

Federal Work-Study Q & A

The Federal Work-Study Program (FWS) provides part-time employment to help students earn money to meet their educational expenses.

What are the eligibility requirements?

To receive FWS, you must meet the eligibility requirements for federal student aid. You must:

- Have financial need
- Have a high school diploma, a GED, or pass an approved ability to benefit test, or have been home-schooled
- Be enrolled to obtain a degree (matriculated)
- Be a U.S. citizen, permanent resident or other eligible classification of non-citizen
- Have a valid Social Security number
- Make Satisfactory Academic Progress for Federal Student Aid Programs
- Register with Selective Service (males between the ages of 18 and 25)
- Certify by signing a FAFSA that you will use any federal student aid funds awarded to you solely for educational purposes
- Certify by signing a FAFSA that you are not in default of any federal student loan and that you do not owe a repayment of any federal student aid grant

How can I determine whether I'll qualify for the Federal Work-Study Program?

Whether you receive an FWS offer is based on many factors: FAFSA information (EFC), need, enrollment and academic status, when you apply, other financial aid and scholarship funds awarded, and availability of FWS funds.

- A student must be eligible to apply for federal aid according to FAFSA guidelines
- A student must register for a minimum of 6 credits in their division of matriculation plus maintain and attend those classes
- A student must meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Guidelines
- A student may not be in default of a student loan or owe a repayment of any financial aid funds
- A student must demonstrate need, meet CUNY awarding criteria and FWS funds must be available to make an offer

How do I apply?

The FAFSA can be filed as of October during the year prior to the academic year aid is desired. On the FAFSA, the student must answer "YES" to the question indicating they want to be considered for an FWS offer. FWS funds can be offered as early as March, therefore, it is important to apply early. Once all FWS funds are offered, late filers would need to inquire with the Financial Aid Office if there is an appeal process.

If I participate in the FWS Program this year, is it guaranteed that I will get a FWS offer for next year?

Participating in the FWS Program one year does not guarantee an offer for the next academic year. The student must apply by completing the FAFSA each year in order to determine their eligibility for FWS funds.

How do I know whether I have been offered Federal Work-Study?

Federal Work-Study offers are posted for the fall and/or spring semesters on the student's CUNYfirst account for the specified academic year. Therefore, the student should monitor and review their CUNYfirst account on a regular basis. It is important to accept the offer immediately if you are interested in this employment opportunity as funding is extremely limited and competitive.

How do I accept my Federal Work-Study offer on CUNYfirst?

The college has a limited budget, therefore there may not be sufficient funds for all FWS offers to be accepted. A student should accept the FWS offers as soon as it appears on their CUNYfirst account. Steps to follow:

- Login to CUNYfirst at <https://home.cunyfirst.cuny.edu>.
- Select HR/Campus Solutions from the left menu.
- Navigate to Self-Service, followed by Student Center.
- In the Finances section, click the Accept/Decline Awards link.
- On the Select Aid Year to View page, you may see listings for multiple aid years and multiple colleges. Click the link for the college and aid year you wish to review.
- If you are offered Federal Work-Study and you want to accept, you MUST check the "Accept" box for each item you wish to receive. If you want to decline the offer, you must check the "Decline" box for each item you wish to decline. Do not forget to hit the SUBMIT button at the bottom of the page after you have indicated your decisions.

NOTE: If you do not indicate acceptance of your Federal Work-Study you risk losing the offer.

Where would I work?

Where you work depends on the amount of your offer, class schedule and job skills. To the maximum extent possible, select a position that complements or reinforces your educational program, career goals, and/or provides an opportunity to enhance your skills. You may work at either an approved on-campus job site or off-campus at a nonprofit community service agency affiliated with CUNY.

Can I choose where to work on-campus or off-campus?

You may apply for various positions. The student can select from the available job postings for which positions they would like to request an interview. The FWS supervisor will notify them if they are going to offer the student an opportunity to have an interview for the specific position. After the interview(s), the site supervisor will notify you if they want to hire you for the position. You can decide which offer to accept. Select one position best suited for you, as that will be your job site for the entire placement period provided you continue to meet all FWS Program requirements.

Once you are approved to be hired, you and your work-study employer will receive an approval by email from the work-study placement office. You may then begin to work.

Can I earn as much money as I want?

