



Becoming a Global Spartan

EXTENDED RESOURCE GUIDE



**Center for
International Studies**

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA UPSTATE

Additional Resources

This guide is a compilation of additional tasks, some optional and some required, that international students often complete after they have arrived on campus. Please note that any companies and procedures mentioned are not a direct endorsement from the Center for International Studies or the university, but rather the recommendations and advice of former USC Upstate international students. Additionally, the sections detailing documents and steps required in order to set up a bank account, acquire a driver's license/car, and pay US taxes, are just general summaries of the actions required to help you get started. Always double check with the proper authorities (your specific bank, SCDMV, US federal/state tax code, etc.) for the most updated information and procedures.

How to Sign FERPA Release Waiver

According to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), USC Upstate and university personnel are not allowed to release student information such as class schedule, attendance records, and grades to any individual other than the enrolled student. This includes family members and guardians of the student, even if they are funding the education. Students that would like to grant parents or guardians access to their university records may complete a FERPA release form for the specific individual(s) they would like to view their records. The [FERPA Release](#) form can be found under the "Student Forms" section of the Spartan Hub SharePoint. The permission granted by the release form is only valid for 1 year, so students must complete the form every year if they would like others to have access to their academic records. Note that the FERPA release form is completely optional, and students may choose to be the only one with access to their academic records without completing additional steps.

How to Set Up a US Phone Number

International students often choose to have a US phone plan to have access to data when Wi-Fi is not available and to avoid international calling, texting and roaming fees from their home carrier. Most phone carriers no longer require a store visit to set up a plan. You can find a plan online and purchase an e-sim or get a physical sim card sent in the mail. Phone providers that former Upstate international students have recommended include Mint Mobile, Ultra Mobil, Tello, and Visible. All have affordable plans with good coverage in the Upstate.

How to Set Up a US Bank Account

Many international students find it easier to open a US bank account and transfer money between their home account and their new account. This allows students to avoid international processing fees that may be charged to their bank cards from home and to pay for larger expenses like rent without long processing and transfer periods. While students are welcome to open bank accounts at any bank in the US, there are a few banks and account types that are better suited to international students:

- Chase College Checking Account (Chase Bank)
- Bank of America Safe Balance Banking (Bank of America)
- Student Everyday Checking Account (Wells Fargo)
- International Student Account OR Student Checking Account (HSBC USA)
- TD Student Checking (TD Bank)
- 360 Checking Account (Capitol One Bank)

Most USC Upstate students usually choose to go with Bank of America because of its proximity to campus. At the beginning of each semester, the CIS usually arranges a group trip to the Bank of America for interested students. You can email international@uscupstate.edu to see if a trip has been arranged. Remember that regardless of the bank you choose you are responsible for all the fees and costs associated with making an account. To open an account in the US as an international student, you will most likely need the following items, but check before your bank visit to ensure that nothing else is need:

- Your full name, home address, home telephone number, your campus telephone number and your college address or apartment lease (2 letters as proof of address)
- Your passport and visa
- An I-20 (certificate of eligibility for non-immigrant student status)
- I-94 approval notice
- Any secondary form of identification (such as your student ID card, birth certificate, driver's license, or a letter from the international student's office at your university)
- A letter of acceptance from your university
- An amount of money to deposit into the account (this will vary between banks)

How to Obtain a Driver's License

If you are only planning on driving a car occasionally, you can use an international driver's license along with your country's national driver license to rent and drive a vehicle for the first 6 months that you are in the US. Past the 6-month mark or if you wish to buy a car, you will need to go through the process of obtaining a US driver's license. There are two parts to the driving test in the US, a written portion and a driving portion. You must pass both before you can receive a license. It is important to note that each state in the US has slightly different traffic laws. If you take the written exam in a different state or plan to drive through multiple states, you should check their state driving handbook and be aware of their laws. You can access every state's motor vehicle services page [here](#).

Documents Needed to Apply (SC)

- 2 proofs of physical address (lease or letters to your name)
- Proof of ID & legal status (passport + visa, I-20, I-90, letter of acceptance from the University)
- Social Security Number or letter stating you are not eligible for a SSN
- Proof of car insurance (if you already own a vehicle)
- National/international driver's license (if you have them- not required)
- MV-94 form (This is the driver's license application form that should be printed and completed before arriving at the appointment)

The Written Test (SC)

It costs roughly \$5.00 to take the exam and receive the initial beginner's permit. Before you take the written exam, you will be asked to complete an eye exam. If you use glasses or contacts, this will be marked on your license and required when you drive. Read the Driver's Manual and take the practice tests on the SC DMV website (link below) before scheduling your written exam.

<https://scdmvonline.com/Driver-Services/Drivers-License/Beginner-Permits>

Road Test (SC)

To complete the road portion of the exam, you must provide a safe vehicle that is properly registered and insured. The DMV employee will ask you to show them the basic safety features of the vehicle and perform vehicle maneuvers like 100-foot backing, parallel parking, and three-point turn. For more information, visit the DMV's website listed below.

