

Social Security Information for International Students

Auburn University sponsored non-immigrant students or scholars must have a letter from the Office of International Programs verifying their status and eligibility to apply for a U.S. Social Security number. Please read the following instructions, and if you are eligible for a Social Security number, complete the appropriate forms.

All Auburn University F-1 students wishing to receive a Social Security number or replacement Social Security card must demonstrate proof of authorized on-campus employment.

- Please bring a letter of employment or offer of employment from the on-campus employer to the Office of International Programs.
- The employer must use the format linked below for the letter.
- This letter must be on the employer's letterhead.
- The Office of International Programs then will prepare a letter for the student to take to the Social Security Administration office.

Questions? Please email intledu@auburn.edu with the subject line reading, "Social Security letters."

The following instructions are circulated by the Social Security Administration regarding the rule stating all F-1 students must have offers of employment prior to securing a Social Security number. This letter must be on the employer's letterhead.

Dear Colleague:

I want to inform you of changes the Social Security Administration (SSA) is making in assigning Social Security numbers and replacing Social Security cards, specifically for F-1 foreign students. Also, I would like to ask your help in providing the necessary documentation to foreign students, and in referring to the SSA only those students who have, or have been offered, jobs on campus or who are authorized for certain off-campus employment, as permitted under Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations.

The integrity of Social Security numbers is of great importance. Concerns about national security, along with the growing problem of identity theft, have caused us to accelerate efforts to protect the integrity of the Social Security number (SSN).

Changes That Affect F-1 Foreign Students:

- SSA is verifying documents from all F-1 students, and
- F-1 students seeking SSNs for on-campus work are required to provide documentation that they have (or have been offered) an on-campus job, and to provide verification of that employment.

Verifying Status

When a noncitizen requests an SSN, we now verify the immigration documents before assigning a Social Security number. We receive immediate online verification from DHS in most cases. However, if verification is not available online, DHS will check the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) to verify the status of international students. Successful verification is dependent on the school's registering or "activating" their students in SEVIS. Verifying student status utilizing SEVIS results in faster processing of SSN applications while still continuing to ensure only those noncitizens who meet the requirements for receiving SSNs get them.

On-Campus Employment

An F-1 student requesting an SSN for on-campus employment must now prove he or she has (or has been offered) an on-campus job and must show evidence of that employment or an SSN will not be assigned. This is in addition to providing evidence of age, identity, a SEVIS-generated Form I-20 A-B, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status, and a current Form I-94, Arrival-Departure Record, showing F-1 nonimmigrant status.

The following two documents are required as evidence of F-1 student on-campus employment only. It is not a requirement for F-1 students for curricular practical training (CPT) or those students who have an employment authorization document (EAD) from DHS.

1. A letter – typed or handwritten – on school letterhead from the designated school official (DSO) that identifies the:

- Student by name,
- On-campus employer (e.g., book store, cafeteria, biology department, library),
and
- Nature of the on-campus employment (e.g., waiting tables in the cafeteria, stocking shelves in the library, monitoring lab experiments, receiving a scholarship or reduced tuition fees in exchange for teaching or other services, etc.).

This letter must include the DSO's original signature, printed/typed name, telephone number and date. The letter can be a form letter as long as the identifying information about the specific student, the student's employer and type of employment, and the DSO signature are original entries by the DSO. The SSA cannot accept a letter that does not have an original DSO signature or that lists more than one student.

In lieu of this separate letter, a DSO may sign off on the information provided in the letter from the employer (explained below). The sign-off must contain the DSO's signature, printed name, telephone number and date.

2. A recently issued pay slip or pay stub from the F-1 student's employer. If the student does not have a pay slip or stub, the student must provide a letter from the employer on the employer's letterhead that provides employment verification, namely:

- Identity of student employee,
- Nature of job the student is, or will be, engaged in,
- Anticipated or actual employment start date,
- Number of hours the student is expected to work,

- Employer identification number (EIN),
- Employer contact information, including the telephone number and the name of the F-1 student's immediate supervisor,
- Original signature and signatory's title,
- Date.

A sample letter is attached for your convenience. If the employer is the DSO, the letter verifying employment must come from a separate source, e.g., the department or payroll official that issues the paycheck and is responsible for wage reporting.

Please note: all documents must be originals. We cannot accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents.

Referring F-1 and M-1 Students to SSA

We ask that you refer to a Social Security office to apply for Social Security numbers only F-1 students who have or have been offered on-campus jobs, or are authorized for certain off-campus employment, as permitted under DHS regulations. Also, any F-1 student authorized for CPT should have the employment page (page 3) of Form I-20 A-B completed. Any F-1 student authorized for other off campus work, including optional practical training (OPT), must have an EAD from DHS. M-1 foreign students may only work, if authorized, in OPT and must have an EAD.

F-1 and M-1 Border Commuter Students

F-1 border commuter students who are nationals of Mexico or Canada may work, if authorized, in CPT or OPT. For CPT, the employment page (page 3) of the Form I-20 A-B must be completed by the DSO. For OPT, an EAD is required. M-1 border commuter students may only work, if authorized, in OPT and must have an EAD.

Working While Awaiting an SSN

An F-1 or M-1 student may work while the Social Security number application is being processed. Employers may wish to reference [SSA's fact sheet, Employer Responsibilities When Hiring Foreign Workers](#). This fact sheet contains information on how to report wages for an employee who has not yet received an SSN.

Also, employers are required to abide by federal and state laws with respect to the payment of wages to employees who have completed the agreed-to amount of work. See the U.S. Department of Labor website that discusses the [basic requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#).

Also, different states have different payday requirements. A comprehensive list can be found on the [Department of Labor's web site](#). We strongly recommend that an employer and/or their payroll or human resources departments check federal and state labor laws and their own legal counsel before withholding wages from their employees. There is no provision in the Social Security Act that employers must have their employees' SSNs before hiring them. Neither is there any provision in the Social Security Act that prohibits an employee from beginning work if he or she has not yet obtained an SSN.