

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.

You do not need to wait for your SSN to start working. Your Form I-9 can be completed as soon as you arrive on campus with your immigration documents. Applying for your SSN happens alongside your job, not before it.

If you already have an SSN, you can skip the application steps — just make sure your number is entered in Workday.

For students on a JI visa please refer to this <https://issa.risd.edu/employment/j1-student>.

RISD sponsored JI students must obtain ISSA approval before completing paperwork with Student Employment.

The one requirement before you can start work

Once you have been hired, you must complete your Form I-9 in person with the Student Employment Office. Nothing else is required to begin working.

Before You Begin

This checklist picks up after you have been hired. If you have not yet completed the steps below, start there — you can find full guidance on the International Student Employment page of the RISD Student Hub.

- **Find an on-campus job.** Any position that is not on-campus at RISD — including affiliate, non-RISD, remote, or off-campus work — must be reviewed with ISSA before you begin.
- **Register for a full course of study.** This is required to qualify for student employment.
- **Review your work permissions with ISSA** and obtain work authorization if your status requires it.
- **Receive your Employment Verification Letter.** You do not need to request it. For hourly jobs, it comes from your supervisor with your job offer. For Graduate Assistantships, it comes from Student Employment with your onboarding instructions. Keep it somewhere safe — you will need it to apply for your Social Security Number.

Once you have a job offer, the two tracks below run in parallel. Part 1 is what lets you start working. Part 2 is what gets you paid correctly.

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 your Form I-9 is completed in person with Student Employment.** You do not need to have applied for your SSN first.
- You may not apply for your SSN more than 30 days before your employment start date (the date on your employment verification letter).
- Your SSA appointment may fall after your job start date. This is okay — it will not delay your ability to work.

- Your Social Security card is yours for life — keep it safe.

Part 1: Complete Your Form I-9 and Begin Work

Once you have been hired, do this as soon as you arrive in the United States. You do not need an SSN, an SSA appointment, or an ISSA letter for this step.

Step 1: Schedule your I-9 appointment

- Use the Penji system to make an appointment with the Student Employment Office.
- Our office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM.
- We are located on the first floor of 20 Washington Place.

Step 2: Bring your original documents

Originals only — no scans, photographs, or copies:

- Valid, unexpired foreign passport
- Most recent Form I-20 (F-1 students) or DS-2019 (J-1 students)
- Most recent Form I-94 — print at i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94 after you enter the U.S.

Please print your I-94 before your appointment. Keep your passport and original I-20 or DS-2019 in your carry-on luggage when you travel, not in a checked bag.

Step 3: Complete Sections 1 and 2 with our staff

- We complete both sections of the Form I-9 with you during the appointment. Please allow 30 minutes.
- Once your I-9 is complete, you are cleared to begin working.

Part 2: Apply for Your Social Security Number

Begin these steps as soon as you are able. You can work while this process is underway.

Because your Employment Verification Letter is sent to you automatically, Step 1 should already be done before you travel. Everything from Step 2 onward requires you to have arrived in the United States and completed your ISSA check-in.

Step 1: Check that you have your Employment Verification Letter

- Hourly jobs: your supervisor sends this with your job offer.
- Graduate Assistantships: Student Employment sends this with your onboarding instructions.
- The letter must be on RISD letterhead and list your job start date.
- If you did not receive one, contact your supervisor. For Graduate Assistantships, contact Student Employment.
- If you were hired into more than one job, you only need one Employment Verification Letter.
- **If your start date changes**, ask for an updated letter. The SSA will use the date on the letter.

Step 2: Complete your ISSA immigration check-in

- Do this as soon as you arrive in the United States. It must happen before you can request your ISSA letter.
- Your SEVIS record must be registered before the Social Security Administration can verify your status. Applying before that is typically denied.

Step 3: 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.

Step 4: Complete the SSN application online

- Go to the Social Security Administration (SSA) website and complete the online application at ssa.gov/number-card.
- You will 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.

Step 5: Schedule your appointment

- Even if the appointment date is far out, schedule it.
- Please let Student Employment know your appointment date so we can support you through the process and answer questions as they come up.
- The SSA discourages walk-ins. Accepting walk-ins is at the discretion of the SSA office. If you choose to walk in, you may be directed to return for your scheduled appointment.
- If your walk-in is successful, please cancel your scheduled appointment so another person can use the slot.
- If there will be a delay, please keep your hiring department updated.

Step 6: Gather your original documents

Originals only — 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

Step 7: Submit your application

- Bring all documents to the SSA office.
- Ask for a receipt showing that you applied. This is helpful for our records, and we encourage you to share it with us, but it is not required in order to work.

Part 3: After You Receive Your Social Security Number

Step 1: Enter your SSN in Workday

- As soon as your number arrives, enter it in Workday. Student Employment runs a weekly report and will follow up with you until this is done.

Step 2: Keep your card somewhere safe

- You do not need to bring your card to our office or show it to anyone at RISD. Entering the number in Workday is all we need.

- Store the card securely. You will need it throughout your life, and replacements are limited.
- If you would like help entering the number in Workday, you are welcome to contact us.

Step 3: Complete your tax profile in Sprintax Calculus

- Once your SSN is in Workday, it transfers to Sprintax Calculus, where you can apply for a tax treaty benefit if your country has one with the United States.
- Allow one business day after entering your number in Workday before returning to Sprintax.
- Step-by-step instructions: search the RISD ITS knowledge base for “Completing Your Tax Treaty Using Sprintax Calculus.”
- Tax treaty benefits are not retroactive. They begin only after your Sprintax analysis is complete, so finishing promptly protects more of your pay.

Why this matters for your pay

Until your SSN is on file, you cannot claim any tax treaty benefit that may apply to you, and your earnings may be withheld at the maximum rate. Completing these steps promptly protects your take-home pay. Depending on payroll timing, there may be a short delay before a treaty benefit takes effect.

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!