



# WORK–STUDY BALANCE FROM STUDENT AND EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES

ASU REVIEW REPORT 1 – STUDENT UNION AT THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

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**Disclaimer:** The content of the study reflects only the view and positions of the authors.

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## ABSTRACT

This report investigates the work-study balance from both student and employer perspectives, focusing on the challenges and benefits that arise when students participate in part-time employment while pursuing their academic studies. The analysis combines survey data from 82 AUT students and qualitative insights from 4 employers across various industries, providing a comprehensive view of how work impacts students' academic performance and well-being. Findings reveal that while work provides financial support, practical experience, and skill development, it also introduces significant stress, fatigue, and time management challenges. Employers, on the other hand, value the flexibility and motivation that student workers offer, but face difficulties in accommodating academic schedules. The report identifies time pressure and scheduling conflicts as the central issues impacting both groups. Recommendations are provided for universities, employers, and students to improve the work-study experience, emphasizing the need for better coordination and flexibility to reduce the burden on students and foster a more sustainable work-study environment.

## INTRODUCTION

The growing trend of university students participating in the workforce while completing their studies has become an important social, educational, and economic issue. For many students, employment is no longer optional; rather, it is a necessity driven by tuition costs, transportation expenses, personal living needs, and the desire to gain professional experience before graduation. At the same time, employers across multiple industries in Lebanon increasingly depend on student employees to fill flexible part-time roles, especially in sectors that require adaptable staffing arrangements.

The student union at the American University of Technology (AUT) has conducted a survey to better understand the present articulation of work-study and how it impacts the learning environment and process as well as the different stakeholders. This report presents a comprehensive combined analysis of both the student and employer datasets, bringing together the experiences of 82 students and 4 employers into one coherent discussion. By integrating the perspectives of both groups, the report aims to identify the benefits of student employment, the challenges that emerge from balancing work and study, and the structural gaps that create stress for both sides. The report also provides evidence-based recommendations for universities, employers, and students to improve work-study experience.

## DATASET OVERVIEW

The project was initiated by the AUT Student Union (ASU) on January 29, 2026, with the aim of gathering student input through structured surveys. The preparation phase of the questionnaires extended until March 9, 2026, during which all ASU members actively contributed ideas and collaborated on their development.

Following the completion of the questionnaires, two surveys were distributed to students through multiple communication channels, including email, WhatsApp groups and channels, social media platforms such as Instagram, and word of mouth. The data collection phase continued until April 15, 2026, allowing sufficient time to gather a broad and representative set of responses from the student body.

The student dataset consists of 82 responses collected through a structured survey focused on employment status, weekly work hours, academic performance, time management, work-study balance, employer flexibility, and skill development. This dataset provides a strong view of how employment affects students' academic and personal lives.

The employer dataset consists of 4 responses from organizations in sectors such as nutrition, services, food and beverage, and supply businesses. Although smaller in size, the employer responses provide valuable qualitative insights into why organizations hire students, the strengths they observe in student workers, and the operational challenges they face when attempting to offer flexibility.

Combining both datasets allows for a more balanced and realistic understanding of the work-study relationship, since it captures both the lived student experience and the organizational realities employers face.

## STUDENT PERSPECTIVE ANALYSIS

The student responses reveal that employment during university is highly common and often financially motivated. A large proportion of respondents (76.8% approximately as reported in Figure 1) reported that they are currently working while studying, confirming that balancing these dual responsibilities has become a normal part of student life.

