Social Security Numbers (SSN)

In the United States, a Social Security number (SSN) is a nine-digit number issued to U.S. citizens, permanent residents, and temporary (working) residents. The number is issued to an individual by the Social Security Administration. Its primary purpose is to track individuals for taxation purposes. Social Security numbers are available only to those international students, scholars and employees who have secured employment in the U.S. If you have previously applied for and been granted an SSN, this number is yours for life. You should not apply for a second number.

Those who are required to file a tax return, but who are not eligible for a Social Security number, may need to apply for an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN).

If you will be employed and you are still pursuing your course of study, you must apply for an SSN in person at the local Social Security Office. Please review instructions about how and where to apply for the SSN. After submitting the application to the Social Security Administration, you will receive a written notice with estimated processing time.

On-Campus Employment
Students with on-campus employment in F-1 and J-1 status must request a Social Security Number letter from OIS. To do so, please log in to My OIS (my.ois.pitt.edu) and submit your request online. Typical processing time for your letter is three business days after your request has been submitted. You will receive an email when the letter has been prepared.

*NOTE:* The Social Security Administration cannot process your SSN application if your on-campus employment start date is more than 30 days from your SSN application date.

Curricular Practical Training
Students who have been authorized for Curricular Practical Training (CPT) may present a copy of their CPT I-20 in order to apply for a Social Security Number.

*NOTE:* The Social Security Administration cannot process your SSN application if your CPT start date is more than 30 days from your SSN application date.

Optional Practical Training
Students who are close to degree completion, and will apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT), may apply for an SSN as part of the OPT application process. You may indicate on the Form I-765 application for OPT that you wish to also apply for an SSN at the same time. If the OPT is approved, the Social Security card will be mailed within 7 business days.

J-1 Scholars and Employees
Scholars and employees will need to provide a copy of their DS-2019 (J-1 Scholars) or I-797 Approval Notice (H1B and other NIV holders) in order to prove their eligibility for a Social Security Number/Card. Canadian TN holders can show their passport entry stamp.

Although you may be asked to provide an SSN for other services such as banking, utilities, cell phones, etc., it is only required for employment. For purposes other than employment, ask the service provider about acceptable alternative identification numbers.
COVID-19: Instructions to apply for Social Security Number (SSN)

Do you need a SSN?

1. The SSN is a 9-digit number that is used to track individuals for taxation purposes.
2. F-1 and J-1 visa holders who are employed in the United States are required to apply for a Social Security Number.
3. Prior to applying, new students and scholars must ensure that their SEVIS record is active. SEVIS activation occurs after completing orientation requirements.

Documents You Need

F-1 Documents
- Passport
- Visa Stamp
- I-94 Record
- I-20 (if on CPT or OPT, endorsed)
- OIS Social Security Letter (if on campus employment, apply in My OIS—my.ois.pitt.edu)

Scholar and Employee Documents
- Passport
- Visa Stamp
- I-94 Record
- DS-2019 (if on AT, endorsed)
- J-1 Student: OIS Social Security Letter (if on campus employment, apply in My OIS—my.ois.pitt.edu)
- J-1 Scholar: Employment Offer/Invitation Letter
- J-2 dependent: EAD
- H1B or NIV: I-797 Approval Notice and offer letter
- Canadian TN: Visa Entry Stamp and offer letter

Complete Application

Complete the application form available on the Social Security website (www.ssa.gov/ssnumber/) and prepare your documents.

F-1 OPT students: For those that applied for a SSN with the Form I-765, do NOT complete steps 2, 3 & 4. Your application was the Form I-765.

J-2 dependents: If you filed the I-765 with USCIS and requested a SSN, you also do not need to complete the following steps.

- Prepare following items to send to local SSN office via mail:
  - Original completed and signed Form SS-5.
  - Photocopies of “Documents You Need”, listed above.
- Verify the mailing address of your local Social Security Administration office at https://www.ssa.gov/locator/:
  - East Liberty
    6117 Station St.
    Pittsburgh PA 15206
  - Downtown
    700 Grant Street, Room 1204
    Pittsburgh PA 15219

Apply for SSN

- Mail application to your local SSA office.
- SSA office will contact you by phone to set up an in-person appointment.
- Make sure that your phone’s voicemail is set up and functioning.
- Bring original “Documents You Need”, listed above, to appointment.
  - NOTE: the SSA office cannot process your application if your employment start date is more than 30 days from your SSN application date.

Receive Your SSN

Your SSN should be mailed to you within 10-14 business days of applying.

F-1 OPT students: For those that applied with the Form I-765, your SSN should be mailed within 7 business days of receiving your EAD card.

If you have any questions, at any stages of this process, contact OIS@pitt.edu.