Applying for a Social Insurance Number (SIN)

What is a Social Insurance Number?

A SIN is a 9 digit number unique to you that the Canadian government requires you to have for taxation purposes if you are a worker. Without a SIN, you cannot get paid. You are required to give your employer your SIN at the time that you start working.

You are responsible for protecting your SIN. Ensure that you store documents containing your SIN and personal information in a safe place. For more information about protecting your SIN, please visit https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/sin/reports/shared-responsibility.html

NOTE: A valid SIN alone does not automatically make you eligible to work on or off campus. You must still meet the eligibility requirements as per our Working On or Off Campus handout (including a work permit if applicable) in order to legally work, even if you already have a valid SIN.

When is a SIN required?

A SIN is only required if you earn income in Canada for work on or off campus. You cannot get a SIN if you do not have at least one of the following: (1) a work permit; (2) a study permit with a notation confirming you may accept employment.

If you are not eligible for a SIN but you decide to do a yearly tax return, you can apply for a temporary filing number (Individual Tax Number) for this purpose.

How can I apply for a SIN?

You must apply in person at the Service Canada office nearest to where you live. A full list of local Service Canada offices can be found at http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/cgi-bin/hr-search.cgi?cmd=lst&pv=bc&ln=eng. The following three locations are easily accessible from SFU’s campuses:

- Burnaby: Suite 100 - 3480 Gilmore Way, Burnaby, BC
- Surrey North: 13889 104th Avenue, Surrey, BC
- Downtown Vancouver: 757 Hastings Street West, Vancouver, BC (Sinclair Centre, Suite 125)

Use the chart below to determine which documents you will need to apply in person. Original documents (NOT photocopies) are required.

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See next page for more information

This is not a legal document and information may change without notice. Always refer to http://www.esdc.gc.ca/eng/home.shtml for the most updated information. This document was last updated on October 2, 2019.
How can I request an amendment to my study permit so that I can obtain a SIN?

Visit https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/application-forms-guides/request-amend-record-landing-confirmation-permanent-residence-valid-temporary-resident-documents.html for details on how to request an amendment to your study permit. There is no fee for this request.

The following documents must be included with your request:

- Application form (IMM 1436), completed and signed
- Original study permit → Keep a photocopy of your study permit for your records
- Photocopy of one piece of valid government-issued photo ID (e.g. passport, BC ID card, etc.)
- Photocopy of one piece of valid government-issued or internationally recognized identification from outside of Canada before your entry to Canada (e.g. birth certificate)
- Original (initial) letter of acceptance and/or confirmation of enrollment letter that you used to apply for your study permit

Mail the above documents to the address indicated on the application form using a trackable method (e.g. XpressPost). Keep photocopies of your completed application form and supporting documents for your records. Please visit https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/application/check-processing-times.html for estimated application processing times.

Once IRCC has approved your request, they will send your amended study permit to you by mail. You can then use this amended study permit to apply for a SIN. Please speak with an International Student Advisor, Immigration Specialist before applying to see if this is the appropriate option for you.

How can I request to change the conditions of my study permit so that I can obtain a SIN?

The process to change the conditions of your study permit is similar to applying for a study permit extension. More information about the study permit extension process can be found in our Extending your Study Permit handout. You will likely need to include a letter in your application explaining how you qualify for a change of conditions.

Once IRCC has approved your application, they will send your updated study permit to you by mail. You can then use this study permit to apply for a SIN. Please speak with an International Student Advisor, Immigration Specialist before applying to see if this is the appropriate option for you.

Is there an application fee for a SIN?

There is no fee for a SIN application.

How long will it take to receive my SIN? Will I receive a SIN card?

You should receive the number on the day that you apply. Service Canada no longer issues SIN cards – instead, you will receive a letter confirming your SIN. Keep this letter for your records.

Will my SIN have an expiry date?

Your SIN will expire at the same time as your immigration document (study permit, work permit, etc). When you renew your study or work permit, remember to renew your SIN (if eligible). You will only be able to renew your SIN if you still meet the requirements listed on the previous page.

Where can I find more information about Social Insurance Numbers?

For comprehensive information on Social Insurance Numbers, including tips on protecting yourself from identity theft, please visit the Service Canada website at http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/sin/index.shtml.