

FEDERAL WORK-STUDY SUPERVISOR HANDBOOK



2025-2026

Office of Student Financial Aid



It is the responsibility of the supervisor to be familiar with the material in this guide. All questions pertaining to the Federal Work-Study program should be directed to the Office of Student Financial Aid. Students who violate any of these policies face immediate cancellation of their Federal Work-Study award and loss of future Federal Work-Study eligibility.

Office of Student Financial Aid

<https://www.gmu.edu/financial-aid-parent/types-aid/federal-work-study>

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WHAT IS FEDERAL WORK-STUDY?

Federal Work-Study (FWS) is a program which provides part-time employment opportunities to eligible students to help meet the costs of post-secondary education. Based on results of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), eligible students are awarded an allotment which may be earned through part-time employment in FWS approved positions either on or off-campus. The program is designed to provide students with an opportunity for employment arranged around class schedules. Students must be enrolled at least half-time (six credit hours per semester for undergraduate and 4.5 for graduate) to be eligible for this program.

Student employment provides students an opportunity to earn money for their college expenses, gives inexperienced students a chance to learn the basics of the workplace, provides students an opportunity to work in a “field” that may be of interest and helps prepare students to enter the workforce. George Mason University (GMU) also benefits from the unique talents and experiences students bring to the campus. A job contributes to more than just financial assistance for a student’s college education; it also offers the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and skills to assist with educational and career goals. The money a student earns through this program is not used to determine their financial need on the subsequent years FAFSA.

PURPOSE OF FEDERAL WORK-STUDY

The law states two general purposes for the Federal Work-Study (FWS) Program. The first and original purpose is to stimulate and promote the part-time employment of students who are enrolled as undergraduate, graduate or professional students and who need employment to pursue courses of study at eligible institutions. The Higher Education Act of 1992 added a second purpose, to encourage students receiving Federal student financial assistance to participate in community service activities that will benefit the nation and engender in the students a sense

of social responsibility and commitment to the community.

ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYERS

Most departments on campus are able to hire Federal Work-Study students on all three of GMU’s campuses. Positions include office support staff, research positions, laboratory support, tutoring, athletics and various others. Due to federal regulations FWS positions must follow guidelines set forth by the DOE and therefore all positions must be screened by the FWS Coordinator.

EMPLOYER ELIGIBILITY

Departments that are set up with a wage fund are eligible to participate in the FWS program. The Federal Work-Study program will subsidize 75% of a student’s wage while the department covers the remaining 25%. In order to participate in the FWS program please verify that your unit has a wage fund. If you are unsure as to whether your department has sufficient funds to hire a student worker, please contact your unit’s fiscal liaison or your department, school/college’s fiscal director. As of the 2024 fiscal year departments no longer have FWS budgets to hire FWS students. Only a wage budget is required.

Employers must establish that they have the funds to provide the 25% match before hiring a student.

AWARD AMOUNTS

Each student is limited in the number of wages they may earn based on the student’s federal financial aid award which is determined by federal regulations. The Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) in accordance with Federal regulations determines this award by taking into consideration the following:

- Funds available to the University
- Number of eligible FWS students
- Number of available positions for students

The student is limited in total earnings to this specific figure (the award amount). Once the award amount is reached, the student needs to stop working or

employers can choose to become responsible for 100% of all wages that exceed the award amount. George Mason University has established the following initial awards and limits:

Standard Initial Award: \$3500/per academic year

Maximum: \$5000/per academic year

HIRING PROCESS

The hiring process is fairly simple. Please follow the check list below when hiring a student.

1. Post open positions(s) to Handshake.
2. Select desired candidates for interviews.
3. Offer position to selected candidate (s).
4. Student completes SEAR form.
5. Complete required OnBoarding process for Human Resources and Payroll.
6. Initiate EPAF.
7. Wait for OSFA to approve EPAF.
8. Student can officially begin working.

If a student is returning to their position from the previous year and no other hire is needed the position does not need to be posted. However, the SEAR from needs to be submitted before the student returns to work and an EPAF may also be necessary.

