

Social Security Number (SSN) Protection FAQ

[Social Security Number \(SSN\) Protection Policy](#)

[SSN Protection Procedure](#)

How do I know what my University ID is?

Your University ID is your unique identification number within Iowa State University. Your University ID is the middle block of nine digits on your ISUCard, as indicated in this image.



Why would any office need my SSN if we are switching to University ID?

There will still be procedures in the university where SSN is required by parties outside of ISU. For example, the IRS requires ISU to report taxable income by SSN; therefore all employees need to provide their SSN at the time they are hired. The goal is to request the SSN only at the hiring point and then restrict the people who have access to that number to just those in areas such as Payroll and Human Resource Services.

If I ask a student for their University ID and they want to give me SSN instead, can I use it?

Yes. In that case the student is voluntarily giving you the information which can be used to access the University ID. If jotted down, care should be taken to destroy the paper in a secure manner. Similarly, you should not read the SSN back to the student if you are in a public area.

The SSN Protection Procedure says that desktop locking should be used. What is that and how do I do it?

With desktop locking, your computer will lock when the screensaver is activated. When you begin working again you will be prompted to type your password to unlock it. Steps for setting desktop locking on a PC:

1. Select *Start, Control Panel, Appearance and Themes, and Display*.
2. Select the *Screen Saver* tab, and click on a *Screen Saver* in the drop-down menu.
3. In the *Wait* box, set the number of minutes of computer inactivity after which the password protected screen saver is to be activated.
4. Select the *On resume, password protect* check box. (If *Fast User Switching* is turned on, select the *On resume, display Welcome screen* check box.)
5. Click *OK*. To log in to your computer after the desktop has locked, enter your network ID and password.

What should we use to post grades?

Password-protected web posting of grades (such as through WebCT) is the preferred option. If web posting is not used, the faculty member should assign a random number to each student in the class that only the student and faculty member know. Grade-posting lists should be in random (not alphabetical) order.

Some service providers on campus are using Net-ID as the unique identifier. Will they be required to switch to University ID?

No. This policy specifically addresses elimination of the SSN as the primary identifier. It does not require that the University ID be the only identifier used on campus.

There are SSNs on some of the vouchers that appear as images in AccessPlus. Will these vouchers be removed?

No. We recognize that older documents and files exist that include SSN. It's not practical to remove the SSN from these documents and accordingly, other safeguards must be in place to protect that information. In the case of the imaging system, people with access to the system signed a confidentiality agreement when system access was granted. This isn't foolproof but it does restrict access to just those individuals with a business use of the imaging system.

Do we have to buy all new file cabinets with locks?

Probably not. In the risk assessment phase, look at two things: the concentration of SSNs and the accessibility of the files. Files with a lot of SSNs in high traffic areas should be secured but this could mean moving all sensitive data to a single lockable cabinet.

Do we have to have all new forms printed using University ID instead of SSN? We can't afford that.

Forms need not be reprinted but changes should be implemented when existing supplies of forms are exhausted. If you are collecting SSNs, you need to attach the disclosure notice that appears in the Appendix to the SSN Protection Procedure. You will need to protect the physical security of the forms as long as you are storing SSN.

We have collaborators in our department. Since they aren't employees, are they covered by this policy?

Yes, since they may be performing some of the same duties as employees, they are subject to the same policies.