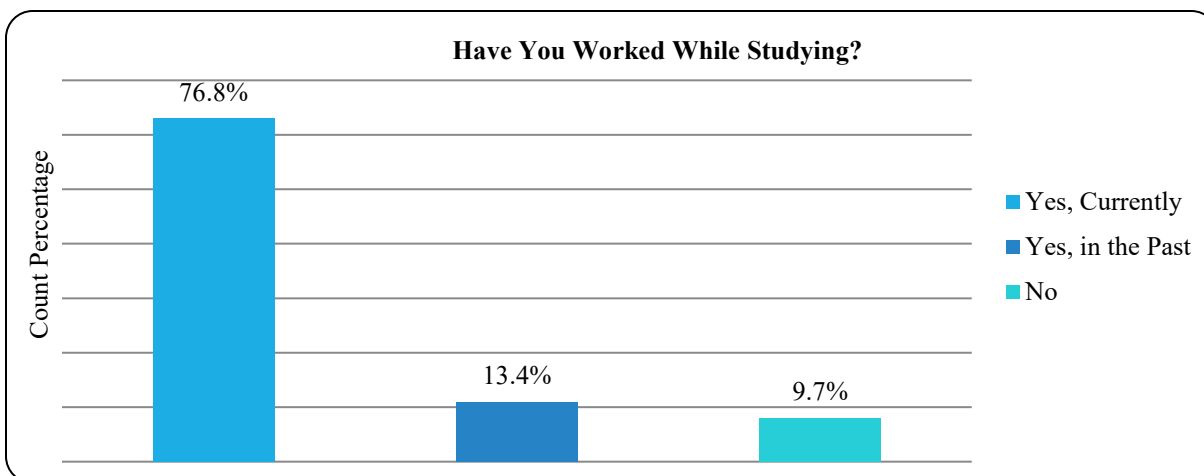


Figure 1. Percentage of students who are currently working, used to work or have never worked

### EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS OF WORKING STUDENTS

One of the most significant findings is that the largest percentage of students (about 50%) work more than 20 hours per week (Figure 2). This suggests that many students are approaching heavy part-time or near full-time workloads while still managing academic commitments. Such long working hours naturally increase the risk of exhaustion, reduced study time, and difficulty maintaining focus on coursework.

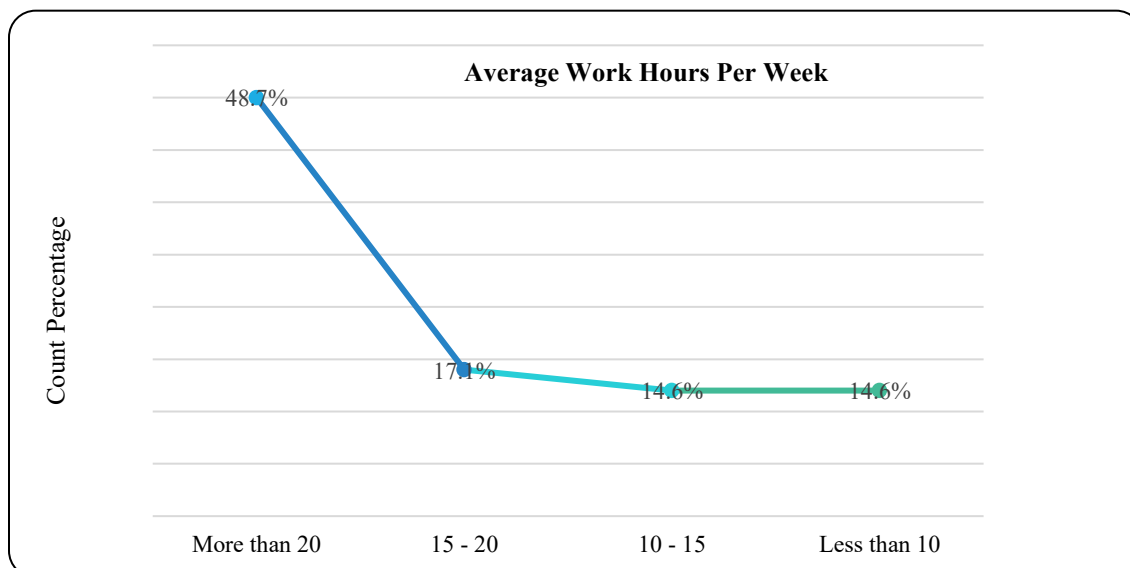
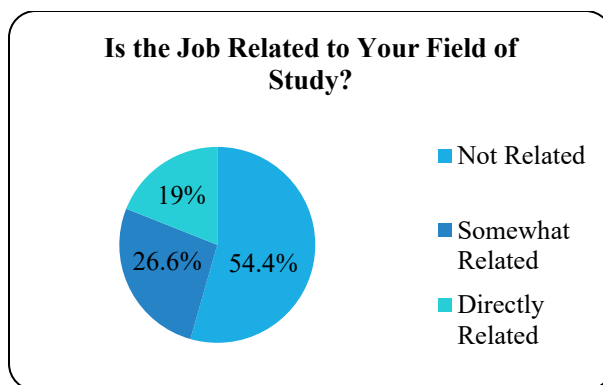


