

**Employment &  
Practical Training  
Online Workshop**





# Employment & Practical Training Online Workshop

This online workshop is **REQUIRED** for any F-1 student intending to apply for an off-campus employment benefit. Students are to view the applicable section of the workshop in its entirety by clicking on the next page link on the bottom of the page until the end of the workshop.

Should you still have any questions after viewing the workshop, you may see an ISSS advisor during “Walk-In Wednesdays” at either MMC (9:30am-12:00pm) or BBC (2:00pm-4:00pm), or schedule an appointment.

# Viewing Instructions



- View and read each page carefully.
- Where a hyperlink is provided, you **MUST** download the document as it will not be provided by ISSS.

## **If completing the workshop on CPT or OPT:**

- You must take a short quiz after viewing the information. Answer the question to the best of your ability and click “Confirm” to submit your response.
- When you reach the end of the workshop, you will find a “Practical Training Workshop Acknowledgement”. Print this page, read it carefully and complete as requested. This completed form must be included in the application packet that you bring to your appointment with an ISSS advisor.

# Introduction



- Holding a non-immigrant F-1 (Student) visa means you are classified and authorized to be in the United States for **the principal purpose of pursuing a full course of study as a degree-seeking student** in an academic or educational institution which issued you a SEVIS Form I-20 and where you are expected to enroll on a full-time basis. There are sections of federal law and regulations that define what F-1 students can and cannot do while in the U.S. Under such law and regulations, **employment is highly regulated and very limited.**
- “Employment” is defined under federal regulations as a rendering of services either on a part-time basis or full-time basis for financial compensation or educational/learning compensation (academic benefits or practical experience). **Employment —on-campus or off-campus, paid or unpaid —should be authorized in writing either by ISSS or by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a branch of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Employment is a “benefit” and available only to students who maintain valid F-1 status prior to the application and through the duration of authorized employment.**
- All application requirements and procedures are subject to change depending on federal rules and regulations, related University rules and ISSS policies. All employment authorization other than on-campus employment is made on an **appointment basis only. Students must bring a complete application packet at the time of appointment with an ISSS advisor. If the application is incomplete, the student will be required to reschedule the appointment.**
- **Employment applications are NOT considered “emergency” situations. Students MUST plan accordingly!**

# Maintaining Valid F-1 Status



Under F-1 status, you are subject to immigration law and regulations. It is your responsibility to know and abide by the law in order to maintain valid and legal status throughout the duration of your stay in the U.S.

Your eligibility for any employment option depends on you remaining in valid status.

# Maintaining Valid F-1 Status



## To Maintain your valid F-1 status you MUST:

- Possess an FIU SEVIS I-20 duly processed by travel and reentry OR processed through ISSS for an immigration School Transfer.
- Possess a machine-readable passport that is valid at all times (at least 6 months into the future).
- Maintain full-time enrollment at FIU each Fall and Spring semesters and, if applicable, during Summer term. Undergraduates (UG) must enroll for at least 12 credits and Graduate (G) students must enroll for at least 9 graduate-level credits. Only ONE online course will be counted towards full-time enrollment.

Students admitted Summer A/C terms: UG - at least 12 credits

G - at least 6 graduate-level credits

Students admitted Summer B term: UG - at least 6 credits

G - at least 6 graduate-level credits

\*Students graduating in Summer (August) MUST register at FIU during that term.

- Maintain good academic standing and "make normal progress towards completing degree". Undergraduate students should maintain at least a 2.000 cumulative GPA and graduate students should maintain at least a 3.000 cumulative GPA.
- Report to ISSS any legal changes to your name OR any change of address within 10 days of the change. For name change, provide ISSS with legal documents such as a passport to request a new I-20 with the new name. To update changes in your address, log in to your Panthersoft account and make the appropriate changes to your Home address.

