

Foreign National Information System (FNIS) FAQs

Q1. Is the FNIS email legit?

- Yes it is. FNIS was implemented by Payroll, Fall Semester, 2020 as a means to gather the required non-immigrant and tax information from international employees. The FNIS e-mails are setup to allow designated Payroll personnel access to e-mails that have been sent to any employees and provide a continuous flow of information.

Q2. Is FNIS required?

- Yes. The US Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) impose complex regulations on payments to Foreign Nationals a.k.a. Nonresident Aliens or NRAs. USCIS restricts the activities of all foreign nationals, therefore to comply with USCIS regulations we require legible copies of all non-immigrant documentation. There is a separate tax code (Section 1441) which is required to be applied to persons in a US non-resident tax status.
- In order to comply with USCIS and IRS regulations we are required to determine eligibility for employment and the individuals US tax status. Completion of information through FNIS permits us to comply with these regulations.
- **Completion of the information and tax forms through FNIS should be completed within 5 business days of receipt of the initial e-mail and receipt of tax forms to ensure correct tax withholding.**

Q3. Do I need to include my current visa on Step 5?

- Yes, in order to accurately determine US tax status we need a complete history of your US visa classifications.

Q4. Do I need to upload my US visa even if it is expired or is a different visa classification?

- Yes. The US visa is a travel document which allows a person to board an air carrier and travel to the US border. Once admitted to the US it does not matter that it expired or that it was a different US visa classification. However, since it is a part of the overall non-immigrant documentation it is required to be provided as part of a complete history.

Q5. How do I complete my tax forms?

- While in a US non-resident tax status the Federal (W-4) and Virginia State (VA-4) tax withholding forms are required to be completed in a very specific way.
 - The **NRA W-4** (Employee's Withholding Certificate) can be found on the Payroll Forms webpage. It is completed as required for a person in a US non-resident tax status.
 - The fields to be completed by the individual are name, address, Social Security Number (SSN) and then to sign and date the form.
 - The **NRA VA-4** (Employee's Virginia Income Tax Withholding Exemption Certificate) can be found on the Payroll Forms webpage. Virginia follows the Federal regulations for taxing a person in a Federal non-resident tax status. THE form is completed as required.
 - The fields to be completed by the individual are name, address, SSN and then to sign and date the form.
- If your tax status has changed to US resident for tax purposes Payroll will require a Form W-9 (Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification), which certifies US tax residency. Once received

the individual will then access the resident W-4 and VA-4 forms through HokieTeam and complete them for their unique situation.

- The IRS provides a tool (Tax Withholding Calculator (<https://www.irs.gov/individuals/tax-withholding-estimator>)) to assist tax residents in determining how the W-4 should be completed.
- The VA-4 form worksheet at the top of the VA-4 form can be used to determine how to complete the bottom of the form. However, if you have claimed exemptions (Lines 1a-1c) you cannot also claim exempt from Virginia taxes (Line 3 and 4).

Q6. Do I have to have a SSN to complete FNIS or the tax forms?

- If you have a SSN it is required to be included in the information provided as the SSN is required to report income and taxes to Federal and Virginia tax authorities.
- If an employee has not yet been assigned a SSN, forms and FNIS can be completed without the number. However, as soon as the SSN is assigned by Social Security Administration (SSA) it needs to be provided to Payroll.

Q7. Does OPT count as Visa Immigration Activity?

- Optional Practical Training (OPT) and STEM OPT are functions of your F-1 visa classification. That are not a separate classification of their own. As long as you would work under OPT or STEM OPT, your US visa status is F-1 which is considered non-immigrant activity.

Q8. Do I have to have exact date I first visited the US, it was 27 years ago?

- We need to have as accurate information as possible. However, if you cannot remember the exact date, we would need a close approximation, for example, you entered as a tourist and you came during the early summer. In this case you could use an estimated first entry date of June 1, 1993.

Q9. Can a cell phone number be used in place of a home phone number?

- Yes, as long as the cell phone number is a US phone number as the form is not formatted for international phone numbers.

Q10. Where do I get the W-8BEN form?

- The W-8BEN form is used to certify a person's US non-resident tax status. This form is typically not required of employees. The FNIS process permits us to prepare and send you the appropriate Federal forms for signature that will be required. If a W-8BEN is needed for Payroll purposes it will be send to you through FNIS.