STEP ONE – POSITION DESCRIPTION

Per Federal guidelines all FWS positions must have a current description, even if the position is not advertised. Please be sure all positions meet the following requirements:

1. The position must not displace employees or impair existing service contracts. (Replacements is interpreted as displacement).
2. FWS positions must not involve constructing, operating, or maintaining any part of a building used for religious worship or sectarian instruction.
3. FWS positions must be completed on the On-Campus Description Form, available on the OSFA website.
4. **All positions must include:**

- a. Name of position (Title)
- b. Classification of the position (e.g., Office Assistant 1, office Assistant 2, etc.)
- c. Name and address of the student's employer
- d. Department or office in which the student will be employed
- e. Location (building)
- f. Name of the student's supervisor
- g. Purpose/role of the position within the organization
- h. Duties and responsibilities
- i. Rate of pay
- j. General qualification for the position and specific qualifications for various levels and pay rates
- k. Length of the student's employment (start and end dates)
- l. Procedures for determining a students' rate of pay when the position has multiple rates

One of the goals of the FWS Program is to provide students with job opportunities that align with their academic and career interests, while supporting their overall success.

Although not currently a formal requirement, supervisors are encouraged to consider the following **Student Learning Outcomes** when developing and managing FWS positions:

1. Employ appropriate communication across a variety of professional situations.
2. Practice the ability to navigate ambiguous job situations by applying problem-solving strategies to achieve clarity and task completion.
3. Use appropriate technology for the completion of specific tasks.
4. Display effective work habits appropriate to the work environment.

STEP TWO – HANDSHAKE

If an employer does not already have a Handshake account, they must create one. Please visit [Employer section](#) on the University Career Services website for assistance.

It is important to remember that **only** students who have already been awarded FWS can view FWS job postings. If an employer wishes to hire both FWS and student wage employees for the same position they must post the position twice, one as FWS and one as student wage.

When positing positions, it is important to remember the following:

- Although it is not required - we ask that employers post a contact person for each position posted.
- All positions must be posted for a minimum of 2 weeks to allow an equal opportunity for all FWS students to apply.
- If an employer is having a difficult time filling a position the employer may request that an e-mail blast be sent out to all FWS students promoting their position. This can be done by e-mailing the FWS Coordinator.
- When the position is filled it is the responsibility of the supervisor to close the position.

STEP THREE – INTERVIEWS

Once the position has closed and a diverse applicant pool is achieved the screening process may begin. With Handshake all students who apply to a FWS position have already been awarded FWS for the current aid year, this is the first confirmation of a student's FWS award. Employers can be confident that their applicants have FWS when considering a student for an open position. Of course, it is important to remember that a student's FWS award is contingent upon their financial aid package and may change in the future. Employers can select any number of students who applied and interview those who meet their requirements. It is up to the FWS supervisor to conduct the interviews. They can be made as formal or informal as desired. However, keeping a professional decorum is important and supervisors are encouraged to keep the interview as professional as possible. It is the goal of the FWS

program to give students the opportunity to gain real world experience, beginning with the job search and interview process thus preparing them to enter the work force post-graduation.

STEP FOUR - OFFERING THE POSITION

Once a candidate is selected an offer can be made. Although not required for FWS - we recommend that an offer letter is provided to the student. Offer letter templates are available on hr.gmu.edu.

STEP FIVE – SEAR FORM

The SEAR form serves as a 2nd confirmation of the student's FWS eligibility at the time of signing. It is also a confirmation from the student and supervisor to the OFSA of their understanding of all FWS guidelines and policies as stated in both the Student Employment Guide and the Supervisor Guide.

The student must initiate the SEAR form. The form is available on our website under the "Student Resources" section.

The student and supervisor must complete and sign the form. Once complete the form must be submitted to the OSFA before the student begins working.

STEP SIX & SEVEN – ONBOARDING PROCESS AND EPAF

Supervisors must follow GMU's HR and Payroll policies and procedures for hiring FWS student employees. Please contact their office at 703-993-2600, they will be able to assist with setting up a student's Employee Personal Action Form (EPAF), and all other required paperwork.

STEP EIGHT – EPAF APPROVAL

If an EPAF is not approved it will be one of two reasons.

1. (Most likely) The FWS Coordinator has not received the SEAR form. During peak season (August – October) EPAFs will be approved on a daily basis (M-F). Otherwise, they are approved on twice a week.
2. (Less likely) There was a change in the student's financial aid and the student is no longer

eligible for FWS. The supervisor will be contacted by our office in this case.

If the student has a pending EPAF and has not submitted their SEAR form the FWS office will send two reminder emails to the student and one to the timesheet approver.

IMPORTANT REFERENCES FOR ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYERS

- EPAF submitters are able to view a student's Federal work-study award via the **MicroStrategy Student Enrollment Lookup** report listed below. This addition enables our hiring managers to easily verify a student's FWS award status when entering their EPAF (Electronic Personnel Action Form). By providing this information upfront, hiring managers can make informed decisions about whether to hire a student under the FWS program or as a regular student wage employee. Please note this is a live document and data is accurate to the date.