<https://scdmvonline.com/Driver-Services/Drivers-License/Testing/Regular-License-Road-Test>

How to Buy a Car

There are several options that international students should consider when purchasing a car. Students can buy new or used from dealerships or third parties or lease a vehicle temporarily. Each of these options will incur different costs and have different benefits. It is the individual's responsibility to determine which option is best for them. Responsible car buyers should also always make sure that they are buying from a reputable source and should check the accident and safety reports on any used or leased vehicles. Along with the listed price of the vehicle, you should prepare to pay an additional 6% on sales tax, which will get added to the bill at the end. In all three cases, students will likely need the following:

- Valid driver's license
- Minimum auto insurance coverage
- Demonstrated ability to make payments
- Auto Loan/Financing (unless paying in cash)
- A positive credit score and report (if financing a vehicle)

Find an On Campus Job

Many international students choose to apply for on-campus jobs or graduate assistantships. It is important to note more on-campus jobs are available in the Fall semester than in the Spring semester. If you arrive in the Spring semester, there may not find a job until the following semester. If you have specific questions regarding finding an on-campus job or resume help, please contact the Office of Career Development. Here are the steps you should take to find a job on campus and get paid:

1. Write your resume. Make sure it is in the correct US format. Email careers@uscupstate.edu for resume help and interview practice.
2. Apply for on-campus jobs. You can find job postings on the university's [Employment](#) page under "Students", then click "View Job Openings".
3. Once you have received a job offer from an on-campus employer, you will need to apply for a Social Security Number (See section regarding SSN) before you can be paid.
4. While you are applying for a SSN, you can complete the paperwork required by your employer such as your I-9 Form, W-4 Form, and Foreign National Tax Information Form.
5. After all these forms are completed and you have a SSN, you can set up a Payroll account on Self Service Carolina and set up your direct deposit, so you can begin working and receive payment.

How to Pay US Taxes

In the United States, all adults present in the country are responsible for filing taxes. This includes international students on an F-1 visa regardless of whether you are employed. Income is taxable. If you were present in the United States at any point during the previous calendar year, you should file for taxes when filing season begins (February through April of each year). As a South Carolina resident, you need to file federal and state taxes. Even if you did not earn income, you need to report your lack of

income to the federal government. The filing deadline, also known as "Tax Day," is typically April 15th of each year or is a date close to April 15th.

Students With Scholarships: Student athletes and others who receive taxable scholarships should make sure to include all information about their scholarships when utilizing their tax services.

Students with On Campus Jobs/Paid Graduate Assistantships: Students will need to include the information from the W-2 form issued by their university employer as well as any additional scholarship information when utilizing their tax services. We recommend requesting an electronic copy of your W-2 as soon as you start your new job for easy filing. You can make this request on the HCM, which is the same portal that you will use to log your work hours.

Students Who Did Not Earn Income in 2023: You should still file a [Form 8843](#) with the federal government certifying that you did not earn income.

How To File Your Taxes

Sprintax is specifically for international student tax filing although students may choose to use any service they wish. You may find their service by visiting <https://www.sprintax.com/>. While not guaranteed, many students receive a tax refund making the process well worth your time.

How to Get a Social Security Number

If you have employment, you will need to obtain a Social Security Number. Complete the steps listed below, reach out to CIS office to see if any group trips are scheduled to the Social Security Office. Usually, the van does one big group trip at the beginning of the semester if there are students interested in going. After the application is complete, it may take 2-6 weeks for the Social Security card to arrive.

Here are the instructions to file for a Social Security Number (SSN):

1. Start the Social Security application process online at ssa.gov.
 - Navigate to "Social Security Number" underneath the initial photos at the top of the page and click there.
 - Click "Start."
 - Answer the questions as asked. You should answer "no" to the question "Is the card for a U.S. citizen?"
 - When you reach the page that says "You can start your Social Security number (SSN) card application online. Once you've submitted your request, visit your local SSA office for additional guidance for completing your application. You will need to give us some of the information you provided again," click Continue.
 - Complete the online process and print out or save a copy of the form you get at the end with a case number.
2. Obtain an Employment Verification Letter
 - If you have on-campus employment: once the Employment Verification Letter is completed by your department, it must be approved and stamped by the Center for International Studies.
 - If you are applying for CPT or Academic Training: your application must first be approved by CIS before applying for a SSN.
3. Take all these items to the Social Security Office to apply for your card:
 - PDF on your phone or printout of online application confirmation with case number
 - Employment Verification letter for on-campus employment

- Passport
- Visa
- I-20 or DS-2019
- Copy of Electronic I-94 from <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>

Center for International Studies

The Center for International Studies (CIS) can help answer questions about health insurance, international student orientation and arrival dates, general questions and concerns about life as an international student at USC Upstate.

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