

# Pennsylvania Driver's Licenses & Identification Cards for Non-immigrants



COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

**Please plan ahead!** The Pennsylvania Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) oversees issuing of driver's licenses and state identification cards. Most non-immigrants and their dependents can obtain a Pennsylvania driver's license or state identification card.

A state identification card is a good alternative to carrying a passport and is useful for opening bank accounts, paying via personal check, or going to bars or restaurants where alcohol is served.

## Eligibility and Applying:

All F-1/F-2, J-1/J-2 visa holders are eligible for state ID or Driver's License AS LONG AS THEIR I-20 or DS-2019 is VALID for a minimum of 6 months or more in the future (including grace period). New students must wait at least 2 weeks from the start of the semester before going to the DMV to allow time for immigration record validation.

1. **OBTAIN A SSN or LETTER OF DENIAL:** An I-20 or DS-2019 *must* be valid for at least 6 months from the date you apply for a license; otherwise you are *not* eligible to apply for a driver's license or state ID card. Obtain a Social Security number or Letter of Denial from Social Security Administration (see Social Security Number for procedure).
2. **F-1 & J-1 students GET LETTER FROM CGE:** Request letter from the Center for Global Engagement using the International Student Request Form. Allow 2-3 business days to collect your letter. If your spouse requires a letter you can get a similar letter from our office as well. These letters are valid for one semester.
3. **GATHER OTHER DOCUMENTS NEEDED:**
  - *Show two forms of proof of residency* (current utility bill, tax record, lease agreement, university bill, bank statement, or other bill)
  - *Immigration Documents:* passport, visa, I-94, I-20 or DS-2019 (if your names do not match exactly on all documents, you may have some difficulty being issued a driver's license or Pennsylvania ID)
  - *Medical Exam* (not needed for PA ID). As part of the application process, all applicants must get a doctor's signature on DL-180, found in the Pennsylvania Driver's Manual.
4. **GO TO THE DRIVER'S LICENSE CENTER** and complete application (DL-180), found in the Pennsylvania Driver's Manual on-line or available at any Driver's License Center.
  - *For the Pennsylvania ID Card:* You will be issued a card upon verification of your documents.
  - *For the Driver's License:* Three tests are required for a license—vision, knowledge, and driving. These are all completed at the Driver's License Center. Upon passing a vision and knowledge test, a driving permit will be issued, which is valid for one year. It allows driving with another licensed driver until passing the driving test. Driving tests must be scheduled: 800-932-4600 or <http://www.dmv.state.pa.us/>.

Detailed information is available in the Pennsylvania Driver's Manual.

## POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AT THE DMV:

- Problems verifying your immigration record may arise and you may have to wait 1-4 weeks for a reply from the DMV. Please call or email us with questions.
- There has been a change in rules for licenses issued during OPT. OPT must be approved in SEVIS or have OPT card in hand to extend license into OPT period.

## INTERNATIONAL AND FOREIGN DRIVER'S LICENSES:

A waiver of some or all of these tests may be available to those who hold a U.S. Driver's License or for citizens of France, Germany, and Canada who hold a license from their home countries. It is still required to show an I-20 or DS-2019, which is valid for more than one year.

International driver's licenses are valid for one year before needing to obtain a Pennsylvania Driver's License.

### **RENEWING YOUR DRIVER'S LICENSE:**

Your driver's license expiration date will be the end date of your I-20 or DS-2019. If you extend your stay, you can renew your license with payment, a new immigration document, and a new verification letter from the Center for Global Engagement to renew your driver's license.

### **BUYING AN AUTOMOBILE:**

Helpful guides for purchasing a car can be found at local bookstores and read on the Internet. *Consumer Report* is an especially good place to look. You can request one on line at [www.consumerreports.org](http://www.consumerreports.org). Also check out the value of a car at Kelly Blue Book ([www.kbb.com](http://www.kbb.com)) or Edmund's ([www.edmunds.com](http://www.edmunds.com)). The newspaper in Lock Haven, the campus newspaper, campus bulletin boards, and electronic bulletin boards are good sources of information on used automobiles.

Be very careful when purchasing a car, especially a used one. Before you buy, have a reliable mechanic inspect the vehicle. In the U.S., you can purchase a car by obtaining a loan and paying installments. Be sure to obtain the title to the car you buy. The title is an official document issued by the state that signifies ownership of the vehicle. Additional documents may be required to complete the transfer of a car from the previous owner to you. If you are unsure about your rights and responsibilities when purchasing an automobile, check with the Driver's License Center or the Automobile Association of America – AAA- ([www.aaa.com](http://www.aaa.com)), (570) 748-5115.

If you own a vehicle, Pennsylvania requires automobile insurance. In case of an accident, automobile insurance protects you against most of the cost of repairs and injuries. The cost of repairs or injuries can be very high. In some states, you may be required to pay for the cost of repairing the other vehicle if you cause the accident.

### **RENTING AN AUTOMOBILE:**

There are car rental agencies in Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield. Inquire ahead of time and ask about extra costs, such as insurance, extra drivers, and mileage-per-day fees.

### **DRIVING PRACTICE:**

If you have never had a license before, you may want to practice driving before taking the driver's test. There are driving schools located in State College and Williamsport that, for a fee, can teach you how to drive.

### **RESOURCES FOR DRIVING & TRAVELING:**

AAA Travel Agency - The Automobile Association of America offers services related to travel, vehicle emergency roadside services, title changes, and updating your address for vehicle registration.

### **PennDOT DRIVER LICENSE CENTERS:**

<b>Williamsport</b> 1782 E. 3rd Street Williamsport, PA 17701 (800) 932-4600 – Call for hours of operation	<b>Rockview/Pleasant Gap</b> 812 West College Avenue Pleasant Gap, PA 16823 (800) 932-4600 – Call for hours of operation
<b>Berwick</b> N Mulberry St and W 10 <sup>th</sup> Street, Berwick, PA 18603 (800) 932-4600 – Call for hours of operation	<b>Selinsgrove</b> 1015 Route 522, Selinsgrove, PA 17870 (800) 932-4600 – Call for hours of operation
<b>Hazleton</b> 1052 S Church St, Hazleton, PA 18201 (800) 932-4600 – Call for hours of operation	<b>Wellsboro</b> 40 Plaza Lane, Wellsboro, PA 16901 (800) 932-4600 – Call for hours of operation