Academic > Shared Reports > Student Academics > Student Enrollment Lookup (ePAF)

Student List									
Stu Term	Stu G Num	Stu Level	Stu Status Code	Degree Seeking Student	Fed Work Study Award Ind	Stu Course Registered Hours	Fed Work Study Award Offer Amt	Fed Work Study Award Pay Amt	Fed Work Study Award Available Amt
Spring 2023		Undergraduate	Active	Yes	Yes	12.00	\$1,531.00	\$822.25	\$708.75
		Undergraduate	Active	Yes	Yes	9.00	\$1,250.00	\$0.00	\$1,250.00
		Undergraduate	Active	Yes		6.00			\$0.00
		Undergraduate	Active	Yes		18.00			\$0.00
		Undergraduate	Active	Yes		14.00			\$0.00
		Undergraduate	Active	Yes		3.00			\$0.00
		Undergraduate	Active	Yes	Yes	15.00	\$2,000.00	\$1,602.00	\$398.00

- When submitting EPAFs for FWS employees using position number WC1GMU, the system will automatically populate a split labor distribution, with 75% of the wages assigned to the work-study org. number. EPAF submitters are responsible for entering the org. number that will cover the remaining 25% departmental match.

LABOR DISTRIBUTIONS												Settings	Insert	Delete
View	Index	Fund	Orgn	Account	Program	Activity	Location	Project	Cost	Salary Budget *	Percent *	To Be		
<input type="checkbox"/>		POOLED	POOLED	61610	POOLED					0.00	25.00			
<input type="checkbox"/>		241170	M19192	61610	80100					0.00	75.00			
Totals										0.00	100.00			

Please refer to page 19 for EPAF example.

- When pulling student information via MicroStrategy, departments can view a breakdown of a student's earnings based on organization numbers.

								Org L3 College-Maj Div ▲	PVB				Total		
								Org ▲	M19192						
								Position ▲	WC1GMU						
								Suffix ▲	00	WC1GMU					
									241170						
Emp ID ▲	Emp Name - First Last ▲	Job Title ▲	Fiscal Year ▲	Payroll PICT Code ▲	Payroll Payno ▲	Payroll Start Date ▲	Payroll End Date ▲	Fund ▲	FWS On Campus Even FY						
								Prog ▲	00100						
								Actv ▲	-						
								Acct ▲		Labor Detail Actual Amt ▼	% of Row Total ▼	Labor Detail Actual Amt ▼	% of Row Total ▼	Labor Detail Actual Amt ▼	% of Row Total ▼
			2024	26	20	9/10/2023	9/23/2023	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	336.00	75.00%	112.00	25.00%	448.00	100.00%	
			21	9/24/2023	10/7/2023	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	168.00	75.00%	56.00	25.00%	224.00	100.00%			
			22	10/8/2023	10/21/2023	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	168.00	75.00%	56.00	25.00%	224.00	100.00%			
			23	10/22/2023	11/4/2023	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	168.00	75.00%	56.00	25.00%	224.00	100.00%			
			24	11/5/2023	11/18/2023	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	168.00	75.00%	56.00	25.00%	224.00	100.00%			
			25	11/19/2023	12/2/2023	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	105.00	75.00%	35.00	25.00%	140.00	100.00%			
			26	12/3/2023	12/16/2023	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	84.00	75.00%	28.00	25.00%	112.00	100.00%			
			3	1/14/2024	1/27/2024	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	84.00	75.00%	28.00	25.00%	112.00	100.00%			
			4	1/28/2024	2/10/2024	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	168.00	75.00%	56.00	25.00%	224.00	100.00%			
			5	2/11/2024	2/24/2024	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	168.00	75.00%	56.00	25.00%	224.00	100.00%			
6	2/25/2024	3/9/2024	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	84.00	75.00%	28.00	25.00%	112.00	100.00%						
7	3/10/2024	3/23/2024	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	168.00	75.00%	56.00	25.00%	224.00	100.00%						
8	3/24/2024	4/6/2024	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	168.00	75.00%	56.00	25.00%	224.00	100.00%						
9	4/7/2024	4/20/2024	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	168.00	75.00%	56.00	25.00%	224.00	100.00%						
10	4/21/2024	5/4/2024	61610 Student Wages Federal Work Study	147.00	75.00%	49.00	25.00%	196.00	100.00%						
Total									2,352.00	75.00%	784.00	25.00%	3,136.00	100.00%	

OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYERS

Mason's eligible FWS students have the opportunity to work with off-campus non-profits, local schools and government agencies. The Federal Work-Study program will subsidize 75% of a student's wage while the organization covers the remaining 25%. In order to participate in the FWS program organizations must add hired FWS students to their payroll and reimbursement will follow the subsequent month.

