

Work hours guidelines for WMU student employees

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When students can work up to 39 hours per week

When to use this section

Use these rules when a student is not enrolled in any WMU classes during a period between semesters. This applies to both international and domestic students.

When 39 hours per week is allowed

A non-enrolled student may work up to 39 hours per week in all WMU jobs combined only during official between-semester periods.

These between-semester periods are:

- After fall final exams end until spring semester classes begin
- After spring final exams end until summer I classes begin
- After summer II final exams end until fall semester classes begin

What does NOT constitute as a “break”

Fall break and spring break are not between-semester periods

During fall break and spring break, students are still enrolled in classes

During these breaks, students must follow the regular “enrolled student” hours limits (see the main work-hours table below).

FICA (Social Security and Medicare) taxes when not enrolled

When a student is not enrolled and working during a between-semester period, all earnings are subject to FICA taxes (Social Security and Medicare)

The student pays half and the employer pays half; the rate is set by U.S. Congress annually

When students are enrolled and meet the minimum credit-hours rules, they are generally FICA-exempt under the student exception rules

If the student is enrolled in summer

If a student is enrolled in at least one WMU class in summer I or in summer II, they must follow the enrolled-student work-hour limits (20 hours per week for international students or 25 hours per week for domestic students), not the 39-hour rule.

Questions about the 39-hour-per-week rule

If you are unsure whether a period counts as “between semesters,” contact Career and Student Employment Services before scheduling over 20 or 25 hours in a week: StudentEmployment@wmich.edu, (269) 387-6280, or Supervisors of Student Employees Teams channel.

Main work-hours rules for enrolled students

How to use this section

1. Find the row that matches the student’s type (e.g., undergraduate, international graduate, etc)
2. Confirm the student is enrolled in at least the minimum credit hours for the current term
3. Follow the “Hours allowed to work per week” for all WMU jobs combined
4. If the student is not enrolled for any classes, and it is a period defined as “between-semester” in the previous section, use the “39-hour between-semester” guidance

Summary of main work-hours rules for enrolled students section

- Most domestic students who are enrolled at least half-time may work up to 25 hours per week total in all WMU jobs during fall, spring, summer I, and summer II semesters.
- Most international students who are enrolled at least half-time may work up to 20 hours per week total in all WMU jobs during fall, spring, summer I, and summer II – this is a federal limit, and exceeding 20 hours per week total puts their visa in jeopardy.
- Contracted graduate assistants may usually work up to 20 hours per week in their assistantship, plus up to 5 hours per week in an additional student job – questions about contracted graduate assistantships should be directed to the Graduate College.

Main work-hours table

Enrolled student type	Minimum enrollment by term	Maximum hours per week, all WMU jobs combined	FICA-exempt when enrollment minimum is met?
Domestic undergraduate	Fall/Spring: at least 6 credit hours Summer I/Summer II: at least 3 credit hours	Up to 25 hours	Yes
International undergraduate	Fall/Spring: at least 6 credit hours Summer I/Summer II: at least 3 credit hours	Up to 20 hours (federal limit)	Yes
Domestic graduate	Fall/Spring: at least 3 credit hours Summer I/Summer II: at least 3 credit hours	Up to 25 hours	Yes
International graduate	Fall/Spring: at least 3 credit hours	Up to 20 hours (federal limit)	Yes

	Summer I/Summer II: at least 3 credit hours		
Contracted Graduate Assistantship (Domestic student)	Must meet Graduate College enrollment rules for contracted graduate assistantships	The hours set by the GA contract can be supplemented by hours in on-campus jobs, for a total of 25 hours per week all jobs combined	Yes
Contracted Graduate Assistantship (Domestic student)	Must meet Graduate College enrollment rules for contracted graduate assistantships	The hours set by the GA contract can be supplemented by hours in on-campus jobs, for a total of 20 hours per week all jobs combined (federal limit)	Yes

If/then guide to help interpret main work-hours guidelines

- If a domestic student employee is enrolled at least half-time any semester:
 - Then they may work up to 25 hours per week total in all WMU jobs combined.
- If an international student employee is enrolled at least half-time in any semester:
 - Then they may work up to 20 hours per week total in all WMU jobs combined (federal limit – exceeding this weekly limit can jeopardize their visa status).
- If you employ a student with a contracted graduate assistantship:
 - Then determine how many hours they are contracted to work per week in their graduate assistantship first, then
 - Domestic students may work additional hours in on-campus jobs for a total of 25 hours per week, all WMU jobs combined, and
 - International students may work additional hours in on-campus jobs for a total of 20 hours per week, all WMU jobs combined (federal limit – exceeding this weekly limit can jeopardize their visa status).
- If a student employee (domestic or international) is enrolled AND it is between semesters (excluding fall break and spring break):
 - Then they may work up to 39 hours per week total across all WMU jobs, and
 - Their earnings will be subject to FICA taxes
- If it is fall break or spring break and the student is still enrolled:

- Then use the regular enrolled-student limits (20 or 25 hours per week).

Example scenarios

- A domestic undergraduate student employee is enrolled in 12 credits in the spring semester. They work 10 hours per week in one department and 12 hours per week in a second department.
 - Total hours per week, all WMU jobs combined: 22 hours per week
 - This is allowed because it is under the 25-hour regular work-hours limit
- A student works in your office after spring finals are over and asks how many hours they can work before summer I classes start.
 - During the period between spring finals ending and summer I classes starting, they may work up to 39 hours per week across all of their WMU jobs combined.
 - Their earnings during that period will be subject to FICA taxes.
- An international graduate student is enrolled in 3 credits in summer I and working in an hourly student employee position.
 - They may work up to 20 hours per week total in all WMU jobs during summer I semester.
 - They cannot increase to 39 hours per week:
 - Unless they are not enrolled in any credits during summer II, or
 - Until the break between the end of summer II finals and the beginning of fall semester classes