Northeastern University
Office of Global Services

What is a Social Security Number (SSN) and can I apply?

For students in F-1 and J-1 status or J scholars, a SSN is a 9 digit number used primarily for tax payer identification, income reporting, and other official record keeping purposes. Social Security Numbers are valid for a lifetime once issued. A SSN does not grant work authorization. Additional information is available here, ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10181.pdf

To obtain a SSN, F-1 and J-1 students must be authorized to work and in a legal student status. The following students may apply:

- F-1 and authorized J-1 students who have on-campus employment at Northeastern University
- F-1 students with Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or Optional Practical Training (OPT)
- J-1 students with Academic Training (AT)

When do I apply?

F and J students and J scholars must complete Form SS-5 (ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf) and submit it in person at a Social Security Administration (SSA) office with the required documentation detailed below as it pertains to the type of work. You can apply for a SSN no more than 30 days prior to the first date of your work. New and transfer students should wait at least 10 business days after arriving the U.S. to apply, to allow for DHS update. After applying, a SSN card will be mailed to the location listed on Form SS-5 within 2-4 weeks.

For students engaging in authorized off-campus employment: Some employers may allow students to begin working and get paid if they submit a receipt from the Social Security Administration office, which shows the date that they applied for a SSN. Further regulations governing employers whose employees are awaiting a SSN are available online at the Social Security Administration website, ssa.gov/employer/hiring.htm.

Where do I apply?

Locations, contact information, and office hours are available online at https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp. Students living on campus should use the following zip codes to determine which SSA office is closest: 02115 or 02120

F-1 Student Employment: How do I apply?

***ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT*:**
　　1. Gather the following documents:
- Completed and signed OGS "On-Campus Employment Certification Form"*
- Unexpired passport (valid for at least 6 months into the future)
- Form I-20
- I-94 record that displays "F-1 D/S" (can be obtained online at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/)

　　2. Go to the SSA and apply.

Stipended Graduate Assistantships (SGAs): SGAs should follow the same application procedures listed above, but should obtain OGS "Evidence of On-Campus Engagement Form" signed by your graduate school and by OGS, in place of the "On-Campus Employment Certification Form".

OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT: Curricular Practical Training (CPT)
　　1. Gather the following documents:
- Form I-20 with CPT authorization listed at the top of page 3 which serves as your proof of work authorization
- Unexpired passport (valid for at least 6 months into the future)
- I-94 record that displays "F-1 D/S" (can be obtained online at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/)

　　2. Apply at an SSA office no more than 30 days before the first day of CPT listed on Form I-20.

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OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT: *Optional Practical Training (OPT)*
1. Gather the following documents:
    - Employment Authorization Document (EAD) issued by the United States Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS)
    - Unexpired passport (valid for at least 6 months into the future)
    - I-94 record that displays "F-1 D/S" (can be obtained online at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/)
    - Form I-20 with OPT recommendation listed on page 3
2. Apply at a SSA office no earlier than the first day of OPT authorization listed on the EAD card (no job offer needed).

J-1 Student Employment: How do I apply?

ON-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT: *J-1 Student Sponsored by Northeastern*
1. Bring a copy of your DS-2019 and completed OGS "J-1 On-Campus Employment Authorization Form" to the OGS*
2. Collect your documents from the OGS (the OGS will email you within 5 business days when your documents are ready)
3. Gather the following documents:
    - Unexpired passport (valid for at least 6 months into the future)
    - Form DS-2019
    - I-94 record that displays "J-1 D/S" (can be obtained online at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/)
    - Completed and signed OGS J-1 On-Campus Employment Authorization Form*
4. Go to the SSA office and apply.

Stipended Graduate Assistantships (SGAs): SGAs should follow the same application procedures listed above, but should obtain of OGS "Evidence of On-Campus Engagement Form" signed by your graduate school and by OGS, in place of OGS "J-1 On-Campus Employment Authorization Form".

J-1 students not sponsored by Northeastern University: J-1 sponsored students who are not under Northeastern University's J-1 Exchange Visitor Program must seek permission from their Program Sponsor to work on or off-campus. Such permission must take the form of a letter on original letterhead with an original signature (no email) and presented to an OGS advisor during a schedule appointment.

OFF-CAMPUS EMPLOYMENT: *Academic Training (AT)*
1. Gather the following documents:
    - Unexpired passport (valid for at least 6 months into the future)
    - I-94 record that displays "J-1 D/S" (can be obtained online at https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/)
    - Form DS-2019 with AT authorization listed at the top on page 1 (item number 5) which serves as your proof of work authorization
    - International Student Eligibility for Employment Letter from the OGS as secondary employment evidence
2. Apply at an SSA office no more than 30 days before the first day of AT listed on DS-2019.

J-1 Scholars: How do I apply?

All paid J-1 scholars are required to get a Social Security Number (SSN). J-1 scholars who are unpaid are also eligible to apply for a SSN, however, it is not required.

The following documents are required to apply for a SSN:
- Valid passport with J-1 Visa stamp
- I-94 record
- DS-2019
- NU Appointment Letter