INTERESTED ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations interested in pursuing a FWS partnership with Mason must complete the Off-Campus Employer Interest form. Once the form is complete it must be submitted to the FWS Coordinator for review via e-mail. The FWS Coordinator will reply with a decision and if approved, the Off-Campus Agreement and various other forms will be sent to the organization for review and submission.

OFF - CAMPUS AGREEMENT

Once an organization has been approved GMU and the organization must enter into a signed agreement. The agreement will be sent to the organization by the FWS Coordinator via e-mail or mail in the welcome packet. The original agreement must be returned by mail or e-mail. The welcome packet will include:

1. **The Off-Campus Agreement** – the agreement must be completed, signed and returned to the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) before hiring students is allowed.
2. **Instructions** for creating a G#, submitting a W-9 and signing up for electronic reimbursement.
3. **Statement of Billing** – the Statement of Billing must be completed at the end of every month and submitted with signed copies of the student's timesheets. The timesheets must be signed by both the student and supervisor. A short description of the performed duties must also be included for each student and also signed by both parties.
4. **Off-Campus Description Form** – this form must be completed in order to hire students. Please

see the hiring process below and position descriptions. This must be submitted to the OSFA as well. A description form must be complete for all desired/hired positions.

5. **Student Employment Authorization and Responsibilities (SEAR) Form Link** – this form must be completed once a student is hired. It must be submitted to the OSFA either by mail, e-mail, and fax or in person by the student.
6. **Supervisor Handbook** – for the organization to keep as a reference.
7. **Student Employment Guide** – for the organization to keep as a reference. All students must read it.

AWARD AMOUNTS

Each student is limited in the number of wages they may earn based on the student's award amount which is determined by federal regulations. The Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) in accordance with Federal regulations determines this award by taking into consideration the following:

- Funds available to the University
- Number of eligible FWS students
- Number of available positions for students

The student is limited in total earnings to this specific figure (the award amount). Once the award amount is reached, the student needs to stop working or employers can choose to become responsible for 100% of all wages that exceed the award amount. George Mason University has established the following initial awards and limits:

Standard Initial Award: \$3500/per academic year

Maximum: \$5000/per academic year

Employer must have agreement in place before hiring any students as FWS employees.

HIRING PROCESS

Once the agreement has been set in place the hiring process is fairly simple. Please follow the check list below when hiring a student:

1. Post open position(s) to Handshake.
2. Select desired candidates for interviews.
3. Offer position to selected candidate(s).
4. Have student complete a SEAR form and submit to OSFA.
5. The student needs to be added to the employer's payroll and timesheets must be established.
6. Student can officially begin working.
8. General qualification for the position and specific qualifications for various levels and pay rates
9. Length of the student's employment (start and end dates)
10. Procedures for determining a student's rate of pay when position has multiple rates

If a student will be continuing their position for the upcoming year and no other hire is needed; the position does not need to be posted. However, a current agreement needs to be in place and the Student Employment Authorization form needs to be submitted before the student returns to work.

STEP ONE – POSITION DESCRIPTION

Per federal guidelines all FWS jobs must have position descriptions on file even if the position is not advertised. All positions must meet the following:

1. The position must not displace employees or impair existing service contracts. (Replacement is interpreted as displacement).
2. FWS positions must not involve constructing, operating, or maintaining any part of a building used for religious worship or sectarian instruction.
3. Any position that is for-profit, sale/food service or janitorial services is not FWS eligible.
4. All FWS positions must be completed on the Off-Campus Description form provided by the OSFA office.
5. **All positions must include:**
 1. Name of position
 2. Classification of the position (e.g, office assistant 1, office assistant 2 etc.)
 3. Name and address of the student's employer
 4. Name of the student's supervisor
 5. Purpose/role of the position within the organization
 6. Duties and responsibilities
 7. Rates of pay for the position

One of the goals of the FWS Program is to provide students with job opportunities that align with their academic and career interests, while supporting their overall success.

Although not currently a formal requirement, supervisors are encouraged to consider the following **Student Learning Outcomes** when developing and managing FWS positions:

1. Employ appropriate communication across a variety of professional situations.
2. Practice the ability to navigate ambiguous job situations by applying problem-solving strategies to achieve clarity and task completion.
3. Use appropriate technology for the completion of specific tasks.
4. Display effective work habits appropriate to the work environment.