# Maintaining Valid F-1 Status



- File for a program extension in a timely manner if you need more time beyond the original completion date of your program (see item #5 of your I-20). An extension must be completed within the 120 days BEFORE the original completion date.
- Limit on-campus employment to a total of 20 hours per week during Fall and Spring semesters and for full-time work during summer and holidays.
- Obtain required authorization before engaging in any off-campus employment whether employment is paid or unpaid. Unauthorized employment is a deportable offense under the law.
- Meet with an ISSS Advisor as soon as you fall out-of-status for appropriate advising.
- Comply with federal tax filing requirements by applicable deadlines (refer to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)).

**For further clarification about requirements above or if you have failed to comply with any of the above, make an appointment with an ISSS advisor. At the appointment, bring all your original immigration documents: FIU SEVIS I-20, passport, and Form I-94. You may also come in on scheduled “Walk-In Wednesdays”.**

# Maintaining Valid F-1 Status



## **SOCIAL SECURITY AND INCOME TAXES:**

Income earnings in the U.S. may be subject to Social Security taxes and federal taxes. State and local taxes may also apply depending on where you are working.

By federal law, all F-1 students must file income tax returns each year with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Tax filing deadline is April 15th.

Being that U.S. tax laws and tax treaties are very complex and change often, ISSS advisors cannot provide students with tax advice or assistance. Students are encouraged to consult with Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) that specialize in non-resident tax or attend an IRS Non-Resident Tax Workshop offered by ISSS each Spring semester.

# Types of F-1 Employment



International students maintaining valid F-1 status are immediately eligible to work on-campus (with certain restrictions). All work off-campus must be authorized either by ISSS or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. These require the issuance of a new I-20.

In the next sections you will learn about:

- **On Campus Employment**
- **Off Campus Employment due to severe Economic Hardship**
- **Practical Training (CPT and OPT)**

# On-Campus Employment



On-campus employment is a benefit available to all students maintaining valid F1 status. It is not necessary to obtain special work authorization from ISSS or USCIS to work on-campus; however, you must obtain an ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT CERTIFICATION signed by an ISSS advisor to submit to Human Resources.

You should also take note of the strict definition of “on-campus employment” per immigration regulations. On-campus employment means employment performed on school premises (MMC or BBC) that provides service to the students or to a University department or unit.

# On-Campus Employment



## **Employment by University:**

Includes employment in any administrative department, academic department, support service office, library, computer, technical or science labs, housing or other University unit. Payment received must be in the form of an FIU paycheck.

**Caution:** Certain research work may not qualify as on-campus work (i.e. work performed off FIU premises or work with no direct affiliation with FIU).

## **Other Employment on School Premises:**

Includes employment with commercial firms contracted by the University to provide services directly to students and the University population (e.g. cafeteria or bookstore).

**Caution:** Work for a construction company erecting a building on school premises does not qualify as on-campus employment.

**On-campus employment during Fall and Spring semesters is limited to 20 hours per week.**

Full-time work is allowed only during the following:

- December break
- Summer term
- Spring break

# On-Campus Employment



## ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT CERTIFICATION:

Follow the steps below to obtain an ISSS On-campus Employment Certification:

- Find a job on-campus that meets the previous page definition.
- Once hired for the job, complete an ISSS Document Request Form to request the On-campus Employment Certification. Should you also need a Social Security letter, you must submit a letter/memo from the department/office that hired you with a completed Document Request Form (A sample Social Security letter is available at ISSS and on the ISSS website).
- Make sure that ISSS has copies of your required documents (SEVIS I-20, valid passport, F-1 visa and Form I-94). You may bring these documents with you at the time you submit your request.
- ISSS will review your immigration and academic records and if you are confirmed to be in valid F-1 status, the certification will be issued. It takes at least 4 - 5 business days to process your request (longer during peak times). Pick-up the On-campus Employment Certification from ISSS and submit it with your complete Sign-On packet to Human Resources or the appropriate personnel handling hiring and sign-on in the department/office where you will be working.

