

What is a Social Security Number?

A Social Security Number 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.

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.

Steps to apply for a Social Security Number:

1. Complete an online application at: <https://www.ssa.gov/number-card/request-number-first-time> Make note of your application confirmation number.
2. Present your original immigration documents at the Social Security Administration. No appointment is required.
3. Receive your Social Security Card in the mail.

What documents will you need?

You must present the following documentation:

1. Confirmation number from your online Social Security Number application
2. An unexpired foreign **passport**
3. **Printout of I-94 record (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/>)** OR original **Form I-94** Departure card
4. Other required documents depending on immigration status and eligibility category. See chart on page 2.

Where can I complete the application process?

Social Security Administration 10 Causeway Street, Room 148, Boston MA,
Telephone #: (866) 964-7311 **Hours:** Monday – Friday from 9 am – 4 pm

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 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.

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. Without a reported Social Security number, 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.



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

Immigration Classification	Eligibility	Restrictions on when the application can be submitted ¹	Additional Documents Needed ²
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"> • Current Form I-20 and all previous I-20s • <u><i>Certification of On-Campus Employment for a Social Security Number Application</i></u> ³
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"> • Form I-20 with CPT authorization, and all previous I-20s
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"> • Current Form I-20 and all previous I-20s • Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
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"> • Current Form DS-2019 and all previous DS-2019s • Letter from ISSO certifying eligibility and enrollment
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"> • Current Form DS-2019 and all previous DS-2019s • Academic Training Letter from the ISSO
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"> • Current Form DS-2019 and all previous DS-2019s • Appointment Letter from BU department, school or college
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"> • Current Form DS-2019 and all previous DS-2019s • Employment Authorization Document (EAD)
H-1 Scholar	Employed at Boston University	No restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current I-797 Approval Notice and any previous I-797s • Appointment Letter from BU department, school or college
O-1 Scholar	Employed at Boston University	No restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current I-797 Approval Notice and any previous I-797s • Appointment Letter from BU department, school or college
TN Scholar	Employed at Boston University	No restrictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I-94 Arrival Departure Record indicating employment authorization for Boston University • Appointment Letter from BU department, school or college
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"> • Employment Authorization Document (EAD) • Appointment Letter from BU department, school or college

¹. 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.

². 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*

³. The URL address for this form is http://www.bu.edu/isso/administrators/social_security_certification.html