STEP TWO – HANDSHAKE

If an employer does not already have a Handshake account, they must create one. Please visit [Employer section](#) on the University Career Services website for assistance.

It is important to remember that **only** students who have already been awarded FWS can view FWS job postings.

When positing positions, it is important to remember the following:

- The positions must match the job description that was submitted to the OSFA.

- All items in blue on the Job Description form must be included in the posting on Handshake.
- Although it is not required - we ask that employers post a contact person for each position posted.
- All positions must be posted for a minimum of 2 weeks to allow an equal opportunity for all FWS students to apply.
- If an employer is having a difficult time filling a position the employer may request that an e-mail blast be sent out to all FWS students promoting their position. This can be done by e-mailing the FWS Coordinator.
- When the position is filled it is the responsibility of the supervisor to close the position.

STEP THREE – INTERVIEWS

Once the position has closed and a diverse applicant pool is achieved, the screening process may begin. With Handshake all students who apply to a FWS position have already been awarded FWS for the current aid year, this is the first confirmation of student's FWS award. Employers can be confident that their applicants have FWS when considering a student for an open position. Of course, it is important to remember that a student's FWS award is contingent upon their entire financial aid package and may change in the future.

Employers can select any number of students who applied and interview those who meet their requirements. It is up to the FWS supervisor to conduct the interviews. They can be made as formal or informal as desired. However, keeping a professional decorum is important and supervisors are encouraged to keep the interview as professional as possible. It is the goal of the FWS program to give students the opportunity to gain real world experience, beginning with the job search and interview process thus, preparing them to enter the work force post-graduation.

STEP FOUR – OFFERING THE POSITION

It is up to the employer to select a candidate and offer the position to them. Off-campus organizations are encouraged to follow their own policies and procedures when offering a position.

STEP FIVE - SEAR FORM

The SEAR form serves as a 2nd confirmation of the student's FWS eligibility at the time of signing. It is also a confirmation from the student and supervisor to the OSFA of their understanding of all FWS guidelines and policies as stated in both the Student Employment Guide and the Supervisor Guide.

The student must submit the SEAR form before they begin working.

STEP SIX – PAYROLL

The employer is responsible for adding the student to their own payroll and processing any required documents based on their own hiring practices and policies. The employer should also set up timesheets for the hired employee.

STEP SEVEN – BEGIN WORK

At this point the student may begin working. It is up to the employer to set the start date.

REIMBURSEMENT

At the end of every month the supervisor must submit the Statement of Billing to the OSFA along with the following:

1. Copies of the student's timesheets signed and dated by both the student and supervisor for the month.
2. A short statement indicating the performed duties by the student. The statement can be on the timesheets. If it is not on the timesheets the statement must also be dated and signed by the student and supervisor.

The Statement of Billing must be sent to the FWS Coordinator by mail or e-mail. The Statement of Billing will be processed by the FWS Coordinator and sent to GMU Accounts Payable department for payment.

Employers can check the status of their payment by visiting GMU's Payment Portal and entering the organizations G# and Reimbursement Amount:

STATEMENT OF BILLING

When completing the Statement of Billing the employer must include all the hours the student worked during that month. An example of how to bill GMU is below.

For example, John Doe worked a total of 15 hours each week during the month of April, which consisted of 3 weeks. Consequently, John's employer will bill GMU for 45 hours. John is paid at a rate of \$12 per hour, amounting to \$540. GMU will reimburse John's employer for 75% of this amount, which equals \$405.

It is important to remember that the employer should process the student's timesheets as normal, when paying the student all appropriate taxes and withholdings should be process as usual.

WORK SCHEDULE

It is up to the supervisor and student to agree upon a work schedule for the student. The student must make every possible effort to adhere to the schedule. If anything should come up, it is up to the student to discuss this with their supervisor.

Students may work up to **20 hours per week** while classes are in session, and they must not work more than 8 hours in one day. Students and supervisors need to monitor the number of hours they work each term in order to not exceed the FWS amount awarded.

During winter, spring, and summer breaks, students are permitted to work up to 29 hours per week, but not to exceed 8 hours per day. Overtime is never allowed.

Supervisors can use the Pay Sheet Tracker to keep track of their students' hours worked and earnings. The tracker can be downloaded from the FWS website. If needed supervisors can contact the FWS Coordinator for assistance.

