

# Filing Taxes for International Students

As an international student (on an F-1 or J-1 visa), you may be required to fill out certain tax forms. All international students (**regardless if you earned money in the previous year**) should download [Form 8843](#) and submit this form to the IRS (International Revenue Service).

If you made money during the prior year, you will need to fill out an income tax return. If you earned money, you will need to also file a [1040NR](#). We strongly encourage you to get professional help in filing your taxes. The Office of International Studies does not have a tax professional on staff, and therefore is not authorized to give tax advice. We have provided some resources below along with some general answers to tax-related questions. **You must file your tax forms by no later than April 15<sup>th</sup>.**

## Links To Forms:

(Note: These links are to forms that are generally used by international students. However, what income tax forms you fill out are specific to your situation. Again, I would highly recommend using a tax professional to determine which forms are appropriate for you.)

- 1040 NR - U.S. Nonresident Alien Income Tax Return: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f1040nr.pdf>
- 1040 NR-EZ – U.S. Income Tax Return for Certain Nonresident Aliens with no dependents: <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f1040nre.pdf>
- Form 8843: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f8843.pdf>

## Tax Resources:

### Sprintax:

Online Tax Service for International Students and Scholars

Website: <https://www.sprintax.com/>

**Note:** Check with the Office of International Studies whether there is an MSUB discount code you can use.

### MSUB Accounting Club:

Address: MSUB Campus

**Free for MSUB students.** Times change each year; please consult with International Studies for advising times or refer to the Master Calendar

### HRDC:

Address: 2114, 7 N 31st St. (downtown)

MSUB campus for students

Phone: (406) 247-4732

Website: <http://hrdc7.org/event/volunteer-income-tax-assistance-vita-3/2018-04-07/>

Cost: Free – volunteer tax assistance. Call for an appointment or visit their website for walk-in hours.

### **Jackson Hewitt (Tax Professionals):**

Address: 524 N. 32<sup>nd</sup> St.  
Phone: 254-0100  
Estimated Cost: \$35.00  
Contacts: Lisa Harlan  
Note: Call for appointment

### **H&R Block (Tax Professionals):**

Address: 38 Grand Ave.  
Phone: 248-7147  
Estimated Cost: \$50.00  
Note: Call for appointment

### **Friendship House:**

Address: 3123 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. South  
Phone: 259-5569  
Estimated Cost: **Free**

**Note:** Consumer Credit Counseling offers free tax help, which will take place at the Friendship House. This free service begins in February and will be available at the following times:

Monday & Wednesday: 6:00 – 9:00 PM

Saturday: 9:00 AM – Noon

*\*First come, first serve. No appointment needed.*

### **Documents To Bring:**

You will need to bring the following documents when enlisting help to fill out your forms –

- Passport
- I-94 Travel Document (or entry/exit dates)
- W-2 (*if applicable*)
- Form 1098T (*if applicable – most international students should ignore this document*)
- I-20/DS-2019
- Social Security Card (If you have one)
- Tax return from last year (If you have one)
- Other tax documents received

## Basic Tax Questions

### **What are tax returns?**

Each Spring, individuals who lived in the United States the previous year file tax returns to report their total earned income to the Office of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). If the IRS



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determines you have paid more taxes in the previous year than necessary, you can receive a full or partial tax refund.

### Should I file a tax return?

All international students who were in the United States in the previous year should file at minimum the **Form 8843**. International students who received income, either through employment or through a scholarship, will file the **1040NR**. **Note:** Nonresident students must file the **1040NR** rather than the 1040 or 1040EZ. These latter forms are only for permanent residents.

### Will I get money back?

If you did not receive income and are only filing the Form 8843, you will **not** receive a refund because you did not pay any income taxes throughout the previous year. If you received income, you have already paid taxes on that income. Based on your tax return, you may be able to receive a full or partial refund. You will find out the amount of refund you are eligible for when you file your tax returns with [Sprintax](#).

### Will I owe money to the IRS?

If Sprintax determines from your situation that you did not pay enough taxes throughout the previous year, you may be required to pay more income taxes. This is rare for international students.

### Do I have to use Sprintax to file my tax return?

We highly recommend you use [Sprintax](#) to file your tax return. Sprintax will make sure the return is correct. If an audit shows you have filed your tax returns incorrectly, you may be subject to financial penalties, as well as difficulties receiving a future visa.

