



# Social Security Card Application Procedures

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## Purpose

The purpose of this handout is to inform international students and scholars of the procedures that must be followed to obtain a Social Security card with an assigned Social Security Number (SSN).

## What is a Social Security Card

A Social Security card provides a unique identification number for the United States government to monitor and tax wages earned by employees in the U.S. Once issued, the Social Security number remains valid for life, even if you leave the U.S. for several years then return.

**Please Note:** a Social Security card does not grant employment authorization, it simply provides a unique identifying number to allow employers to pay wages and deduct appropriate taxes on behalf of the U.S. government. Each different immigration classification has varying rules regarding possible employment authorization.

## Eligibility

You must be physically present in the U.S. in an immigration classification that permits employment. With regard to specific classifications held by most Boston University international students and scholars, the following eligibility criteria also apply:

1. Students in F-1 status are only eligible to apply for an SSN under the following circumstances:
  - a. If they have been offered an on-campus job or already begun working at an on-campus job
  - b. If they have been granted Curricular Practical Training employment authorization
  - c. If they have been granted Optional Practical Training employment authorization, they have received their Employment Authorization Document (EAD) and the validity period of the EAD has begun.
2. Students in J-1 status sponsored by Boston University are eligible:
  - a. At any time while pursuing their program of study.
  - b. After completion of the program of study if the student has been granted Academic Training (AT) employment authorization.
3. Students in J-1 status sponsored by an outside agency should consult with their Exchange Program Sponsor regarding their eligibility and the documentation they need to apply.
4. Scholars in J-1 status are eligible at any time up to 15 days prior to the end of the period of their exchange program as indicated on their Form DS-2019.
5. Scholars in H-1 or O-1 status are eligible at any time up to 15 days prior to the end of the approved period of employment as indicated on their I-797 Approval Notice.
6. Scholars in TN status are eligible at any time up to 15 days prior to the end of the approved period of employment as indicated on their I-94 Arrival/Departure Record (Card).
7. Students and scholars in possession of an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) are eligible to apply only after the validity period of the EAD has begun; and no later than 15 days prior to the expiration of the EAD. (Students in F-1 status, see #1 above).

## When Should You Submit the Application for the Social Security Card?

If you have recently arrived in the U.S. for the first time in your current immigration classification, you must **wait at least 10 business days** after your date of arrival to submit an application for a Social Security card. This will allow the Department of Homeland Security adequate time to enter your arrival information in their database for verification purposes.

In addition, **refer to the attached chart** for other time restrictions.

You may submit an application for a Social Security card to the Social Security Administration in person on any business day (except holidays) between the hours of **9:00 am and 4:00 pm**. When possible, it is best to obtain the Social Security card prior to beginning any employment in the U.S. If you begin employment without a Social Security Number, you must inform your on-campus employer as soon as you receive your Social Security Number for payroll purposes.

## What Documents Should You Submit with an Application for a Social Security Card?

You must present ALL of the following documentation:

1. A completed Application for a Social Security Card. The application form is available at the ISSO, on-line at [www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf](http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf), or at the Social Security Administration office.
2. Unexpired foreign **passport** with U.S. visa stamped inside
3. Original **Form I-94** Departure card (small white card stapled into passport)
4. See the attached chart for additional documents required

## Where should you submit the Application for a Social Security Card?

### Social Security Administration

Thomas P. O'Neill Federal Office Building  
10 Causeway Street, Room 148  
Boston, MA 02222  
Telephone #: (800) 772-1213

By MBTA: North Station "T" stop on the green or orange line; building is next to the TD Banknorth Garden. For a map to the office, go to: <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/Controller>

## Receiving Your Social Security Card and Number

The Social Security Administration may need some time to verify your current immigration status before they can issue a Social Security card. In most cases, a Social Security card should be mailed to the address you listed on your application form within 14 business days. If you do not receive a Social Security card within 30-60 days, you should contact the Social Security Administration via telephone at 1-800-772-1213 or visit the Social Security Administration website at: [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov) to inquire about the status of your pending application.

The notation on the Social Security card should read *Valid for Employment Only with INS Authorization* which means that you may need to obtain work permission in order to commence employment. To find out more about employment authorization, please contact a staff member at the ISSO or visit the ISSO website at [www.bu.edu/isso](http://www.bu.edu/isso).

## Beginning work without a Social Security Card

You may begin working before you receive your Social Security card. In fact, you may begin working prior to submitting the Social Security card application. However, it is strongly recommended that you apply as soon as you are eligible to do so. Until you are able to report your Social Security Number to your employer, you will not be able to take advantage of tax treaties that may pertain to you and the employer will tax you at the maximum rates. In addition, the employer can be sanctioned for continuing to report your tax withholdings to the government without a Social Security Number.