Figure 2. Average hours per week that students work

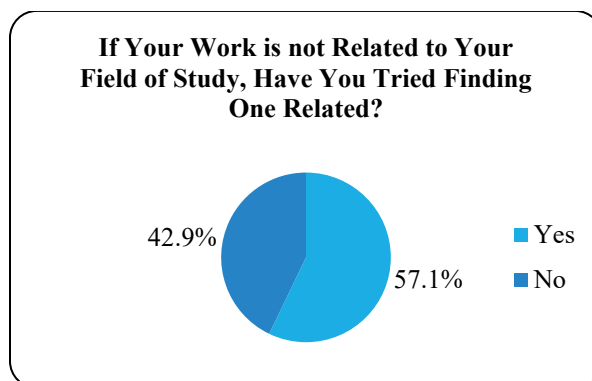
We also investigated the relationship between the students' jobs and their fields of study. Figure 3 shows that most students work in jobs that are not related to their field of study (43 students), while fewer students reported having jobs that are somewhat related (21) or directly related (15). This suggests that many students may prioritize finding available work opportunities over gaining experience connected to their academic major.



**Figure 3.** Students working in their designated fields

We also tried to sense how strong the attachment of the students is to their field of study. Figure 4 indicates that among students whose jobs are not related to their studies, more students have tried searching for a related job (40) compared to those who have not (30). This shows that many students are interested in finding work connected to their field, even if they are currently unable to do so.

The relationship between the two sets of responses is that the high number of students working in unrelated jobs is linked to the large number of students actively seeking field-related opportunities. Together, the figures suggest that students may face limited access to jobs that match their academic specialization.



**Figure 4.** Students seeking jobs in their designated fields

## EMPLOYMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

When students were asked about the impact of employment on academic performance, most responses were concentrated between 3 and 4 on a 5-point scale, indicating a moderate negative effect. The data shows a moderate positive correlation ( $\approx 0.31$ ) between students' working hours and the effect on their academic performance, suggesting that students who work longer hours are more likely to experience academic challenges. In contrast, simply being employed has a very weak correlation with academic performance, meaning that the number of hours worked matters more than having a job itself. Overall, the findings suggest that balancing excessive work hours with studies can negatively influence students' academic outcomes. This finding suggests that students are generally able to continue meeting academic expectations, but often at the cost of increased stress, reduced rest, and lower overall efficiency.

However, further investigation in collaboration with the academic departments would be needed to better assess the extent of the impact on students' academic performance and well-being.

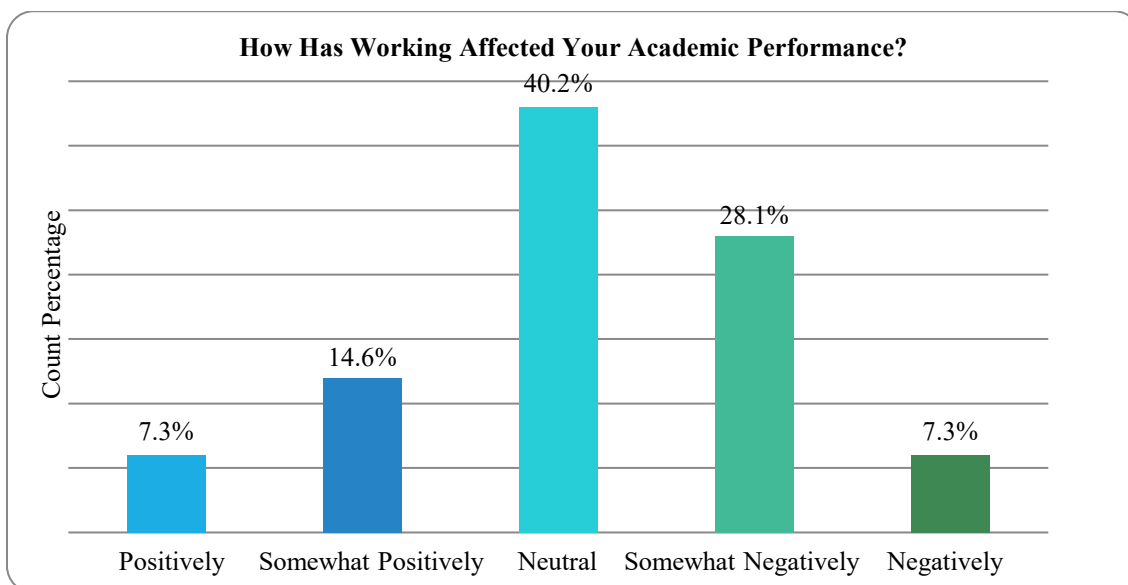


Figure 5. Impact of employment on the students' academic performance

**WORKLOAD, TIME MANAGEMENT, AND WELL-BEING**

A recurring theme in the student dataset is the challenge of time pressure. Many students described difficulties in allocating sufficient time for assignments, exam preparation, class attendance, and rest. Fatigue, stress, and scheduling conflicts emerged as major obstacles. Refer to Figure 6 for more details. Despite these difficulties, some students still report that the balance is manageable (Figure 7), which indicates strong coping and time-management efforts rather than an ideal system.

