

# FEDERAL WORK-STUDY

## STUDENT EMPLOYMENT GUIDE

FWS

APPLICATION  
PROCESS

ELIGIBILITY

TIMESHEETS

Office of Student Financial Aid



**It is the responsibility of the student 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.**

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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, and 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.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

Jobs that serve the wider community, not just George Mason University, its students or staff, is considered a community service employer. Off-campus community service jobs are with local non-profit, governmental and community-based organizations that are designed to improve the quality of life for residents of the surrounding area.

Community Service positions aim to:

- Provide students with real life experience outside of the classroom
- Encourage students to consider careers in public service
- Provide community service organizations the opportunity to extend the population they service
- Allow students the opportunity to gain professional work experience

Students interested in open community service positions must apply to these positions via Handshake. Students hired for community service positions must follow all FWS guidelines as indicated in the Student Employment Guide. All employers must follow guidelines in the supervisor guide.

## AWARDS

Each student is limited in the number of wages they may earn based on the student's federal work-study 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:

- EFC
- Cost of Attendance
- Awarded loans, grants, scholarships, etc.

Students are **not** to exceed the total amount of their FWS award. For students attending both the fall and spring semesters, their aid will be divided evenly between the fall and spring semesters. Any funds not used will be forfeited.

If a student does not have FWS they must contact the financial aid office with their name and student ID number and request FWS.

## HIRING PROCESS

The hiring process consists of:

1. Establishing FWS eligibility.

2. Applying for positions via Handshake.
3. Interviews.
4. Completing hiring paperwork.

## APPLYING FOR POSITIONS

Federal Work-Study positions are located on Handshake, Mason's online job and internship database.

In order to log in, **new students (freshmen and transfer students)** must be registered (enrolled for classes) for the upcoming semester. Students typically will register during orientation. If a student cannot log in, they must wait till after orientation to apply for jobs. Handshake accounts cannot be created for non-registered students.

### To Get Started:

1. **Log in to Handshake** - using your Patriot Pass Credentials
2. **Complete Your Profile** – add your work/volunteer experiences, skills and interest
3. **Upload Your Documents** – Upload your resume, cover letter, and job availability form
4. **Apply for Jobs** – Once your resume is approved, you can begin applying for open positions.

### Helpful Hints:

- Need help crafting a resume? Visit University Career Services' website:  
<https://careers.gmu.edu/undergraduate-students/create-resume>
- Jobs: Browse various positions by clicking on their titles. You can apply to as many as you want—the more you apply, the higher your chances of being hired. Remember, Handshake lists various types of positions, not just FWS ones, so pay close attention

## RETURNING TO A PREVIOUS POSITION

If you have been asked to return to a position you held last semester you will need to submit a new Student Employment Authorization and Responsibilities form (SEAR).

- If you are working over the summer you will need to submit the form **before** July 1st.
- If you are returning to your position at the start of the fall term, you will need to submit your form prior to your first day back on the job.

## INTERVIEWS

If contacted by the prospective employer, follow procedures instructed by them in order to interview for the position in which you are interested in. Please note that employers have different policies on following up with applicants. It is your responsibility to contact the employer with questions regarding your application status.

If contacted for an interview students should remember the following:

- Note location and time of interview
- Name of the person you will be meeting for the interview
- Be as professional as possible
- Dress appropriately

If assistance is needed with interviews and practicing for interviews, resources are available at University Career Services.

## REQUIRED PAPERWORK

### SEAR FORM

**If you obtain a FWS position, you and your supervisor are required to complete a current Student Employment Authorization Responsibilities Form.**

These forms are Dynamic Forms and available on via our website. It is your responsibility to submit this form to the Office of Student Financial Aid **before** your first day of work. The supervisor must be a Mason staff member or direct supervisor for off-campus jobs. A Student Employment Authorization and Responsibility Form is required for each academic year and for each new position.

**OSCAR Research Assistantships** – if you hold an OSCAR position, all paperwork including the SEAR form will be completed with the OSCAR office.