**NOTE: You cannot delegate pick-up of this form to someone else as you are required to sign the form at time of pick-up.**

# Off-Campus Employment Due to Severe Economic Hardship



Having been admitted to the University and issued a Form I-20, you have shown that you have sufficient financial funding (provided through family funds, financial sponsors, etc.) to cover your education expenses throughout your studies at Florida International University. As an F-1 student, you are fully aware that your employment options are **very limited**. However, an F-1 student who suffered a **SEVERE ECONOMIC HARDSHIP** or a serious and extreme financial emergency that is **UNFORESEEN** and **BEYOND THEIR CONTROL** may be eligible to apply for **Off-Campus Employment Due To Severe Economic Necessity**.

ISSS recommendation is required and application is submitted to the U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services-Texas Service Center (U.S. BCIS-TSC) official authorization is granted by BCIS.

You **MUST** meet the following qualifications to be eligible to request this off-campus employment:

- You have been enrolled and completed **AT LEAST ON FULL ACADEMIC YEAR AT FIU**.
- You are **maintaining your legal F-1 non-immigrant status**.
- You are in **good academic standing**. Your cumulative G.P.A. must be at least a 2.00 if you are an undergraduate student or a 3.00 if you are a graduate (Master's, EdD, or PhD) student. **No eligibility if you are on academic warning, probation, or dismissal**.
- The factors which caused your severe economic hardship developed **AFTER you acquired F-1 status UNDER FIU I-20**. You **MUST be able to document and/or prove existence of these factors**.
- Your severe economic hardship was caused by **factors which were unforeseen at the time you acquired F-1 Status and beyond your control**. **NOTE: Increase of tuition fees is NOT an unforeseen circumstance**.
- The proposed employment will **NOT** interfere with your studies and will **NOT** cause you to reduce your course load below the full-time requirement.
- You were **unable to secure any on-campus employment**.

# Off-Campus Employment Due to Severe Economic Hardship



## Important to know:

- Increase of tuition fees is NOT an unforeseen circumstance.
- Retirement of a parent or a sponsor is NOT considered unforeseen.
- Parents' or sponsor's financial burden incurred due to educational expenses of your sibling(s) or sponsor's children will NOT constitute an unforeseen situation.
- Any authorized off-campus employment due to severe economic hardship will be for part-time employment (maximum of 20 hours/week) while school is in session.
- Authorization for off-campus employment due to severe economic hardship precludes you from accepting any on-campus work. Should you begin any on-campus work, your off-campus employment authorization is immediately invalidated and any continued employment under that authorization will be considered illegal employment, a deportable offense under the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

# Off-Campus Employment Due to Severe Economic Hardship



Although the USCIS regulations may establish eligibility for off-campus employment based on your initial acquisition of F-1 status, FIU ISSS advisors generally evaluate your situation based on the date of initial entry into FIU. Since you were required to document finances before you received your FIU I-20, ISSS advisors assume that any severe economic hardship or extreme emergency must have occurred **AFTER** you submitted the financial documents to the FIU Office of Admissions. ISSS advisors will **NOT** recommend to USCIS that you be authorized to continue off-campus employment which was authorized at your previous school.

If you believe you may qualify for off-campus employment due to severe economic necessity, you **MUST SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH AN ISSS ADVISOR** to further determine eligibility and clarify related issues.

# Practical Training



## **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

A student must be maintaining valid F-1 status at the time of application AND throughout the duration of practical training per immigration law and federal regulations. In addition, a student must have been enrolled full-time for at least two consecutive academic terms.

**NOTE:** Graduate (Master's or Doctoral) students whose programs REQUIRE them to engage in practical training during their first semester of study are exempt from the two consecutive academic term rule provided that the practical experience requirement is clearly stated in the University Graduate Catalog under program curriculum and confirmed in writing by the Academic Advisor.

# Practical Training



**Practical Training** is employment that is directly related to your major or program of study and commensurate with your degree level.

Employment under practical training must always be authorized, either by an ISSS Advisor or USCIS.

The two types of practical training are **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)** & **Optional Practical Training (OPT)**.

NOTE: Being issued and /or in possession of a social security number does NOT constitute employment authorization.

# To Apply for Practical Training



**Complete one of the following  
Practical Training Workshops**

[Curricular Practical Training \(CPT\) Workshop](#)

[Optional Practical Training \(OPT\) Workshop](#)

