



FWS Frequently Asked Questions

Purpose:

The Federal Work-Study (FWS) program at UNC is a complex system. Both new participants and those returning often have questions about program operations and logistics. Listed below is a collection of some of the most common questions we’ve received from students in previous years.

Contents

- Purpose: 1
- Receiving a Federal Work-Study (FWS) Award 2
- Obtaining a Job 3
- Human Resources & Onboarding..... 5
- Working..... 6
- Pay..... 7
- Unused Awards and Conversions 8
- Other 8



Receiving a Federal Work-Study (FWS) Award

1. What is the Federal Work-Study program?

Federal Work-Study is a type of financial aid, though it is different from grants and loans. Through the FWS program, students are paid competitive wages in exchange for working in one of a variety of sanctioned FWS positions with on-campus entities or off-campus community service partners. The program also strives to provide students with employment opportunities which will support their academic and professional development as well as deliver a paycheck.

2. What do I need to do in order to receive a FWS award?

FWS awards are provided to all students who indicate they are interested in participating in the program on their FAFSA and show sufficient need. You'll need to submit a FAFSA and indicate "yes" when asked if you are interested in the work-study program.

Please note, graduate students interested in the FWS program will also need to submit an additional application located at <https://www.unc.edu/studentaid/pdf/misc/GradFWSForm.pdf>.

3. I didn't click "yes" to the work-study question when I completed my initial FAFSA. Can I change that now so I can get work-study added to my financial aid package?

While we're happy to provide FWS funding to interested students, our budget is limited. If you didn't indicate you wanted a work-study award on your FAFSA, but are interested in the program, send an email indicating this to work-study@unc.edu. If we have remaining funding, we'll update your award.

4. Will I receive an FWS award each year?

Eligibility for FWS awards are recalculated for each student on an annual basis. While we try to award students every year, receiving the award is dependent on the individual's financial need and amount of remaining funding. It is possible to be eligible in one year and not the next.



Obtaining a Job

5. What kind of jobs are available?

The list of jobs and employers varies from year to year, but it always includes a variety of positions across campus and in the surrounding community. When the job board and application system is open to applicants (usually August 1 to mid-May), users can review the list of available jobs at https://unc.studentemployment.ngwebsolutions.com/JobX_FindAJob.aspx.

All positions are classified into one of the following categories

i. On-Campus Jobs

1. Athletics
2. Clerical
3. Environmental
4. General Office
5. Laboratory
6. Library
7. Marketing/Public Relations
8. Research
9. Student Services
10. Technology
11. Miscellaneous/Other

ii. Off-Campus Jobs

1. Tutor
2. Child Care
3. Clerical
4. General Office
5. Program Coordination
6. Research
7. Technology
8. Miscellaneous/Other

6. How do I find a job?

Students with FWS awards can find a job by going to the [JobX Student page](#) and clicking on the [Find a Job](#) link.

Once there, students can use the Find a Job page to search for jobs by key word, name, department, location, or a variety of other factors. Students should remember to look for positions which will enhance their academic and skills development in addition to providing a paycheck.

7. What if I can not find a job?

Historically, the FWS program has more open positions than students to fill them, so job applicants should have a variety of options available throughout the year. You should start by completing the steps outlined under question six.

If you still have trouble finding a position, check out the guides on the [JobX Student page](#). Using a different type of search might reveal additional opportunities of which you were previously unaware.

If you've completed all of those steps and still need help, consider coming by the FWS Desk on the 2nd floor of Vance Hall or reaching out to the FWS Team at work-study@unc.edu.

8. How do I apply for a job?

Once you've found a position in JobX that you are interested in, you can submit an application using the [Apply for selected jobs] button on the search page. The application system is contained entirely within JobX, so you'll fill out a job application, submit your resume/cover letter, and answer any questions posed by the employer within the system.

9. What if I need help applying for a job?

If you need instructions on how to apply to a position, review the JobX Student Training resource on the [JobX Student page](#). This resource provides step-by-step guidance on how to complete an application.

