

## HOW TO OBTAIN A CALIFORNIA DRIVER'S LICENSE

**Disclaimer:** PUC OISS has prepared this guide to provide you with general guidance. However, any advice provided to you by our office, as well as the information in this document, should not be construed as legal advice. PUC international staff will provide regulatory and practice information as it stands at the time of the consult. Due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, individuals must understand that the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) office may change its interpretation of established immigration laws/regulations and eligibility requirements for benefits at any time. For legal advice, you may consult with an immigration attorney.

As an F student, you may be eligible to drive a motor vehicle while residing in the United States. This involves successfully applying for a driver's license. Driving a car without a driver's license is illegal. To acquire a driver's license, you must apply for one at your local Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), which can have a different name in some states.

The basic steps are:

- Talk with your designated school official (DSO)\* about driving rules and regulations in your state or territory. \*International School Advisor at PUC
- Confirm with your international student advisor that your student record is Active in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).
- Wait 10 days after arriving in the United States to apply for a driver's license to ensure that your Form I-94, Arrival/Departure Record" information can update in all the government systems.
- Obtain a Social Security Number (SSN), if required by your state or territory
- Visit and submit the proper documentation to the DMV.

More detailed steps are:

**Step 1:** You must first obtain a Social Security number. If you are unable to obtain a social security number, you will need to obtain a "denial notice" (refusal letter, Form SSA-L676) from the Social Security Administration.

**Step 2:** Schedule an Office Visit Appointment online with your local DMV at [www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv](http://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv).

**Step 3:** Take your I-20 Original form, passport, visa, I-94, and Social Security Card or Denial Notice Letter with you to your appointment. For some states you may need to provide proof of residence. If you are on optional practical training (OPT), bring your Form I-766, Employment Authorization Document (the DMV will use the A number on this card to verify your status).

**Step 4:** Pass the written test. To practice prior to the written test, visit [www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv](http://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv).

**Step 5:** Schedule a Behind-the-Wheel Driving Test Appointment with your local DMV at [www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv/detail/portal/foa/welcome](http://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv/detail/portal/foa/welcome).

**Step 6:** Make another appointment for your Driving test. After passing the driving test, you will be given an interim driver's license for 90 days and your Driver License card will be mailed to you. You have three chances to pass the driving test. You may practice for a while, then make another appointment. There is no waiting period, but you must make an appointment. We recommend you make the appointment online first. (You may view *Frequently Asked Questions* on the DMV website for more details.)

DMV offers alternative methods for completing the driver's license written examination. The examination may be conducted:

- In a foreign language (Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Cambodian/Khmer, Chinese/Cantonese, Croatian, English, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Hmong, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Persian/Farsi, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Samoan, Spanish, Tagalog/Filipino, Thai, Tongan, Turkish, and Vietnamese).
- In American sign language
- By audio (listening rather than reading material) --*Audio tests are available in the above foreign languages and Mandarin.*
- By having an examiner ask the questions (Oral Examination)
- It is advisable for an individual with special needs to discuss those needs with the local driver license supervisor to allow the supervisor to better assist the applicant.

*If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Student Life / International Student Advising at [isa@puc.edu](mailto:isa@puc.edu) or (707) 965-7362.*