

State Work Study FAQs

For Employers

Employer Eligibility

DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

Is my business or organization eligible?

Eligible employers include government agencies, for-profit corporations, small businesses, and non-profit organizations. However, the state constitution prevents any business or organization involved in or with a controlling interest in political or religious activity from participating in the program.

In selecting employer participants, SPU reviews the:

- Nature of the position;
- Organization's compatibility with the school's role and mission; and
- Work environment to ensure that it promotes a positive learning experience.

In addition, SPU requires that the position will:

- Not displace regular workers or impair existing contracts;
- Give students the opportunity to explore or gain experience in a career interest; and,
- Be adequately supervised.

ASSESSING COSTS

What will it cost?

Wages

You are required to pay the student a wage equal to what you would pay non-students for similar work. The state will then reimburse you for a percentage of the student's gross wages. (The percentage depends on the type of your organization.)

Benefits

You will pay the employer share of any required employee benefits, such as Federal Withholding Tax, Workers' Compensation, Federal Social Security Taxes, and State and Federal unemployment taxes. You may offer optional employer-sponsored benefits, although it is not required. You will not be reimbursed for these optional benefits.

Students who work in public schools or government agencies may be eligible for retirement benefits. Contact the [Washington State Department of Retirement Systems'](#) Employer Support Services for more information.

Why is the cost so low?

As a participating employer, you're not the only one who benefits. The state and students win too.

Through the program, the state helps students who might not be able to afford an education pay a portion of their college costs.

Money earned through the Work Study Program allows students to pay for their education in current dollars, limiting their need to incur more debt. Because the employer pays a portion of student wages, the state's financial aid funds can be distributed more widely, making higher education available to more Washington residents.

In addition, national studies suggest that students who work up to 20 hours per week while in college manage their time better, are less likely to drop out, and place a higher value on their education.

The Hiring Process

RECRUITING

How do I recruit students?

Recruiting good employees can often be difficult. This program allows you to try out potential employees before graduation and train them the way you would like. You can assess the students' performance on a low-cost basis, then if they are a good fit for your organization, offer them full-time employment upon graduation.

Prior to recruiting students, specific job descriptions must be approved by SPU and the Washington Student Achievement Council. Approved positions will be entered into SPU JobLink. Hiring supervisors should visit <https://spu-csm.symplicity.com/employers> and request login access to the site. Once access is granted, the supervisor will have the ability to post/pull job postings as well as online applications. Most aspects of the hiring process can be managed through the site.

When is the best time to recruit students and where can I find them?

In general, the best time to recruit students is in the fall when most students begin a new school year and look for part-time jobs. In the summer, many students look for full-time work to earn money for school.

DETERMINING A STUDENT'S ELIGIBILITY

Can I hire any student?

To qualify for reimbursement, you must hire a college student who is eligible for State Work Study and has been referred to you by SPU. Employers are encouraged to hire non-work study students as well.

How do I know if a student is eligible?

Most students will identify themselves as eligible when they call or visit you to inquire about a job. Ask them to bring to the interview a copy of their State Work Study Work Referral. Students may obtain this form from Student Financial Services. The State Work Study Work Referral Form includes:

- A statement that the student is eligible for State Work Study;
- The total amount the student can earn, or the "award amount;" and,
- The eligibility dates.

Complete this form with the student and return it to the school. Make sure you keep a copy for your new employee's personnel file. If this form is not completed and received by SPU, any hours worked (and respective earnings) will be considered non work study and will not be reimbursed.

When does the student need to complete a Work Referral form?

A student must complete a work referral form at the beginning of each academic year and at the beginning of each summer (if the student will be working in the summer). This is true for all students- even those continuing in the same job.

INTERVIEWING

How many candidates can I interview before I select one?

You should interview as many as you think necessary. Be aware, that due to the program's popularity and limited funding, there are many more jobs than students to fill them each year.

Do I have to hire any student referred to me?

No. Select a student worker as you would any other worker. Outline the job requirements, conduct interviews, and hire the student that is the best fit for your organization.

Do I have to hire this student when he or she graduates?

No, you are under no obligation to offer permanent employment to a student employee. However, many employers view this program as a good tool for identifying and hiring permanent workers.

Once I've hired a Work Study Student employee, what can I expect?

You should expect the same performance and results you would expect from any other part-time worker.

What may be different about student workers?

Every student is required to make satisfactory academic progress in school while holding a Work Study position. If a student's grades fall or the student drops below half-time enrollment, he or she may be required to stop work. Therefore, the student's work schedule should be flexible enough to accommodate study and exam times.

HIRING

What is the "typical" student like?

The student population has become increasingly diverse. It includes traditional students, ages 18 to 21, who are eager to excel in their first work experiences, as well as the non-traditional student population that includes older students seeking to make mid-career changes or add cutting-edge skills to their already considerable work experience.

What kind of time commitment can I expect from a student worker?

Students may work up to 19 hours per week during enrollment periods. Some students may be available to work up to 40 hours per week during non-enrollment periods (for example, summer term or school breaks.)

Students can earn varying amounts based on their work study award, as determined by the school. If their eligibility award is low, the time commitment they can offer you may be limited.

Are these "needy" students unskilled workers who can't find jobs on their own?

No. Many students need additional financial help to get through school. This is not a reflection on their ability to do a good job for you. As college costs continue to rise, more and more students need financial assistance. These students are as skilled and academically capable as students who don't qualify for work study based on their financial status.

Pay and Performance

SETTING STUDENT WAGES

Students must be paid on an hourly basis at a rate that is comparable to the entry-level rate for regular employees performing similar duties within your organization.

If I have no other workers who are performing this kind of work, how do I determine a fair wage?