If you've reviewed the guide and still need assistance, consider coming by the FWS Desk on the 2nd floor of Vance Hall or reaching out to the FWS Team at work-study@unc.edu.



10. Do I have to interview for a job?

FWS students applying to a new position (including a higher-level position with the same employer) are required to complete an interview. University Career Services provides a number of resources on the interview process that can be accessed at <https://careers.unc.edu/students/interviewing>.

FWS students who are returning to the same job with the same department can have their interview waived at the discretion of the FWS Supervisor. This decision is entirely up to the supervisor.

11. Can I hold more than one FWS job?

Students can only hold one FWS position at a time. Students may choose to change positions during the academic year or between years, but they can not simultaneously hold two or more FWS jobs without violating program regulations.

Students interested in working additional hours or obtaining a second position are allowed to take up a non-work-study job in addition to their work-study position. However, we do not recommend that any student work more than 20 hours per week across all positions while taking classes full time as studies show this consistently has a negative impact on a student's well-being and academic performance.



Human Resources & Onboarding

12. After I have been hired, what additional steps do I need to take with HR?

Once you have been hired, you will need meet with the departmental Human Resources officer to complete onboarding. This will include multiple processes:

- i. Completing I-9 verification
- ii. Completing federal payroll withholding sign-up
- iii. Completing state payroll withholding sign-up
- iv. Completing direct deposit enrollment

13. What documents do I need to bring with me to complete onboarding and get on the payroll?

Multiple documents will be required to complete onboarding

- i. For I-9 verification, please see the USICS's page on [acceptable documents](#).
- ii. For federal payroll withholding sign-up, you will need to complete a [W-4](#).
- iii. For state payroll withholding sign-up, you will need to complete a [NC-4](#).
- iv. For direct deposit enrollment, you will need to provide an [1106.1.1f](#) form. You will need to have access to a bank account to complete this form and may need to provide a voided check.

14. Where can I get the forms needed for onboarding?

After being hired, your FWS Supervisor will connect you with their HR representative. This representative will provide you with copies of all of the forms required to complete the onboarding process as well as guidance on how to complete the forms.



Working

15. When do I work (days of the week and hours)?

Your schedule will vary with the position you choose. While most positions are looking for students during normal business hours (Monday to Friday, 8 AM to 6 PM), FWS job opportunities are available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week during the academic year. Some positions even work exclusively during evenings and weekends, for those students who prefer to work outside of normal class hours. You should review each job posting in JobX for information on this topic during your job search.

16. Is the work schedule the same every week?

This will also depend on the job. Some positions require students to work the same weekly schedule, while others vary each week. Some positions even allow students to set their own schedule each week, provided they work a minimum number of hours. You should review each job posting in JobX for information on this topic during your job search.

17. How many hours will I work?

On average, students work between 10 and 12 hours per week. However, the exact number of hours worked will depend on the individual and the position. Under program regulations, students can not work more than 20 hours per week. In contrast some positions do not require students to work any hours during specific weeks at points during the academic year.

18. Can I start FWS in the Spring semesters? Can I work in just the Fall semester?

While most positions are for Fall & Spring, students are allowed to work in only one semester if they chose to do so. Each job posting will state whether it is for the Fall, Spring, or full Academic Year.

19. How long will I stay at the job?

FWS positions are normally for the academic year, meaning most students work from the time they are hired until the end of the Spring term. However, many FWS students will return to the same position in future aid years if they find it to be a good fit.

Both students and supervisors have the right to cease employment at any time. If a student is unhappy with their position, they are free to leave and search for another job at any point during the academic year.

20. What kind of training should I expect to receive?

According to annual survey data, 99% of supervisors provide training for FWS students, and 85% of students receiving between 1 and 20 hours of training each year. The exact type of training will vary based on the duties of the position, but all students will receive training on how to track their time worked for payroll purposes. Additionally, all students receive training on any necessary health, safety, and/or confidentiality topics required by the position to ensure the safety of the student and/or stakeholders.