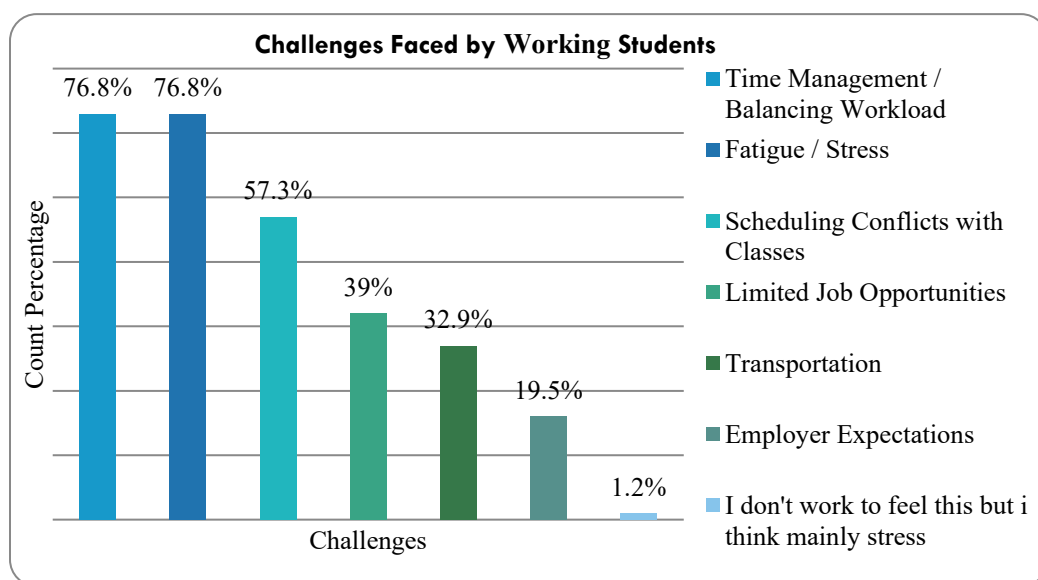


Figure 6. The challenges that students face while working and studying at the same time

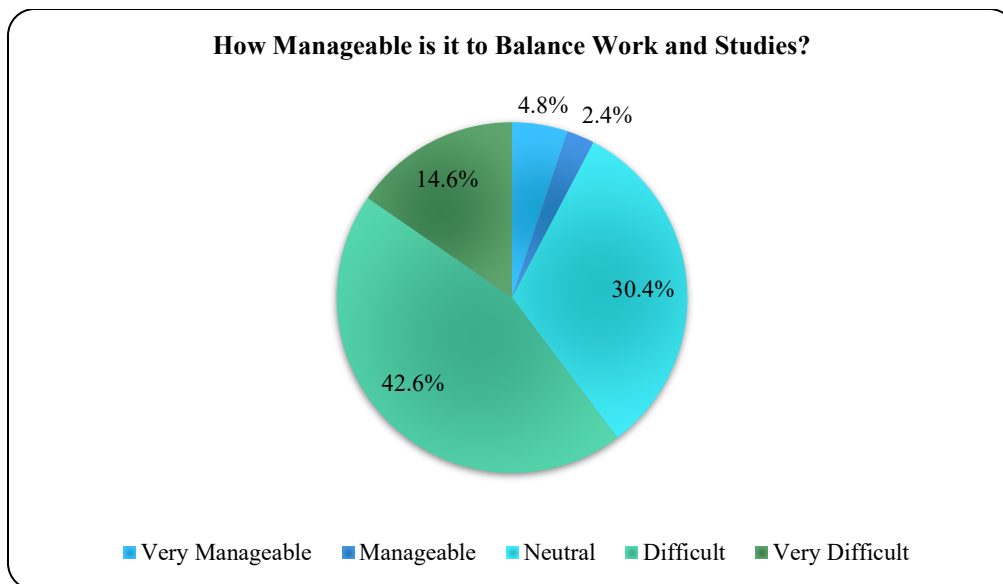


Figure 7. Ease of balancing work and studies for students

**WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY**

An especially important finding is the positive role of employer flexibility. Students who reported working for flexible employers were significantly more likely to describe their work-study balance as manageable. This suggests that workplace policies and scheduling practices play a major role in determining whether students succeed in balancing both responsibilities.

