

Social Security Checklist

For International Students Who Do Not Already Have a Social Security Number

Welcome! As part of beginning your on-campus job at RISD, some international students will need to apply for a Social Security Number (SSN). This number is required for payroll, possible tax treaty benefits, and tax reporting — and you'll keep it for life.

If you already have an SSN, you can skip this process. If you do not, please follow the steps below carefully. Once you complete them, you'll be ready to finish your employment paperwork with Student Employment and start your job.

Important Reminders

- **Who this checklist is for:** This document is intended for F-1 and J-1 students whose status is sponsored by RISD. F-1/J-1 students sponsored by Brown University should consult with Brown's Office of International Student & Scholar Services (iss.brown.edu). J-1 students sponsored by Fulbright should consult with the organization that issued their DS-2019. Students in other statuses may need to consult with their immigration counsel about employment eligibility in their current status.
- **You cannot begin working on campus** until you apply for your Social Security Number (SSN) and complete employment paperwork with Student Employment.
- If you already have an SSN, you do not need to go through these steps.
- **You may not apply for your SSN more than 30 days before your employment start date** (the date on your employment verification letter).
- Your Social Security card is yours for life — keep it safe.

Steps for Applying for a Social Security Card

1. Secure a Job & Employment Letter

- **For hourly jobs:** Your supervisor provides the Employment Verification Letter.
- **For Graduate Assistantships:** Student Employment provides the letter.
- The letter must be on RISD letterhead and list your job start date.
- If you were hired into more than one job, you only need one Employment Verification Letter.

2. Request Your ISSA Letter

- **F-1 students:** Submit the Social Security Letter Request via Terra Dotta.
- **J-1 students:** Email issa@risd.edu.
- International Student & Scholar Affairs (ISSA) will then issue your Immigration Status Verification Letter.

3. Complete the SSN Application Online

- Go to the Social Security Administration (SSA) website and complete the online SSN application: ssa.gov/number-card
- You'll be prompted to schedule an appointment at your local SSA office.
- Use this address for your appointment:

Social Security Administration
6th Floor, One Empire Plaza
Providence, RI 02903

(This office is within walking distance of the RISD campus.)

4. Appointment + Walk-In Option

- Even if the appointment date is far out, schedule it.
- The Social Security Administration (SSA) discourages walk-ins. Accepting walk-ins is at the discretion of the SSA office. If you choose to walk in, please be aware that you may be directed to return for your scheduled appointment.
- Your SSA appointment may be after your intended job start date. This is okay, but please remember: **you cannot begin working until your I-9 is completed with Student Employment.**
- If there will be a delay, please reach out to your hiring department to keep them updated.
- If your walk-in is successful, please cancel your scheduled appointment so another person can use the slot.

5. Gather Required Original Documents (no scans or copies)

- Employment Verification Letter (on RISD letterhead)
- Letter from ISSA
- Completed SSN application confirmation page
- Valid, unexpired passport
- Visa
- Most recent I-20 (F-1 students) or DS-2019 (J-1 students)
- Most recent I-94 — print at i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94

6. Submit Your Application

- Bring all documents to the SSA office.
- **Ask for a receipt showing you applied** — you'll need this to complete your employment paperwork with Student Employment.

7. Final Step

- Once you have your SSA receipt, schedule your I-9 appointment in Penji with Student Employment.
- Bring all of your original documents with you to your in-person appointment.
- After your I-9 is completed, you'll be cleared to begin working.

Need Help?

If you have any questions while completing this process, please reach out:

Student Employment Office

20 Washington Place, 1st Floor

studentemployment@risd.edu | 401-427-6955

International Student & Scholar Affairs (ISSA)

issa@risd.edu | RISD ISSA Portal

We're here to help you every step of the way!