## Foreign Language Assistance

To find out more about the Social Security Administration in your native language, visit the Social Security Multilanguage Gateway at: [www.ssa.gov/multilanguage/index.html](http://www.ssa.gov/multilanguage/index.html). For Free Language Interpreter Services, call (800) 772-1213 between 7:00 am and 7:00 pm.

## Additional Information

If you will be employed at Boston University in any capacity, you must report to the ISSO **no later than your third day of employment** to complete an *Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9* for payroll purposes. Please contact the staff of the ISSO for more information.

For more information regarding Social Security number visit one of these pages of the Social Security Administration web site:

**International Students And Social Security Numbers:** [www.ssa.gov/pubs/10181.html](http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10181.html)  
**Foreign Workers And Social Security Numbers:** [www.ssa.gov/pubs/10107.html](http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10107.html)  
**Social Security Numbers For Noncitizens:** [www.ssa.gov/pubs/10096.html](http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10096.html)  
**Application for a Social Security Card:** [www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.html](http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.html)  
**Social Security Administration home page:** [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)



## Applying for a Social Security Card: *Eligibility, Restrictions, Documents Needed*

Immigration Classification	Eligibility	Restrictions on when the application can be submitted <sup>1</sup>	Additional Documents Needed <sup>2</sup>
F-1 Student	Offered on-campus job or already working in an on-campus job	May not apply more than 30 days prior to employment start date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current Form I-20 and all previous I-20s</li> <li><a href="#">Certification of On-Campus Employment for a Social Security Number Application</a> <sup>3</sup></li> </ul>
F-1 Student	Granted Curricular Practical Training (CPT) employment authorization	May not apply more than 30 days prior to start date of CPT authorization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Form I-20 with CPT authorization on page three, and all previous I-20s</li> </ul>
F-1 Student	Granted Optional Practical Training (OPT) employment authorization and issued an Employment Authorization Document (EAD)	Must apply on or after the "valid from" date on the Employment Authorization Document (EAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current Form I-20 and all previous I-20s</li> <li>Employment Authorization Document (EAD)</li> </ul>
J-1 Student Non-BU Sponsored	<i>Must consult with Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor to determine eligibility</i>	No later than 15 days prior to the end date on the DS-2019, if eligible to apply.	<i>Must consult with Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor to obtain documentation needed to apply.</i>
J-1 Student Sponsored by BU	Pursuing a full course of study	No later than 15 days prior to the end date on the DS-2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current Form DS-2019 and all previous DS-2019s</li> <li>Letter from ISSO certifying eligibility and enrollment</li> </ul>
J-1 Student Sponsored by BU	Granted Academic Training (AT) employment authorization after completion of academic program	No later than 15 days prior to the end date on the DS-2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current Form DS-2019 and all previous DS-2019s</li> <li>Academic Training Letter from the ISSO</li> </ul>
J-1 Scholar	Participating in an exchange program under any J-1 scholar category	No later than 15 days prior to the end date on the DS-2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current Form DS-2019 and all previous DS-2019s</li> <li>Appointment Letter from BU department, school or college</li> </ul>
J-2 Dependent	Granted employment authorization and issued an Employment Authorization Document (EAD)	Must apply on or after the "valid from" date on the Employment Authorization Document (EAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current Form DS-2019 and all previous DS-2019s</li> <li>Employment Authorization Document (EAD)</li> </ul>
H-1 Scholar	Employed at Boston University	No restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current I-797 Approval Notice and any previous I-797s</li> <li>Appointment Letter from BU department, school or college</li> </ul>
O-1 Scholar	Employed at Boston University	No restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current I-797 Approval Notice and any previous I-797s</li> <li>Appointment Letter from BU department, school or college</li> </ul>
TN Scholar	Employed at Boston University	No restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I-94 Arrival Departure Record indicating employment authorization for Boston University</li> <li>Appointment Letter from BU department, school or college</li> </ul>
Student or Scholar with EAD	Employed at Boston University	Must apply on or after the "valid from" date on the Employment Authorization Document (EAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment Authorization Document (EAD)</li> <li>Appointment Letter from BU department, school or college</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup>. All individuals, regardless of immigration classification, should not apply earlier than 10 days after they arrive in the U.S. for the first time in their current classification.

<sup>2</sup>. All students and scholars applying for a Social Security card must present a valid passport, an I-94 Arrival/Departure Record, and an [Application for Social Security Card](#)

<sup>3</sup>. The URL address for this form is [http://www.bu.edu/isso/administrators/social\\_security\\_certification.html](http://www.bu.edu/isso/administrators/social_security_certification.html)