Pay

21. How do I get my pay?

As part of onboarding, you'll set up a direct deposit system for your paycheck. Through this, your earnings will be deposited into a bank account of your choice.

22. How much do I get paid?

FWS students are hourly employees; as such, students will be paid according to how many hours they work during a given pay period. In keeping with federal regulations, the hourly wage rate for each student is based on duties and requirements outlined on the job posting. Students can see the wage range and estimated number of hours per week for each position when reviewing job postings.

23. When do I get paid?

Students are paid on UNC's [biweekly schedule](#), meaning that students are paid every two weeks. Because of the logistics of payroll cycle, earnings are usually provided to students 2 weeks after the end of the payroll cycle during which work was performed.

Unlike other forms of financial aid, FWS funding is not paid out at the beginning of the semester. As such, it is not available to pay for initial balances with the University at the beginning of the semester.

24. What can I use my earnings to pay for?

FWS earnings are a form of financial aid, and, therefore, can be used to pay for any college-related expense.

This can include charges paid directly to the university as well as charges paid to non-university entities for other expenses related to attending school such as books, food, rent, transportation, medical expenses, or basic living expenses.

Earnings are not intended to cover expenses unrelated to college. Therefore, using FWS earnings to cover such items as vacations or gifts would not be in keeping with program guidelines.

Students are not required to submit documentation regarding how their FWS earnings are used.

25. Can I use my earnings to pay my bill with UNC?

Yes, FWS earnings can be used to pay charges to UNC. However, as previously stated, FWS earnings are paid out over the academic year as students work rather than being paid out in a lump sum at the beginning of the term. As such, these funds are not usually available to assist with initial Cashier's bills which occur at the beginning of the academic term.

26. Will my earnings be taxed?

FWS earnings are subject to federal and state taxes, just like earnings through any other employer. However, most students are able to reclaim part or all of their taxed income by filing a tax return.



Unused Awards and Conversions

27. What happens if I don't use the full award by the end of the year?

Unused FWS funding remains on the students accounts at the end of the year and no additional wages are paid for unworked hours. Effectively, the student simply does not receive that portion of their funding for the year.

28. What happens if I use the full award before the end of the year? Can I get more FWS funding?

Students who utilize their full FWS award before the end of the year will need to cease their work through the FWS program in order to prevent a violation of program regulations. In some cases, students may be able to continue working for their employer once FWS funding is exhausted if the department is willing to pay the student out of their own departmental funds.

29. What if I don't want to work or am unable to work?

Students with FWS awards who do not participate in work-study will not receive funding through the FWS program. Students will need to either locate another source of funding to make up for the unearned award or reduce their expenditures to account for the portion of their college cost that is no longer being covered by FWS funds.

30. Can I convert the FWS funds to something else?

Yes, students have the option of converting their FWS award into a student loan using the [Conversion Request Form](#). The FWS Team will provide the best possible loan option at the time of conversion, and students can choose whether to accept or decline the new loan funding.

Other

31. Is there summer work-study?

At this time, we do not have sufficient funding to provide summer work-study funding. As such, FWS awards are limited to the Fall and Spring semesters.

Some FWS employers to allow students to work over the summer. However, these positions are funded by the individual departments and are separate from the FWS program.

32. What happens to my work-study award if I study abroad?

FWS opportunities for UNC students are not available outside of the Chapel Hill area. As such, we can not offer work-study to those students who are studying abroad. In most cases, FWS funding is converted to loans or grants as part of the study-abroad packaging process.

33. Will my work-study earnings impact the amount of financial aid I can receive the next year?

If reported on the FAFSA as work-study income, FWS earnings will not affect the need calculation performed by the FAFSA. As such, properly-reported FWS earnings do not impact the amount of aid a student can receive in a future aid year.