



U.S. Social Security Numbers for F-1 and J-1 Students

What is a Social Security Number?

A Social Security Number (SSN) is a national identification number used to track U.S. earnings and to report required tax information. It is assigned permanently and does not change or expire, even when you return home. As an international student, you do not require a SSN unless you become employed in the U.S. and may not be able to apply for a number right away. However, once you are eligible for a SSN, the ISO will assist you in the application process. For students whose academic program requires a working relationship (including an assistantship, fellowship, or service-based stipend), you should apply for your SSN as soon as possible after you arrive to the University. If you are ineligible for a SSN, you may request this in writing from the Social Security Administration and may also apply for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN), if needed (see details below).

Protect yourself: The SSN is an important form of identification in the U.S. and you should keep this number private so it is not used without your knowledge or permission. According to U.S. law, a Social Security Number is required *only* for employment and tax-reporting purposes. However, many institutions – including banks, credit cards, the Department of Motor Vehicles, utility companies, and other businesses – often request a SSN to establish identity or review your credit history. It is your choice whether to give your SSN in these cases, but the business also has a choice of whether to provide a service without that information. If you are uncertain about giving out your SSN, you are always free to ask why the number is required, how it will be used, and whether it will be protected.

SSN Eligibility

International students are able to obtain a Social Security Number according to their immigration status. J-1 students are eligible upon entry to the U.S. in valid status. F-1 students are eligible once they secure an on-campus job *or* are authorized for off-campus employment (via CPT, OPT, etc.). At the University, many F-1 students are able to find on-campus employment through either a service-based award, Focus Group, or other student position. To apply, you must document your eligibility by a letter from ISO.

Application Procedures

The ISO assists all eligible F-1 and J-1 students in applying for their SSN and coordinating required documents with other campus offices. When appropriate information is available, our office is able to monitor pending applications with the Social Security Administration and to help resolve any delays and errors. You are responsible for completing the following steps of the application process:

1. **Report to ISO** for instructions and to collect verification letter of SSN Eligibility, as available
2. **Prepare SSN application** and supporting documents (see below):
 - Name (#1): Print your name as it is listed on your current I-94 card
 - Mailing Address (#2): C/O University of Rochester
209 Morey Hall, PO Box 270446
Rochester, NY 14627-0446
 - Citizenship (#3): Mark the box for “Legal Alien Allowed to Work”
3. **Visit local Social Security Administration office** to submit the application
 - Wait at least 10 days from entry to U.S. to allow for government database updates
 - Complete Immigration Check-In at least one week before applying
4. **Submit copy of SSN Receipt** to ISO: Visit, Fax (585-244-4503), or Campus Mail (209 Morey Hall)
5. **Pick-up SSN card from ISO** once your card arrives by mail
 - ISO will send notification to your University email account

Required Documents

When applying for your Social Security Number, the following documents are required:

1. Original SSN Application:
 - Form SS-5 (available in ISO or online: www.socialsecurity.gov/online/ss-5.pdf)
2. ISO certification of valid immigration status & SSN eligibility:
 - F-1: Verification of F-1 On-Campus Employment letter (see below)
 - J-1: Social Security Eligibility letter (issued by ISO)
3. Original immigration documents:
 - I-20 or DS-2019, Passport, and I-94 card or I-797 Approval Notice for Change of Status

Verification Letter for On-Campus Employment (required for F-1 students only)

To satisfy SSN eligibility requirements for F-1 students, the ISO has developed a template letter for University departments to use in documenting on-campus employment. The hiring department should complete the top portion of this letter with the relevant information, including the nature of the student's job, anticipated start date, and hours per week (no more than 20 during the academic year). For new students, these letters are often forwarded to the ISO before arrival and are available during orientation. However, if you find a job on campus at a later date and need to apply for the SSN, you can request a letter from your hiring department and bring it with you to the ISO for verification and instructions.

The template is available as a fillable PDF for UR Department Representatives through the ISO website, at: www.iso.rochester.edu/Forms/SSNLetter.pdf. **Letters must be printed on University letterhead.**

Applying for your SSN

Applications must be submitted to the Social Security Administration in person. A representative there will review your immigration documents and enter your information into their database to confirm valid entry to the U.S. and eligibility for the SSN. A SSN Receipt is then issued to record the date of your application (you must supply a copy of this receipt to ISO). Please notify the ISO of any challenges in verifying your information through SSA. Applications are usually processed within 2 to 6 weeks.