The pay rate should be appropriate within the context of your pay schedule. Consider major duties and responsibilities, level of tasks and duties, distinguishing characteristics, typical work, judgment required, and the skills and knowledge required to do the job.

Can I pay student workers on a commission basis?

No. The terms of the contract require you to set an hourly wage for the duties performed. If your organization pays workers by commission, bonus, or other special compensation, in addition to an hourly wage, you will be reimbursed for only the agreed upon percentage of the hourly wage.

Can I pay a student in cash?

No. The rules of the program require that you pay by check or direct deposit and keep accurate records for proof of payment.

Can I offer room and board or other goods or services in exchange for hours worked?

No. The student must be paid an hourly wage for hours worked.

What do I do if a student receives a pay raise?

Contact the Office of Student Employment with the effective date of the new pay raise. If the pay raise exceeds the contracted pay range as defined by the job description submitted to the WSAC, an Employer Information Change Request Form must be submitted.

ENSURING PERFORMANCE

What if a student is not performing satisfactorily?

Point out the problem and take corrective measures right away. To prevent performance problems, clearly outline your expectations. If you have an ongoing need for student employees, consider writing Work Study procedures into your standard personnel procedures manual. Each time you sign the time sheet to verify hours worked, you are also verifying that the work was performed satisfactorily.

Can I fire a Work Study Student employee for performance problems?

Yes. However, if possible, first offer the student a chance to correct the problem. You may want to apply your normal performance-review procedures to student employees, or modify your standards by reviewing performance more often. A review every three to six months seems to work best.

Can a Work Study Student employee be laid-off?

Yes, if necessary. However, the student may take another job and not be available later.

Contract and Reimbursement

SIGNING THE EMPLOYER CONTRACT

How do I sign up for the program?

Contact SPU to receive an employer contract or go to the Washington Student Achievement Council's website to [download the forms](#). Write a job description for each position and send the completed forms back to SPU.

How long does the contractual period run?

The contract year runs from July 1 until June 30. Renewal is required each year. If you want to hire a student for the summer only, beginning before July 1, you will need to sign a contract for the current year ending June 30.

Do all the colleges and universities in the state follow the same procedures?

In general, they follow the same procedures, although some differences exist. Public schools directly handle contracts and reimbursement checks. Due to state constitutional requirements, the Washington Student Achievement Council issues checks and approves contracts for independent colleges and universities.

Each school will have a set of operating procedures and guidelines. Some rules may be unique to each school. If you have questions, call SPU to verify its requirements.

Who signs the contract in my organization?

The individual who is authorized to approve expenditures should sign the contract. The authorizing signature indicates compliance with all provisions of the contract.

What are my responsibilities once the student employee starts work?

As an employer, you are responsible for the following:

- Providing adequate and reasonable supervision for the student employee;
- Ensuring that the student employee does not work more than an average of 19 hours per week while in school and no more than 40 hours during breaks;
- Ensuring that total earnings do not exceed the amount for which the student is eligible, that the student does not start work before the start date listed on the award letter, and does not work beyond the end date. If you are uncertain about those dates, contact SPU for assistance;
- Notifying the Student Employment Office of any changes in the student's employment, such as changes in wage rate or job title, promotion, termination, federal id and/or address;
- Attesting that wages were paid to the student by signing the time sheet; and,
- Following all state and federal employee laws.

MONITORING STUDENT EARNINGS

What is the best way to monitor student earnings?

The best way to ensure that you will be reimbursed is to monitor student earnings. Keep track of the total eligibility amount and the gross amount earned, not just the employer share. Encourage the student to keep records too.

When the student has earned most of the award amount, the student can check with the school to determine eligibility for an increased award.

If the student is not eligible for additional State Work Study funds, the student must stop work. Of course, you may continue to employ the student, although you will not be reimbursed for amounts in excess of the award.

COMPLETING TIMESHEETS

Where do I get timesheets and how do I complete and submit them?

The school will provide time sheets. They can also be accessed at the www.wsac.wa.gov/employers. The original should be sent to SPU. Make sure to keep a copy for your records.

The timesheet is a record of hours worked and wages paid, and allows you to receive reimbursement.

The timesheet must be signed in ink and dated on or after the last day worked, by the student and by the person directly responsible for supervising the student's work.

If a student works beyond his or her eligibility, you will not be reimbursed for hours over the amount indicated in the award letter. In addition, the student's financial aid may be revised downward to compensate for the additional money earned.

GETTING REIMBURSED

The contract outlines employer responsibilities and the rules for claiming reimbursement. It's a good idea to ask everyone involved in the Work Study program--from the student's supervisor to the payroll specialist--to review the contract.

Submit timesheets to the Student Employment Office at SPU as often as the student gets paid and keep a copy for your records. You must submit the timesheets within 15 days following the end of your payroll period.

It is especially important that you submit all time sheets for June hours ASAP. The state can make reimbursements only for hours worked during the fiscal year. Please note that June and July hours must be submitted on separate time sheets. To avoid delays, please make sure that time sheets are error-free.

How long will it take to be reimbursed?

Generally, it takes 3-5 weeks from the date the timesheet is submitted to Seattle Pacific University until you receive a reimbursement check. If the timesheet needs correction for any reason, it will delay the reimbursement. It is important to carefully review the timesheet before it is sent to SPU to be sure it is error free. Reimbursements take slightly longer to be processed at the end of the fiscal year.

Whom should I contact with questions about timesheets, contracts or job descriptions?

Contact the Student Employment Coordinator at SPU first. If you still have questions, then contact the Washington Student Achievement Council at (360) 753-7861. When calling or writing WSAC, please have the following available:

- Your IRS Federal Identification Number;
- The student's name; and,
- The name of the student's school.

Please contact the Office of Student Employment with any questions: ose@spu.edu.