### I am now a resident alien. How do I file my tax returns?

If you have been in the United States for more than 5 years, you may be considered a resident alien for tax purposes. If this is the case, you will not be able to use Sprintax and you will need to find an alternative tax preparation software or service.

### I am a former student who is now on OPT. Can I use Sprintax?

Yes. If you are a student on OPT, but who still has a valid I-20 issued from MSUB, you may use the Sprintax software.

## Questions about the 1098-T Form

### 1098-T form is

- 1) An informational form which should not be considered as tax advice; and
- 2) Mailed to students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents by January 31<sup>st</sup> under The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 (TRA97); and

3) Shown qualified tuition & other related expenses billed to students for any terms in a calendar year. IRS regulations [CFR §1.6050S-1\(a\)\(2\)](#) specify that the University is not required to issue a 1098-T for nonresident alien individuals (as defined in [IRC §7701\(b\)](#) and [CFR §301.7701\(b\)-3](#)) during the calendar year, unless the student requests the form.

### Purpose of this Form

The Form 1098-T is an information tax document to aid taxpayers in determining whether they are eligible to claim a tax deduction or one of the education tax credits (Hope Credit or Lifetime Learning Credit). The student, or the person who can claim the student as a dependent, may be able to claim eligibility for the Hope and Lifetime Learning education tax credits on Form 1040 or 1040A using Form 8863: Education Credits (American Opportunity and Lifetime Learning Credits), only for the qualified tuition and related expenses that were actually paid in 2014.

For more details about 1098-T, please refer to:

- [http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i1098et\\_14.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/i1098et_14.pdf)
- [IRS Publication 970](#): Tax Benefits for Higher Education;
- [IRS Announcement 97-60](#): Consumer Guidance on Education Tax Incentives

### What does the 1098-T Form mean for International Students?

These education tax credits are not available to nonresident aliens who filing Form 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ. Therefore, if you are filling as a nonresident using form 1040NR/NR-EZ, you should ignore the form 1098-T because it is not relevant for your taxes.

Details for 1040NR requirements can be reviewed at:

- <http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/International-Taxpayers/Foreign-Student-Foreign-Scholar-Filing-Requirements-for-U.S.-Federal-Income-Tax-Form-1040NR-or-1040NR-EZ>
- <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p519.pdf>

### My friends said I could get \$1,000 back from a tax service with the 1098-T. Is this right?

*No!* Nonresident students are not eligible for the education tax credit associated with the 1098-T. Some tax preparation offices may offer international students the refund without understanding the differences between resident and nonresident aliens.

### I've already received \$1,000 from my 1098-T. What should I do?

If you have already received the refund, return to the tax preparation office and explain that they incorrectly filed the Form 1040. Tell them to file an amended return and include the refund check along with this amended return. Do not let them charge you for the amended return. This was their mistake, but you still need to act to correct it.



## **Filing Taxes for International Students**

### **Tax Forms**

#### **What is a Social Security Number (SSN)?**

An SSN allows the government to keep track of taxes individuals have paid, owe, and are owed. All students who have been employed will have a social security number. This number is how you will receive your refund.

#### **What is an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)?**

An ITIN is given to students who have received a 1042-S for a taxed scholarship and who do not have an SSN. Students will not be able to receive their refund for their taxed scholarship without an ITIN. These students should contact the student services coordinator who will help them apply for an ITIN.

#### **What is the Form 8843?**

All international students in the U.S. in the previous year must file the Form 8843. Students without U.S. income can file this on their own. This form lets the government know you did not receive income during the tax year. Students with income will file it along with the 1040NR. Sprintax will assist students in filing the 1040NR and the Form 8843 at the same time.

#### **What is a Form 1040NR?**

The Form 1040NR is used to file income tax returns for nonresident aliens. Sprintax will provide and fill out the 1040NR for you.

#### **What is a W-2?**

A W-2 is a statement from the employer to employee that proves how much income you earned in the previous year and how much you paid in taxes. MSUB employees can access their W-2 through their MyInfo account beginning in January each tax season. Use this form to complete the 1040NR tax returns.

#### **What is a 1042-S?**

Students who have had their scholarship taxed will receive a 1042-S from Student Accounts during the Spring semester. Use this form to complete the 1040NR tax returns in Sprintax. Students who receive a 1042-S and who do not have a SSN or ITIN will need to contact the student services coordinator to apply for an ITIN.