial aid 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
 - Political sanctions or natural catastrophes influencing home country's economic situation and sponsors financial situation
8. Student may apply for SSN upon receipt of valid EAD. For more detailed information, please visit www.socialsecurity.gov or call 1-800-772-1213.
9. Students will be responsible to file their tax return. The International Student Office does not advise on filing taxes, however, more guidance can be found online at: <http://www.academyart.edu/students/my-academy/student-resources/international-student-resources>



Application Process

STEP I: Students should first discuss their situation in detail with a DSO to determine whether or not filing for Economic Hardship is a viable option. Student may stop by during office drop in hours to review their situation with one of the advisors or send an email to intlservices@academyart.edu to ask for more information or set up an appointment with one of the advisors.

STEP II: Students should compile all of the necessary documents:

- Complete and sign Form I-765 (www.uscis.gov)
- Complete Form G-1145 (www.uscis.gov)
- Issue personal check to “Department of Homeland Security” in the amount of the fee for Form I-765
- Copy of all Form I-20’s, including I-20 with the recommendation for Economic Hardship
- Copy of Form I-94 (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/>)
- Copy of passport page and visa stamp
- 2 Photographs (<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/passports/photos/photos.html>)
- Official transcript (<http://www.academyart.edu/content/aau/en/students/my-academy/academic-resources/registrar.html>)
- Letter detailing current situation, including a breakdown of your monthly budget and finances
- Letter from your financial support person explaining their economical hardship, and supporting financial documents from their bank (6 months of account summary is required)
- Any claim made in the letters must be supported by appropriate documents, such as surveys, articles, copy of medical bills, etc.

Step III: AAU will mail your application via UPS Express Mail. Within one month of submitting your application to USCIS, you should get a standard receipt notice stating that USCIS has received your application and accepted it for processing. The case number in the top left corner of this receipt notice can be used to check on your case by calling the USCIS or visiting their website at www.uscis.gov.

Step IV: The average processing time is 3 months. If USCIS issues a Request for Evidence (RFE), the average processing time may increase to 4-5 months. Students who receive a Request for Evidence should contact the International Student Office immediately for assistance.