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[*Binghamton University, SUNY; International Student & Scholar Services*]
Foreign Drivers Licenses and Driving in New York State**

In the past few months, several international students have informed the ISSS of issues when presenting a valid foreign driver's license, rather than a New York State license for driving purposes. In fact, it is perfectly legal to drive in New York State using a valid foreign driver's license. However, not everyone is familiar with this policy. Even police officers have, on some occasions, ticketed an international student for "driving without a license" if the only license presented was from a foreign country. If your driver's license is written in a language other than English, police officers may have difficulty reading it. In that case, it is recommended that you have an International Driving Permit to present with your foreign driver's license.

The best information on this issue comes from the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles website. We repeat the text from their web link, <http://www.nysdmv.com/license.htm#driversfromothernations> below:

A valid driver license from another country is also valid in NYS. You do not need to apply for a NYS driver license unless you become a resident of NYS.

According to NYS law, a resident of another country **can** get a NYS driver license. The DMV **does not** recommend this because:

- NYS recognizes your foreign driver license if you remain a resident of the nation that issued the license. You do not need to have a NYS driver license to drive in NYS unless you become a resident of NYS.
- If you have a driver license from any nation except Canada, you must pass a written test, complete a 5-hour pre-licensing course and pass a road test to qualify for a NYS driver license. See "New Drivers - How to Apply".
- **You must show a Social Security Card.** If you are **not eligible** for a Social Security Card, you must provide a letter or form SSA-L676 from the US Social Security Administration (SSA) that states that you are not eligible. The SSA Letter or form must have been issued no more than 30 days before the date of your application. You must also show the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) documents that the SSA used to determine that you are not eligible for a Social Security Card. Read the specific requirements on the identification requirements page.



- When you receive your NYS driver license, you must surrender your foreign driver license to the DMV road test examiner. The local DMV office keeps your foreign driver license, and then destroys the license after 60 days. If you plan to return to your home country and use your foreign driver license, ask the road test examiner how to make sure that your foreign driver license is not destroyed. If you need to get your foreign driver license, go to the local DMV office where you applied for your NYS driver license.

International Driving Permit: *An International Driving Permit is not a driver license* . The permit only verifies that you hold a valid driver license in your home country. Your foreign driver license, not the International Driving Permit, allows you to drive in NYS. Contact the authorities in your home country to get an International Driving Permit. If you are not a resident of the US, you cannot apply for an International Driving Permit in the US.

You are not required to have an International Driving Permit to drive in NYS, but the permit has value. The permit verifies, in several languages, that you have a valid foreign driver license. A police officer who cannot read the language on your foreign driver license can read the permit.

A final note: Different states have different rules. What applies in New York State may not apply in other states.