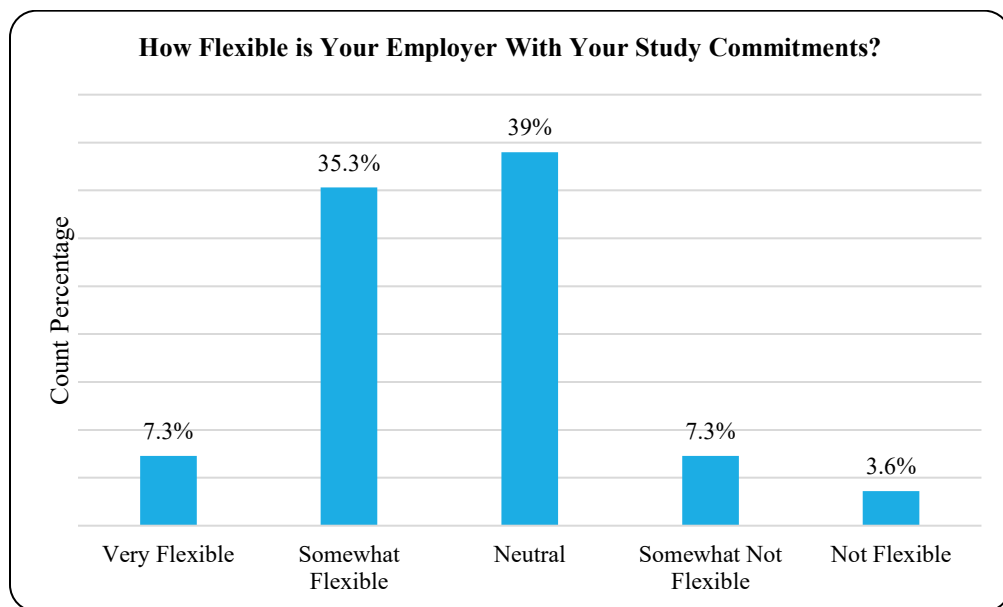
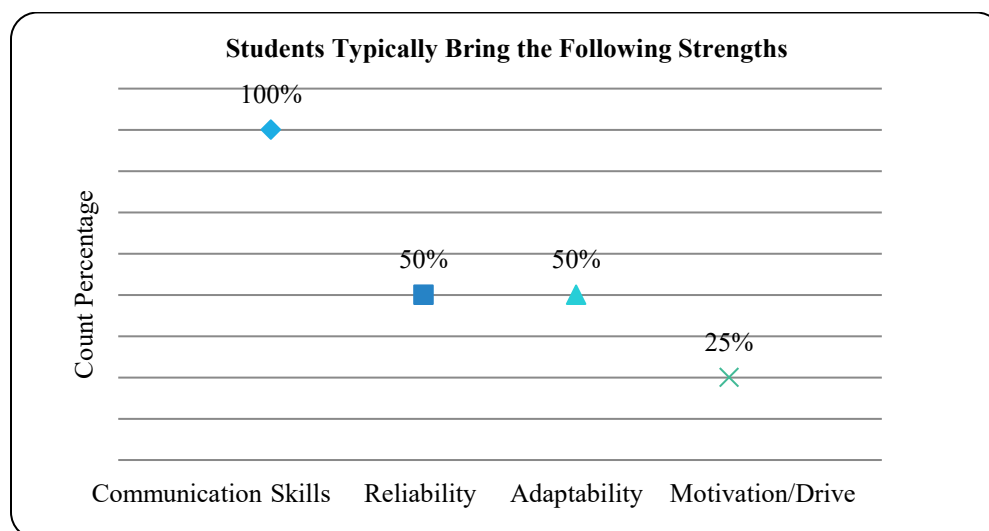


Figure 8. Employer flexibility in supporting students' work-study balance

## EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE ANALYSIS

### APPEAL OF STUDENT EMPLOYMENT FOR EMPLOYERS

From the employer perspective, students are viewed as valuable contributors to the workforce. Employers consistently highlighted qualities such as communication skills, reliability, adaptability, motivation, and willingness to learn (Figure 9). These characteristics make students highly attractive for part-time and entry-level roles, especially in industries that benefit from flexible staffing.



