



## OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

University Center for International Studies  
University of Pittsburgh

### Driver's License

As a nonimmigrant visa holder (F, J student, J scholar or H-1B), you have two options to drive legally in Pennsylvania, depending upon the duration of your I-20, DS-2019, or I-797 – apply for a Pennsylvania driver's license or use an International Driving Permit.

Those who do not plan to drive, but want a state-issued identification document, may be eligible to apply for a Pennsylvania Photo Identification Card.

#### Pennsylvania Driver's License

If you are a nonimmigrant visa holder (F, J student, J scholar or H-1B), and your I-20, DS-2019, or I-797 is valid, you are eligible to apply for a Pennsylvania Driver's License.

According to Pennsylvania law, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) "may issue a license if the person will lawfully be in the United States for a period of one year or more after the date of the application or for a shorter period of time if deemed appropriate by the department."

Please review instructions about obtaining a Pennsylvania Driver's License on page 2.

#### International Driving Permit

If you will be in the US for less than one year (i.e., the expiration date on your Form I-20, Form DS-2019, or Form I-797A Approval Notice is less than one year away), you may also wish to consider driving with a **valid home country license and International Driving Permit (IDP)**.

An IDP translates information contained on your driver's license into 10 languages so that officials in foreign countries are able to interpret your license. An IDP supplements a valid government-issued license; it does not serve as a replacement for a license. If you are stopped by law enforcement, you will most likely be asked to produce both your IDP and your official driver's license. **You cannot apply for an International Driving Permit in the United States, so you will need to obtain this document from the relevant authority in your home country before traveling to the U.S.**

Pennsylvania honors a valid foreign driver's license with an international driving permit for a period of up to one year. If the foreign license and/or international permit expire(s) before one year, the individual must apply for a Pennsylvania Learner's Permit to continue to drive in this state.

#### Pennsylvania Photo Identification Card

If you are a nonimmigrant visa holder (F, J student, J scholar or H-1B) who does not plan on driving, and your I-20, DS-2019, or I-797 is valid, you can apply for a **Pennsylvania Photo Identification Card**.

#### Note about REAL ID

Students wishing to apply for a REAL ID-compliant Driver's License or Photo Identification Card must apply at a location that offers this service. See more information on PennDOT's [REAL ID webpage](#).

#### Note about SSN and SSN Denial Letter

To apply for a Driver's License or Photo ID, you must have a:

- [Social Security Number](#) (SSN), or;
- "[Denial Letter](#)" from the Social Security Administration, stating that they do not currently qualify for an SSN.

If you do not have an SSN at the time you apply for a Driver's License or Photo ID, you will need to receive a "Denial Letter" before you apply. Review the links above for more information.



## OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

University Center for International Studies  
University of Pittsburgh

### Instructions for Applying for a Driver's License or State ID

#### 1. Which Document?

If you are a F, J student, J scholar or H-1B employee and your immigration document is valid on the date you are applying, you are eligible to apply for a Pennsylvania (PA) Driver's License or a PA Photo Identification Card (State ID).

A Driver's License will allow you to drive, but you will have to take a written test, a road test, and a medical exam.

If you do not need to drive but still want a state-issued ID, you can get the State ID without these tests.

#### 2. Documents You Need

Every international visitor applying for a Driver's License or State ID will need the following documents:

- Passport
- I-94 Record (<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>)
- [Social Security Card](#), or [Denial Letter](#) from Social Security Office
- [2 Documents verifying a Pennsylvania address](#) (lease, utility bill, etc.)
- [Application Form for Driver's License](#) (with medical portion completed by a doctor; students can contact the [Student Health Services](#)), or [Photo Identification Card](#)

Below are the documents you need based on your immigration status:

Document	F-1 Student	F-1 on OPT	J-1 Student	J-1 Scholar	H-1B
Form I-20	X	X			
EAD Card		X			
DS-2019			X	X	
Form I-797					X

#### \* Things to Remember

**For OPT Participants** — You need to wait until you receive your EAD to apply for a Driver's License or State ID.

**For Dependents** — You need your immigration document (I-20, DS-2019 or I-797) plus the primary visa holder's immigration document in addition to all other requirements.

**For Verification Issues** — if PennDOT cannot verify your immigration documents, OIS recommends that you ask PennDOT to submit a [SAVE](#) record correction request. Then, you can receive a case number to check on the status of your [SAVE CaseCheck](#).

#### 3. Apply for License or ID

Visit a Driver's License Center to submit the required documents and forms. For additional information, visit PennDOT's [website](#).

#### LOCAL DRIVER'S LICENSE LOCATIONS:

Penn Hills  
11620 Kelekit Dr.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15235

Downtown  
708 Smithfield St.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Allison Park  
1701 Duncan Ave.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15101