

Western New England University (WNE) Policy on Financial Hardship Requests for F-1 Students

Effective Date: 02/11/2025

Purpose: This policy outlines the criteria and procedures for F-1 international students at Western New England University (WNE) seeking a recommendation for financial hardship relief. The policy aims to maintain compliance with federal regulations while ensuring that recommendations for financial hardship are limited to exceptional and uncontrollable circumstances.

Policy Statement:

Financial hardship requests for F-1 students will not generally be supported by WNE. F-1 students are expected to have sufficient financial resources to complete their studies at the University as outlined during the admission and SEVIS I-20 issuance process.

Key Guidelines:

1. First-Year Restriction:

- Under no circumstances will financial hardship recommendations be made for F-1 students during their first semester of study at WNE.
- Financial hardship recommendations will not be made for F-1 students during their 2nd semester at WNE, except in rare and extraordinary circumstances such as major natural disasters, war, or other uncontrollable catastrophic events that directly impact the student's ability to access financial support.

2. Recommendation Authority:

- The authority to recommend financial hardship I-20 updates or approvals rests solely with the Principal Designated School Official (PDSO).

3. Eligibility for Financial Hardship Consideration:

Recommendations will only be made for financial hardship when the student demonstrates that the financial difficulty is due to circumstances beyond their control. Examples include:

- War or civil unrest in the student's home country.
- Major natural disasters that are widely recognized (e.g., earthquakes, floods, or hurricanes).
- Other uncontrollable catastrophic events that directly impact the student's ability to access financial support.

4. Non-Qualifying Circumstances (including but not limited to):

The following circumstances will **not** be considered valid reasons for financial hardship requests:

- Losses made by sponsors in stock investments or other financial ventures.
- If your sponsor is not your parent, your sponsor's health issues or inability to provide financial support.
- Adverse currency exchange rate fluctuations.

- Any situation that could have reasonably been anticipated or managed by the student.

5. Documentation Requirements:

- Students must provide verifiable and official documentation of the financial hardship and the circumstances leading to it along with an essay on changed circumstances.
- The PDSO reserves the right to request additional information or documentation as necessary.

6. Submission Process:

- Students must submit a formal written request to the PDSO, including a detailed explanation of the hardship and supporting documentation.
- A committee consisting of the PDSO and two other DSOs will determine the eligibility on a case-by-case basis.
- The PDSO will review the request and notify the student of the decision within a reasonable time frame.

7. Appeals:

- Decisions made by the PDSO are final and not subject to appeal.

Compliance with Federal Regulations: This policy aligns with the regulations set forth by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). WNE is committed to maintaining compliance while supporting the academic success of its F-1 students.

Conclusion: WNE expects F-1 students to have adequate financial planning for their education. Financial hardship recommendations will be made only under rare and uncontrollable circumstances to ensure fairness and compliance with federal guidelines.