When creating a work schedule with the student it is important to remember:

- The student's work schedule should not interfere with their class schedule.
- Once the schedule is set it should be carefully followed.
- Students are responsible for adhering to their work schedule and should only be paid for hours worked.
- If the student is unable to attend, the student must notify the supervisor in advance.
- If a supervisor is not able to host a student for work whether for an office closure, holiday etc., it is the responsibility of the employer to notify the student in a timely manner.
- During final exams and midterms supervisors must accommodate the student's study/exam schedule.
- Supervisors must ensure that all work hours are properly supervised.
- **Students cannot be paid for hours worked when it is determined that they should have been attending classes during that time.** It is not required but recommended that supervisors ask for a copy of the student's class schedule, as to ensure that students do not work when they should be in class.

TIMESHEETS, PAYMENT AND RECORD KEEPING

On-campus students: Timesheets must be submitted to Patriotweb, on time. HR and Payroll will charge departments who fail to have all timesheets submitted on time. For more information on this please visit: <http://hr.gmu.edu/>

- Students will earn a bi-weekly paycheck. Payment for hours worked runs two weeks behind the submission of timesheets.

Off-campus Students: Timesheets are submitted per the requirements of the employers. Per the FWS Agreement, students must be paid at least twice a month for hours worked.

- Students will be paid in whatever way the organization pays the rest of its employees.

Students will not be paid for hours worked over the award amount unless:

- A) The FWS Coordinator increases the student's FWS funds in advance *or*
- B) The department agrees to pay the student 100% from their own funds, a wage EPAF must be submitted before the student surpasses their FWS award.

Student and supervisors must keep accurate timesheets signed by both the supervisor and student.

The supervisor and student must keep track of hours worked and FWS funds earned.

Students must sign out for breaks and then sign back in after the break is completed. It is against Federal Regulations for any part-time employee to work more than six hours without a 30-minute unpaid break.

Supervisors and students must keep a record of all the hours worked per pay period.

At any time during the fiscal year the FWS Coordinator may audit supervisors for verification on reported hours for any FWS student employee.

WAGE INCREASES

It is up to the supervisor to set the hourly pay rate for the position. Supervisors must keep in mind the amount of work the student is hired to do when setting a wage. They must also make sure their department's budget is able to accommodate the rate, as well as any increase if desired in the future.

Wages can vary anywhere from \$12.41 to \$17.00 per hour. The minimum wage is at George Mason University is set at \$12.41 per hour. However, for positions outside of Virginia the minimum wage should be concurrent with whichever state the FWS position is in. The average wage of a Federal Work-Study student at Mason is \$13.50 per hour.

Hourly Rate Averages per Position Type

Office Assistants	\$13.00
Customer Service/Receptionist	\$12.41
Lab Tech/Monitor	\$13.50
Research Assistant	\$15.00

Please note that any position with an hourly pay rate of over \$17 will need to be justified to the FWS Coordinator.

Pay increases should be given when it is determined the student has been there for x amount of time or the student's role in the department has gained further responsibilities. The length of time in between increases is determined by the supervisor/department. If the student's responsibilities have increased then a new position description should be written up and submitted to the FWS Coordinator.

OVER AWARDS

Although it is the responsibility of the student and supervisor to keep track of a student's earnings, sometimes an over award does occur. If an over award does occur a labor redistribution may be needed. Before a labor redistribution is done within your department or through budget, please e-mail the FWS Coordinator. In some instances, students can be kept on FWS:

- If the student has unmet need left and there are still FWS funds available a FWS award increase may be granted.
- A student's financial aid budget may be adjusted to increase the student's eligibility, therefore increasing the student FWS award.

LABOR REDISTRIBUTIONS (LR)

For situations where a student cannot be kept on FWS a labor redistribution of funds is need. The FWS Coordinator will contact the department with the amount that needs to be reallocated to wages. The designated person in the department that handles LRs

will need to complete the Labor Redistribution via self-service via Patriot Web.

Once the LR has been completed the FWS Coordinator should be notified so that the OSFA's records can be updated. An EPAF to terminate the student's FWS should be processed as well. Please contact the FWS Coordinator for assistance.

CONCURRENT EMPLOYMENT

Students cannot hold more than one Federal Work-Study job at a time at Mason. If a student wishes to switch positions, they must first quit their previous position before starting the new one. It is also recommended that students do not hold another job while holding a Federal Work-Study position.