**Please note: EPAFs will not be approved unless this the SEAR form has been submitted to our office.**

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## EMPLOYMENT PAPERWORK

All student employees need to complete the following forms:

- **Student Employment Authorization and Responsibilities Form** (on the FWS website)
- **On-Campus**
  - The Mason Onboarding Process must be completed by all students, this process will be initiated by your employer on-line. Students have 3 business days to complete the hiring process.
  - During this process you will need to submit original proof of Authorized Employment ([form I-9](#)).
    - *It is important to remember to bring these documents with you if you are an out-of-state student.*
  - Your supervisor will create your Electronic Personnel Action Form (EPAF) in order for you to have a time sheet. EPAFs will not be approved until the SEAR Form is received by the FWS Coordinator.
  - Bank Account Information is necessary for setting up Direct Deposit.
- **Off-Campus** - Students will need to submit any required paperwork requested by their employer. Their policies and guidelines should be followed.

## BEGINNING YOUR FWS ASSIGNMENT

The student is expected to arrange his/her schedule prior to the first day of work.

Some departments or agencies may require students to work during holidays and/or breaks so that services may continue uninterrupted. This expectation will be made clear during the interview and hiring process.

## WORK SCHEDULE

- Students must arrange a mutually agreeable work schedule with his/her supervisor and adhere to it.
- Arrange a work schedule that does not interfere with your class schedule.
- 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.

- Follow the schedule carefully once it has been established. Always notify your supervisor if you are unable to work.
- During final exams and midterms, supervisors must accommodate the student's study/exam schedule. Advance notice should be given to the supervisor so they can arrange proper scheduling.
- Be punctual.
- Student must provide advanced notification to supervisor of inability to report for scheduled work hours.
- Students cannot be paid for hours worked when it is determined that they should have been attending class during that time.

## TIMESHEETS, PAYROLL, PAYMENT AND RECORDS

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### TIMESHEETS

- The student is responsible for adhering to their work schedule and will only be paid for actual hours worked.
- You and your supervisor are responsible for keeping track of your timesheets, hours worked and earnings.
- Students need to monitor their timesheets closely to ensure they do not exceed the total amount of their FWS award.
- On-Campus students will submit their timesheets via Patriotweb every two weeks.
- During holidays or vacation periods, the submission date for timesheets may change. Please pay close attention to the Bi-Weekly timesheet schedule:

<https://hr.gmu.edu/payroll/payroll-calendar/>

- Off-Campus students will submit their timesheets via their employer's system.

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### PAYROLL

The student will not be paid for hours worked over the award amount unless the FWS Coordinator increases the number of hours in advance or the department

agrees to pay the student from their wage budget. The department must notify the FWS Coordinator in advance if it intends to pay the student out of their own funds.

#### PAYMENT

On-campus student employees are paid every two weeks by direct deposit through GMU. If payment is not received students need to contact the Payroll office at 703-993-2600. Bank Account information can be verified via student's Patriotweb.

Off-Campus students will be paid either by check or direct deposit via their employer's policies.

#### RECORD KEEPING

The student must keep an accurate timesheet that is certified by their supervisor biweekly.

The student must keep track of their hours worked and amounts paid.

Students can use the Pay Sheet to help them keep track of their hours and amounts paid.

#### REGISTRATION AND TERMINATIONS

- Students should give a notification of at least two weeks in advanced 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.

#### 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.

#### SUMMER FWS

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.

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Including the requirements listed above students are required to meet the followings terms and conditions. Once a student submits a Student Employment Authorization form, they are accepting the following:

- 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.
- Be enrolled in a degree seeking program.
- 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 you have graduated, you 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.  
<https://www.gmu.edu/financial-aid/eligibility/satisfactory-academic-progress-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 their award per academic year.
- Any unearned funds will be forfeited.
- Students may not work more than one FWS job simultaneously.
- 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.
- 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, poor attendance, unethical work behavior or dishonesty may also result in the loss of your FWS award.