International Student Employment FAQs

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Introduction
Northeastern University, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), and the sponsoring departments of international students all have rules and procedures that must be followed in the employment of international students. These rules are summarized here to help guide you through the process. As each student's situation is different, you are encouraged to seek assistance from the International Student and Scholar Institute (ISSI) and the Student Employment Office (SEO).

NOTE: In order to maintain proper visa status at Northeastern, all international students must receive the appropriate employment authorization (if eligible) prior to engaging in any type of employment. Improperly authorized or unauthorized employment jeopardizes an international student’s ability to maintain proper visa status. The U. S. government’s Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) – which is administered by the ISSI at Northeastern for those in “F” or “J” nonimmigrant visa classifications – requires that any employment must be properly authorized to ensure SEVIS compliance.

May I work while at Northeastern University?
If you want to work, contact the ISSI, located in 206 Ell Hall. A staff member will evaluate your immigration status and determine your eligibility to work. The ISSI grants on-campus work permission to eligible students with valid F-1 and J-1 status provided that the visa eligibility document is issued by the ISSI. Those students in J-2 status and other specified nonimmigrant visa classifications (e.g. E-1/E-2 dependent, L-2) must have applied for and received an Employment Authorization Document card (EAD) in order to be hired/paid. In rare instances students in other visa statuses may be granted on-campus work permission. International students pending permanent residency may also be granted permission to work.

International students who plan to work in a co-op position at Northeastern must be authorized to do so under the auspices of Curricular Practical Training (F-1 students) or
Academic Training (J-1 exchange visitors) prior to commencing each and every period of employment. The ISSI provides such authorization as appropriate.

International students are required to have full-time status each academic semester unless it is their final semester or in other very specific and limited cases according to strict SEVIS and ISSI guidelines. Undergraduate students must register for a minimum of 12 credits per semester to be considered full time. Graduate student course load is determined by the program and the school of study. Graduate students should be certified as full-time students if carrying less than a full-time credit load due to teaching or research. International students are eligible to work during the summer at Northeastern University provided they are enrolled full time for the fall semester. Those students working on their doctoral degrees should check with their graduate school's registrar to be sure they have a full-time certification. International students graduating in September must be enrolled during the summer term.

Lastly, all those employed by Northeastern University must ultimately have obtained a valid Social Security number.

Do I need a Social Security Number to Work?
Yes, all those employed by Northeastern University must have a valid Social Security number to work. A student must meet with an ISSI staff member before applying for a Social Security Number.

If you have been awarded a Stipended Graduate Assistantship (SGA) or a Northeastern University Tuition Assistance (NUTA), or have any other job offer on-campus, when applying for a Social Security Number, you must request a receipt of application. The receipt of application must be returned to the ISSI as soon as possible. This receipt will be presented to the Student Employment Office to activate the payroll process.

How do I apply for a Social Security Number?
First, you must meet with an ISSI staff member before applying for a Social Security Number.

Application Process:
You must be physically present in the U.S., in an immigration classification that allows for employment and you must have a job or an offer of employment to apply for a Social Security Card. You may submit an Application for a Social Security Card to the Social Security Administration in person on any business day (except holidays) between the hours of 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM. You must request a receipt of application for the Social Security Administration. The receipt of application must be returned to the ISSI office as soon as possible.

PLEASE NOTE: If you have just recently arrived in the U.S. for the first time in your current immigration classification, you should wait at least 10 business days after your
date of arrival in the U.S. to submit an application for a Social Security Card. This will allow the Department of Homeland Security adequate time to enter your arrival information in their database for verification purposes.

You must present ALL of the following documentation to the Social Security Administration Office:
1) A completed Application for a Social Security Card. The application form is available on-line at http://www.ssa.gov/online/ss-5.pdf, or at the Social Security Administration office.
2) Unexpired foreign passport with U.S. Visa
3) Original USCIS I-94 Departure card (small white card stapled into passport)
4) All of the supporting documentation below (depending on immigration status) available at ISSI:
   A) F-1 Students - All SEVIS Form(s) I-20; an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) if engaging in practical training.
   B) J-1 Exchange Visitors – All SEVIS Form(s) DS-2019
   D) Offer letter of employment/appointment from Northeastern University
   E) Form ISSI 125 issued by the ISSI.

The above documentation must be presented in person at a Social Security Office. One local office address:

Social Security Administration
Thomas P. O’Neill Federal Office Building
10 Causeway Street Room 148
North Station/Fleet Center
Boston, MA 02222
Telephone # (617) 565-8797

For other available Social Security Administration information and details please see ISSI publication # ISSI 111, also available at www.issi.neu.edu/forms.htm.

MBTA Directions: North Station "T" stop on the green or orange line; building is next to the Fleet Center

Receiving Your Social Security Card and Number
The Social Security Administration may need some time to verify your current immigration status before they can issue a Social Security Card. In most cases, a Social Security Card should be mailed to the address you listed on your application form within 14 business days. If you do not receive a Social Security Card within 30-60 days, you should contact the Social Security Administration via telephone at 1-800-772-1213 or visit the Social Security Administration website at: http://www.ssa.gov/ to inquire about the status of your pending application.
Within a week of receiving your Social Security Card, you must go to the Student Employment Office and present your valid Social Security Card and the completed Northeastern Social Security Identification Form (available at https://studentemployment.neu.edu/cimages/SSNID.pdf).

NOTE: Once students have obtained a U.S. Social Security Number, it is not necessary to apply for a new one if the employment changes.