The application process takes just a few minutes, but the wait for an available representative can often take a few hours. Alternatively, the ISO usually schedules a special session with SSA for new UR international students as part of our orientation each fall. If you would like to take advantage of this, more information will be available during your International Student Orientation Program meeting. If you choose to apply on your own, please request your eligibility letter from ISO and visit a local SSA office.

Downtown: (directions below)

One HSBC Plaza, 14th Floor
100 Chestnut Street
Rochester, NY 14604

Greece:

4050 West Ridge Road
2nd Floor
Rochester, NY 14626

Applications are accepted Monday through Friday, from 9 am to 3 pm. Telephone: 1-800-772-1213

Directions to Downtown SSA from River Campus

By Car: Exit River Campus from Wilson Blvd., taking a left onto Elmwood Avenue. Turn left onto Mt. Hope Avenue (NY-15). After several blocks, Mt. Hope bends right and becomes Byron Street. Turn left onto S. Clinton Avenue. Turn right onto Court Street (NY-31E). Take a left onto Chestnut Street (NY-31). Parking is available at street meters, paid lots, and several downtown area parking garages.

By UR shuttle: Catch the Red Line from River Campus and get off at the Eastman School of Music, on Gibbs Street. You will have to walk to Main Street, turn right and one block north to Chestnut Street. Turn left on Chestnut and walk several blocks further to HSBC Plaza (between Broad and Court Streets).

By RTS bus: Catch the 18 – University bus (westbound) from River Campus and get off at Main & Clinton. You will have to walk one long block south on Clinton Avenue to Broad Street. Turn left on Broad and walk one block to Chestnut Street. Turn right and HSBC Plaza is between Broad and Court Streets.

Working while your SSN is pending

F-1 and J-1 students may work while the Social Security Number application is being processed. For information of how to report wages for an employee who has not yet received a SSN, employers may want to reference SSA's fact sheet, *Employer Responsibilities When Hiring Foreign Workers*, which is available online at: www.socialsecurity.gov/employer/hiring.htm.

UR Payments without the SSN

University Payroll has established a policy that will allow F-1 and J-1 students to receive UR paychecks prior to the SSN being issued. The first paycheck will be issued automatically. After this first pay period, Payroll must have copies of the student's eligibility letter from ISO and SSN Receipt in order to continue receiving payments. These documents should be given to your hiring department and the ISO. While the application is pending, students are able to receive payments for up to 2 months. If you still have not received your SSN after 2 months, please contact ISO for further guidance. Our staff can assist you with resolving any problems with your SSN application and requesting a continuation of University payments.

Reporting your SSN

Once your SSN has been issued, several updates may be necessary. Since the SSN is necessary for employment and tax purposes, you will need to supply the number and sometimes a copy of the actual card to your employer(s). If you have bank accounts or plan to open a credit card, the SSN will likely be required. At a minimum, please make the following updates as soon as your SSN is assigned:

- UR hiring department or any other employer
- Database Records: GLACIER & HRMS

Social Security Taxes

Many F-1 and J-1 international students are exempt from Social Security taxes (FICA) for the first few years of study in the U.S. (F-1: 5 years, J-1: 2 years). Your individual exemption will depend whether you are categorized as a Non-Resident Alien for tax purposes. For UR students, your tax category is determined using the GLACIER tax compliance software and is listed on your Tax Summary. Please contact your employer if you believe FICA taxes have been withheld from your paycheck in error. More information and resources are available through the "Tax Information" link on the ISO website.

University ID numbers

When you arrive at the University you are given an 8-digit University ID number. This number should not be confused with the SSN and *cannot* be used for employment verification purposes.

Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)

Students who are ineligible for a Social Security Number (no current employment, studying in the U.S. for less than 6 months, etc.) may apply for an ITIN. This number can sometimes be used in place of a SSN on tax forms. Applications must be submitted through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), located at 255 East Avenue. Additional information and application forms for the ITIN are available in the ISO.

Dependent Information

F-2 spouses are *not* eligible for a SSN, since they do not have any work permissions. J-2 spouses are only eligible for a SSN *after* receiving an Employment Authorization Document for work permission from USCIS. Dependent children are not eligible for the SSN, unless they are born in the U.S. as a citizen. Spouses and students who have difficulty obtaining a NYS Driver's License without a SSN may request a letter of ineligibility from the Social Security Administration. This letter can be shown to the Department of Motor Vehicles instead of a valid SSN card. Spouses may also apply for an ITIN if needed (see above).