No. Your FWS offer represents the maximum amount you may earn for each semester during the academic year. How much of the total offer you actually receive depends upon your rate of pay, the total number of hours you work each week and the number of weeks you work during the approved placement period. Once you have earned your maximum FWS offer, you will have to stop working. You must maintain a minimum of six (6) credits each semester. Should you withdraw or stop attending classes you must stop working immediately and contact the FWS Office.

Can I work as many hours as I want?

The FWS Program allows you to work between 6 to 20 hours per week. If there is a different maximum, it will be stated on the job description. If there is any change in the maximum hours students can work per week an e-mail will be sent to the FWS supervisor and student with the details. Otherwise, students may not work more than 20 hours per week!

What are the requirements for taking a break?

After 6 consecutive hours of work it is mandatory that you take at least a half hour unpaid break.

Can I work if my class is canceled?

No. A student may not work during a time their class is scheduled to meet according to CUNYfirst.

Can I work during winter break?

All students must stop work at the end of the fall semester, even if they still have unearned FWS funds remaining for the fall. Your FWS supervisor will need to e-mail a request to FWS@brooklyn.cuny.edu requesting a review of your record to determine if you are eligible to work for the winter and the date you may resume work. We will notify the FWS supervisor and student as to the decision via email.

Can I work during the summer?

Federal Work-Study offers are only made for the fall and spring semesters. Some eligible continuing students have requested to use their fall FWS offer during the summer. Students offered FWS for the following fall semester should contact the Financial Aid Office at the end of June to find out more about this option.

What is the pay rate for Federal Work-Study employees?

The pay rate will be indicated on the job description.

How will I be paid?

Each payroll period is usually two weeks. Your FWS supervisor submits your time sheet for each pay period to the Financial Aid FWS Payroll Office for processing. Refer to the Federal Work-Study Payroll Schedule for pay period dates, when the time sheet is due, and scheduled payment dates. Time sheets received late after the due date are processed with the following pay period.

What is the most secure form of payment of my work-study wages?

You can receive your Federal Work-Study payments electronically by signing up for direct deposit. The benefits of direct deposit are listed below:

- **Safe:** You don't have to worry about lost/stolen checks
- **Convenient:** No need to wait in line to cash your check
- **Fast:** Your money is deposited to your bank account as soon as it's ready

If I am unable to earn my entire offer, will I be able to receive the rest of the money?

No. Students are paid only for the hours they have worked. If you do not earn your entire FWS offer before the end of the placement period, the unearned portion of your offer is returned to the program.

How many credits do I have to take for FWS eligibility?

You must register for and maintain an enrollment status of half-time (6 credits or equated credits) or greater as one of the eligibility requirements to participate in the FWS Program. If, for any reason, your course load falls below half-time, you can no longer participate in the program and must stop working. You should notify your FWS supervisor and the FWS Payroll Assistant in the Financial Aid Office.

Do I have to stop working if I withdraw from school?

Yes. If you withdraw from school for any reason, you lose your eligibility for FWS and must stop working.

I am currently receiving unemployment benefits. Do I have to report FWS earnings to the unemployment office?

Yes. If you are receiving unemployment insurance benefits and are also employed in the FWS Program, you must notify your local unemployment office that you are working in the FWS Program. The New York State Department of Labor considers it willful misrepresentation to collect unemployment benefits without revealing that you are also receiving FWS.

Are FWS earnings taxable?

Yes. FWS earnings are considered taxable income by both federal and state governments. However, when completing the FAFSA, FWS earnings are not included in the calculation of your eligibility for federal financial aid.

Why do I have to fill out an I-9 Form?

According to federal law, the identity and work eligibility of all individuals being hired must be verified before beginning an FWS employment assignment. You will have to complete an I-9 form and present certain unexpired documents at the time of being hired. You may not participate in the on-campus FWS Program until you have filed an I-9 form with the Financial Aid Office. If you work off-campus, you will file your I-9 with your off-campus employer.

Should I retain copies of my FWS placement and payroll documents?

Yes, you may need that information in the future to document your work history and earnings.

What are the benefits of the FWS Program?

If you have never had a job, the FWS Program can give you your first exposure to the world of work. FWS employers are often willing to give you on-the-job training. By participating in the FWS Program, you can gain valuable experience. You may learn about giving something back to the community through a community service related FWS position. You may include your FWS job experience on your resume. You could be offered a non-work-study position by the employer you worked for as a FWS student. Some students are offered part-time or full-time employment based on their work performance as an FWS employee.