RESIGNATION AND TERMINATIONS

- Students should give a notification of at least two weeks if planning to resign from their FWS position.
- A student's continued employment is contingent upon satisfactory performance as determined by their supervisor. If the supervisor decides that the student's performance is not satisfactory, the student may be dismissed.
- If they knowingly submit fraudulent information, students will be dismissed from the program and may face legal consequences.
- Failure to abide by the Office of Student Financial Aid's [Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\) Policy](#) is grounds for termination from the FWS program until the student has been reapproved for financial aid by the OSFA's appeals committee.

TERMINATING STUDENTS

The OSFA understands that terminating students can be difficult for both the student and the supervisor. We ask that before a student is terminated, they be warned and asked to rectify their behavior. If the issue is not corrected within a timely manner, a termination may be suitable. However, the OSFA understands that there are

instances that merit an immediate termination without a warning period.

If a student is terminated from their position, please submit a Termination EPAF and e-mail the FWS Coordinator as to why the student was terminated. Any and all termination policies set by the university must also be followed.

ACADEMIC CREDIT AND FWS

A student may earn academic credit as well as compensation for FWS jobs. Such jobs include but are not limited to internships, practica, or assistantships (e.g., research or teaching assistantships). However, a student employed in a FWS job and receiving academic credit for that job may not be:

- paid less than he or she would be if no academic credit were given;
- paid for receiving instruction in a classroom, laboratory, or other academic setting; and
- paid unless the employer would normally pay a person for the same job

SUMMER FEDERAL WORK-STUDY

Students can work during the summer only IF:

- a. They will be enrolled for at least half-time during the summer. **AND/OR**
- b. They will be enrolled for at least half-time during the following fall semester.

Students who will be enrolled during summer:

- Students who are enrolled during the summer for at least half-time and have requested summer aid: We can award them summer FWS, if they qualify. This award can be used until the last day of summer classes. This award will not be added as a resource to the student's following aid year award.
- Students who are enrolled for the summer for at least half-time but did not request summer aid and were not awarded summer FWS; they have until June 30th to use their FWS award from the school year, however, any amount

earned after the last day of classes in the spring will be added to their financial aid award for the following year as a resource.

Students who will not be enrolled during the summer:

Students who are not enrolled for at least half-time during the summer but will be enrolled for at least half-time during the following fall semester: can work during the summer, however any amount earned between the last day of spring classes and June 30th, will be added as a resource to the student's financial aid award for the following aid year.

GRADUATING STUDENTS

For students who will be graduating in winter, spring or summer: their last day of work is on their last day of classes of their final semester. Once a student has had their last day of classes, they must be terminated immediately and no longer allowed to work using FWS funds.

If the student continues to work after their last eligible day, either the student or department must reimburse the earned monies as soon as possible.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF FEDERAL WORK-STUDY

STUDENTS

- Each student must file a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and be determined to have financial need.
- Student must have FWS awarded on their financial aid package prior to starting work.
- Be enrolled at least half-time (at least 6 credits per semester; 4.5 for graduate).
- Enrolled undergraduate and graduate students are eligible to work as student employees. If a student has graduated, they are not considered a current student and therefore, are not eligible for FWS student employment.
- Be a U.S. Citizen or eligible non-citizen.
- Be achieving Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP); please look on the OSFA website for our SAP policy.
- Not be in default on any student loan.
- Submit all documents required by the Office of Student Financial Aid.
- Students may not work more than 20 hours per week during the fall and spring semesters and no more than 29 hours per week during winter, spring, and summer breaks. Overtime is not allowed.
- Students may not work more than 8 hours in one day, and must take a ½ hour break when working 6 or more hours.
- **Students are not permitted to work during their scheduled class time. Including but not limited to canceled classes.**
- Student wage rates will be determined by the employer.
- No student may earn more than his/her award per academic year.
- Any unearned funds will be forfeited.
- Students may not work more than one FWS job simultaneously.
- George Mason University has the right to terminate any Federal Work-Study position due to changes in availability of FWS funds or due to changes in the student status that could affect continued eligibility for financial aid. Failure to abide by GMU policies and procedures, unsatisfactory performance, and poor attendance are grounds for termination.
- The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 prohibits employers from accepting voluntary services from any paid employee. Any student employed under FWS must be paid for all hours worked.
- There are instances when students may be allowed to work over the regulated hours, however, permission must be granted by the FWS Coordinator **before** the hours are worked, not after. This permission will be granted only once per semester. The student must adhere to all University policies and procedures.

SUPERVISORS

- The employer/designated supervisor should establish and maintain a regular work schedule based upon the needs of the employer and the student's class schedule.
- The employer or supervisor should provide the student with a detailed job description and sufficient training to function effectively on the job.
- The employer should make every effort to give the student sufficient work/hours so the FWS award may be earned.
- The employer/supervisor must ensure the student does not work during times when it is determined the student should be in class.