**Figure 9.** Strengths employers often observe in student employees

Employers reported several reasons for hiring students, including their availability for part-time shifts, lower staffing costs, and their ability to quickly adapt to changing tasks. In addition, employers often see student workers as long-term talent investments who can develop into stronger professionals over time.

### CHALLENGES IN EMPLOYING STUDENTS

At the same time, employers identified several challenges associated with student employment. The most common issue was scheduling conflict with university classes and exam periods. Reduced availability during academic peak periods creates operational difficulties, especially in businesses with fixed hours and limited staffing resources.

Another recurring issue is fatigue and occasional burnout among student employees. Employers recognize that students often arrive under pressure from academic demands, which can affect focus, availability, and productivity. However, employers also noted that these challenges are often temporary and linked to exam periods or major academic deadlines.

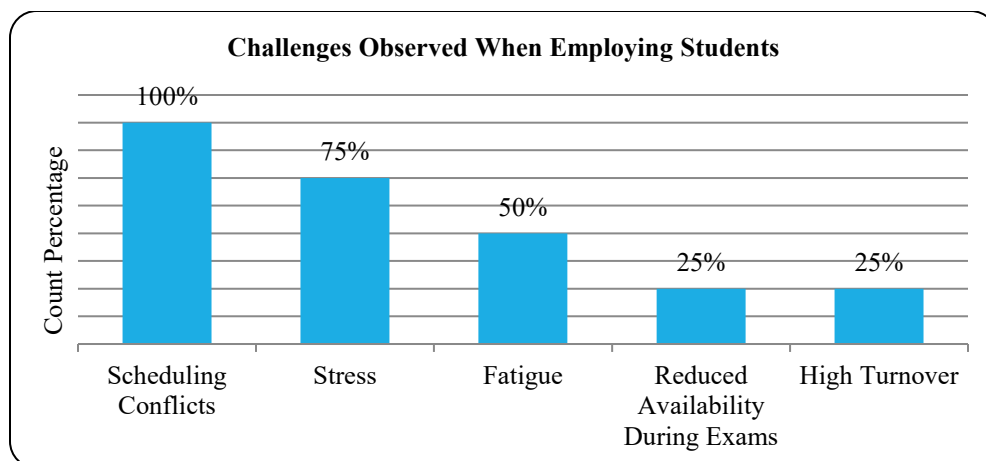


Figure 10. Challenges employers commonly face with student employees

### FLEXIBILITY CONSTRAINTS

A key insight from the employer dataset is that even when organizations want to support students, flexibility is limited by practical business constraints. Staff shortages, budget limitations, payroll restrictions, and difficulty finding last-minute replacements all reduce the level of flexibility employers can realistically offer.

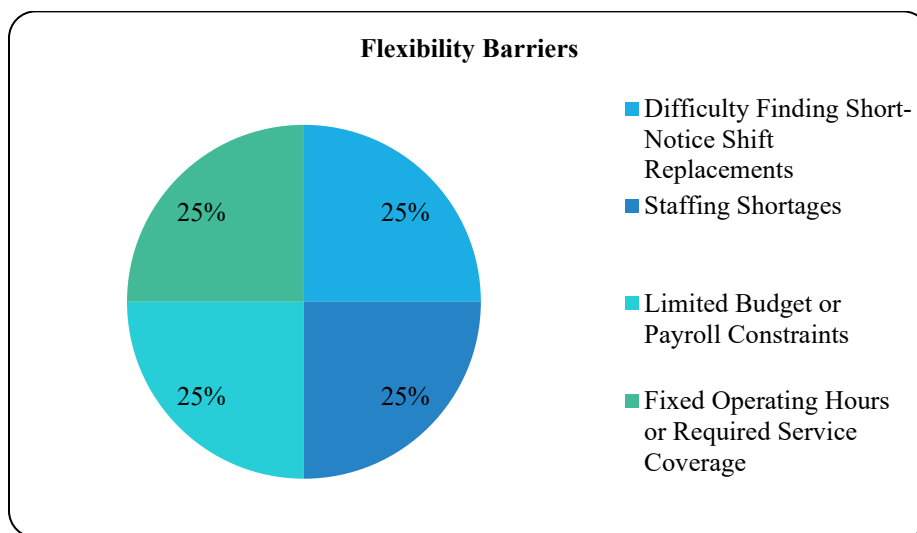


Figure 11. Obstacles limiting employer flexibility with student employees

### COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BOTH PERSPECTIVES

The most important outcome of combining both datasets is the discovery of a strong alignment between student and employer experiences. Both groups clearly identify time pressure and scheduling conflicts as the main challenge in the work-study system.