Where can I look for a job?
Online Job Search can be found on myNEU, the Self-Service Tab, click on the Student Employment Link.

What do I have to do once I am hired?
Once you have found a job on campus, you should return to ISSI with your immigration documents (passport, I-94 card, and I-20/DS-2019), and your Northeastern University ID card. The staff at the ISSI will have you complete an Employment Eligibility Form (I-9). Once you have completed your I-9 at ISSI, the Student Employment Office will be notified and update the online Student Employment System. Then, your employer should be able to complete your hire online.

Are there any restrictions on my employment?
You may not work more than 20 hours per week while classes are in session, but may work full time during vacation periods: winter intersession, spring break, and summer recess (if not required to enroll in classes). If you are receiving a Stipend Graduate Assistantship (SGA), you are paid on a semi-monthly basis and are considered to be working 20 hours a week. As an SGA, you cannot work in an hourly paid position during the academic year as those positions fulfill the 20 hour per week maximum employment allowed by USCIS regulations. If you are receiving Northeastern University Tuition Assistance (NUTAs), you are considered to be working ten hours per week and you may only work an additional 10 hours per week at another job. A student exceeding the 20 hour per week limit while classes are in session is considered to be in violation of status and very serious consequences may arise.

You may work through the date authorized by the ISSI or until you graduate from Northeastern University, whichever comes first. Once your work authorization date expires, you may not work until you get an extension from the ISSI.

How and when am I paid?
If you are a semi-monthly paid research assistant or teaching fellow, you will receive your pay on the 15th and the last day of the month, provided the department you are working for has submitted your information before the payroll deadline.
If you are an hourly paid employee, you should submit your online time sheet to your supervisor each week that you work. The deadline for timesheets to be submitted to your supervisor is Monday at 12:00 Noon each week. Your supervisor is responsible for reviewing, approving and forwarding your time sheets to the SEO by Tuesday 12:00 Noon. Payments are issued on Friday.

All students are required to use Direct Deposit. The Direct Deposit Form is available online or at the Student Employment Website.

If you have more than one job, your total earnings will be combined in one check. Remember, you are limited to working a maximum of twenty hours per week while classes are in session. You (not your supervisor) are responsible for making sure you do not work more than 20 hours total each week.

Do I have to pay taxes on the money that I earn?

NOTE: Every spring semester, ISSI offers a Tax Seminar Series presented by a tax attorney who specializes in tax issues for nonresidents. Advanced sign up is required.

While working in the United States, you are subject to both federal and state taxes. If you are from a country that has a tax treaty with the United States that exempts you from full or partial tax withholdings (click here to view list), do not complete Form W-4 (Employee Withholdings Allowance Certificate). Instead, you must complete a form 8233 (Exemption from Withholdings on Compensation for Independent Personal Services of a Nonresident Alien Individual), a Foreign National Data Sheet, and a treaty letter. These forms must be completed each calendar year in order to claim exempt status and must be accompanied by a copy of your passport, visa, I-94 card, and DS-2019 or I-20.

Most tax treaties have a limit on tax exempt earnings that can be exempt from taxes. Your country’s treaty letter will identify this amount. When your earnings have reached the limit allowed by the tax treaty between your country and the United States, you then must complete Form W-4 following the same procedures as students from countries that do not have tax treaties.

If your home country does not have a tax treaty with the United States that allows you to claim an exempt status from tax withholdings --- for example Brazil, Denmark, and the United Kingdom --- you should complete Form W-4. You should claim 1 exemption from withholding at the single rate, with an additional amount of $7.60 per week to be withheld from your earnings. If you are from Canada, India, Korea, or Mexico, tax treaty provisions may allow you to claim more than one exemption. If you do not file a Form W-4, you will have taxes withheld at the highest possible rate.

If you have been in the United States for less than five years and you are a student in F-1 or J-1 immigration status, you are exempt from FICA (Social Security and Medicare taxes).
Each year you are required by law to file a 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ tax return and Form 8843 with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). You may obtain these forms by calling the IRS at 1-800-829-3676. You may also download these forms from the IRS website (www.irs.gov). Failure to file these forms is a violation of United States law and may jeopardize your future status in the United States. You may also be required to file a Massachusetts Income Tax Form with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR). You should consult the DOR's website (www.dor.state.ma.us/) to determine your filing responsibilities. You may obtain Massachusetts State tax forms by calling the DOR at 1-800-392-6089. You may also download forms from the DOR's website.

Additional Questions?
We hope this guide has answered many of your questions about working while at Northeastern University. Remember, if you have any questions regarding your eligibility to work, you should contact the ISSI, and if you need any assistance in finding a job, you should contact SEO.

The following publications, which will assist you with your tax status, are available to you from the IRS:

- Publication 515 Withholding of Tax on Nonresident Aliens
- Publication 901 U.S. Tax Treaties
- Publication 597 U.S.- Canada Tax Treaty
- Publication 519 U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens

These publications may be obtained by calling the IRS. You may also request these publications at www.irs.gov.

Contact Information
International Student & Scholar Institute
206 Ell Hall
360 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
Tel. (617) 373-2310
Fax. (617) 373-8788
Email: issi@neu.edu

Student Employment Office
354 Richards Hall
360 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
phone: (617) 373-3200
e-mail: studentemployment@neu.edu
Northeastern University's policies provide for equal opportunity and affirmative action in employment and admission to all programs of the University.