- The employer must notify the FWS office, in writing, whenever a change is made: revision of job description, change in pay rate, position termination, change in supervisor, etc.
- The employer may be asked to evaluate a student's work performance at the end of the award period. The evaluation criteria will be productivity, dependability, attitude, initiative, attendance, and relationships with coworkers.
- The employer/supervisor agree to all regulations stated in the Supervisor and Student guides.
- The Supervisor must have a process in place to ensure that FWS students are working the hours reported on their timesheets and that the timesheets are accurate. The supervisor must certify that the student has worked and earned the amount being paid.
- The employer must adhere to all University policies and procedures.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can a student study while performing a federal work-study job?

Despite including the name "study", the purpose of the program is not to pay students to study. However, the nature of some employment positions includes some "down time". In some cases, the employee is allowed to use that time to do personal things such as read or study. This can occur in positions such as a receptionist, parking lot attendants, workers at information booths, or others. As long as FWS employees are not given special allowances not provided to "regular" employees, and the job does not become primarily one in which personal time is given, it is permissible to allow these FWS employees to study during slow times on the job. It would be best to document this allowance in the job description.

Can a student work in a FWS job while studying abroad?

Employing a student under the Federal Work-Study (FWS) Program while the student is studying abroad is permissible only if the FWS position is located at a branch of the student's home school in a foreign country, at a U.S. government facility abroad, or a U.S. company abroad.

Can FWS employees be paid sick leave?

Sick leave cannot be paid with the federal share of FWS funds. FWS funds cannot be used to provide fringe benefits.

Is a student teacher receiving course credit eligible for FWS?

Yes, a student teacher may be paid using FWS funds, but it must be done under the conditions laid out by the Department of Education. For more information, please contact the FWS Coordinator.

Can a student work over time?

NO! Students should stick to the regulated hours.

If a student is returning to a position, does the position need to be advertised?

No, as long as a student is returning to the same position the job does not need to be advertised.

Can federal work-study students work remotely?

The employer is responsible for ensuring that each student's work is properly supervised and that hours worked can be properly documented. Supervisors must be able to sign off on hours worked. Student employees must adhere to university policies and procedures on telework/remote work.

EPAF EXAMPLE

Details			
Name and ID [REDACTED]	Transaction [REDACTED]	Transaction Status Pending	Approval Category Hire: Non-Benefited, HNBEN
Job and Suffix WC1GMU-04, Work Study	Query Date 08/25/2025		

Employee Record		
Employee Status Active		
Employee Class Code	Old Value SW, Student Wage	
Home COAS P		
Home Organization [REDACTED]	Old Value [REDACTED] S	
Distribution COA P		
Distribution Orgn [REDACTED]	Old Value [REDACTED]	
District Code	Old Value FX, Fairfax Campus	
Current Hire Date	Old Value 05/04/2025	
Last Work Date -		
Term Reason Code -		
Termination Date -		
I9 Form Indicator	Old Value Received	
I9 Date	Old Value 11/21/2023	
I9 Expiration Date		

Starting Job Record, WC1GMU-04, Work Study	
Employee Class Code	WS, Work Study
Jobs Effective Date	08/25/2025
Personnel Date	08/25/2025
Job Begin Date	08/25/2025
Timesheet COA	P
Timesheet Orgn	
Regular Rate	15
Annual Salary	
Hours per Day	2
Hours per Pay	20
Title	Front Desk Assistant OAA
FTE	0
Factor	26
Pays	26
Job Change Reason	RR, Rehire
Contract Type	Primary
Time Entry Method	Employee Time Entry via Web
Supervisor ID	
Supervisor Position	
Supervisor Suffix	00
Appointment Percent	100
Salary Encumbrance	0

Terminate Job Record, WC1GMU-04, Work Study

Jobs Effective Date

06/30/2026

Personnel Date

06/30/2026

Job Status

Terminated

Job Change Reason

CA, Completion of Appointment

All FWS positions must have a termination date of June 30th or earlier.

Update Labor Funding, WC1GMU-04, Work Study

New

Effective Date: 08/25/2025

Percent	COA	Index	Fund	Organization	Account	Program	Activity	Location	Project	Cost	Encumbrance Override End Date
25	P		The Department should enter their Fund, Org and Program Code here.					FFX			
75	P		241170	M19192	61610	80100					

The FWS FUND, Org, Account and Program are auto-populated.