From the student side, this issue appears as stress, fatigue, reduced study hours, and academic pressure. From the employer side, it appears as shift coverage problems, lower availability during exams, and scheduling complexity. These are two sides of the same structural problem.

At the same time, the relationship remains strongly beneficial for both groups. Students gain income, practical experience, professional exposure, and transferable workplace skills. Employers gain a motivated, flexible, and cost-effective workforce capable of filling essential part-time roles.

The real issue, therefore, is not a lack of willingness or value from either side, but rather the absence of a well-structured support system that aligns academic schedules with workplace realities.

## DISCUSSION

The combined findings show that student employment is both beneficial and challenging. On one hand, work provides financial independence, professional growth, and stronger employability after graduation. On the other hand, excessive work hours and rigid scheduling can negatively influence academic performance and student well-being.

The evidence suggests that the balance students achieve is often based on personal sacrifice rather than institutional support. Students are not necessarily thriving; instead, many are coping under pressure through strong personal discipline and time management.

Employers clearly appreciate student workers and recognize their value, yet their flexibility is often restricted by operational demands. This creates a gap between the support students need and what employers can practically provide.

This discussion highlights the importance of collaboration between universities and employers. Without structured coordination, the burden of balancing both responsibilities fall almost entirely on the student.

## LIMITATIONS

While this study provides insightful findings, there are several limitations to consider.

First, the employer dataset only includes responses from four organizations, which may not fully represent the broad range of businesses that employ students. A larger sample size would offer more comprehensive insights.

Second, both datasets rely heavily on self-reported responses from students and employers, which could introduce bias, as participants may unintentionally misrepresent their experiences or opinions. The data gathered is also geographically limited, and the findings may not fully reflect the experiences of students or employers in other countries or regions.

Third, the study captures a snapshot of student-employer interactions at one point in time, and a longitudinal study would provide a deeper understanding of how these relationships evolve over the course of a student's academic journey.

Fourth, the report mainly examines general work-study roles without distinguishing between different sectors or types of student work, such as internships, part-time jobs, or volunteer work. A more detailed breakdown could uncover additional factors that influence students' academic performance and work-life balance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Universities should take a stronger role in supporting working students by expanding on-campus employment opportunities, improving financial aid systems, and designing schedules that better accommodate part-time work realities. Time management workshops and academic support services could further reduce student stress.

Employers should introduce more student-friendly scheduling policies, particularly during exam periods. Reduced shifts, easier shift swapping, and better communication channels between managers and student employees can significantly improve outcomes.

Students themselves should aim to maintain sustainable work hours whenever possible, ideally between 15 and 20 hours per week, and should communicate academic deadlines early. Selecting jobs related to their field of study may also help transform work from a financial necessity into a long-term career advantage.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the combined student and employer datasets provide a clear and coherent picture of the modern work-study experience. Student employment is widespread and creates valuable benefits for both students and employers. However, the current system places significant pressure on students, especially when weekly work hours become excessive and workplace flexibility is inconsistent.

The strongest conclusion drawn from both perspectives is that a structured work-study ecosystem involving universities, employers, and students is essential. Better coordination, improved flexibility, and institutional support can transform student employment from a source of stress into a sustainable model that supports both academic achievement and professional development.

Ultimately, the findings suggest that when the needs of students and employers are aligned through better systems and communication, student employment can become a strategic advantage rather than a burden.

## APPENDIX

### Students' Questionnaire Survey:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdIoTh7XdIS9jwVaJAnOHF1aBoGSvl0NQDZTIQ2be0CC4eyTQ/viewform?usp=header>

### Employers' Questionnaire Survey:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdIPZ1pQCN8ArcyF1j-vUJekTO1\\_o9gHzyeVAefuFthrUL\\_JA/viewform?usp=header](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdIPZ1pQCN8ArcyF1j-vUJekTO1_o9gHzyeVAefuFthrUL_JA/viewform?usp=header)