INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS: APPLYING FOR AN ALABAMA DRIVER LICENSE

1. **Do I need a Social Security number to apply for an Alabama driver license?**

   No. If you happen to have a Social Security number for work authorization, bring it to your driver license test appointment. If you do not receive a paycheck from UAB, you must obtain a “proof of denial” letter from the Social Security Administration in order to apply for a driver license or state ID. The Social Security Administration building is located at the following address:

   Birmingham, AL 35285

   The office is open from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday and from 9:00 am until noon on Wednesday. The parking entrance is on 12th Street.

2. **How many days do I need on my Form DS-2019 to apply for a driver license?**

   Your Form DS-2019 must be valid for at least 160 calendar days beyond the date your driver license is issued. If you do not have 160 days remaining and need to drive while in the US, you should obtain an International Driver License (IDL) in your home country. An IDL can be valid for up to one year.

3. **What documentation should I bring when applying for an Alabama driver license?**

   Please read the list below carefully and bring the documents that apply to you:

   - Valid passport
   - Most recent Form I-94 (download here)
   - *Original* paper Social Security Card (not a copy), if you have employment
   - “Proof of denial letter” if you are unemployed (see above – question 1)
   - Form DS-2019 valid for at least 160 more days
   - Credit/debit card or cash for driver license fee (currently $36.25)
   - Cash or money order for road test fee (currently $5)
   - Birth certificate (not required, but helpful)

4. **Where do I go to apply for an Alabama driver license?**

   While there are many offices in Alabama that issue driver licenses, the only office in the Birmingham area that will issue a license to international scholars is:

   908 Bankhead Highway
   Birmingham, AL 35204
   Phone: (205) 252-7445

   Based on feedback, the best time to go is on a Wednesday morning before noon. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 11:00 am and from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. You can make an appointment here: https://www.schedulealdl.com/SelfScheduler/Default.aspx.
5. **What should I expect during the driver license tests?**
You must pass both a written test and a road test and present all documentation listed in question 3 above. You will also have to pass a vision test. You must provide a vehicle to take the driving test—the DMV will not provide a vehicle for you. If you do not have an International Driver License, you must have a licensed driver take you to the driver license office. This licensed driver must be willing to let you use his/her vehicle for the road test and must be able to provide proof of auto insurance for the vehicle. The officer will inspect the vehicle to make sure it is fully functional (i.e., working turn signals, horn, etc.) before beginning the road test. Practice driving the vehicle in an empty parking lot to become comfortable driving before being tested.

6. **How can I have a successful experience at the DMV?**
Be very nice and patient with the DMV officials, even if they are not nice and patient with you. Prepare for the tests, bring all of the documents listed above, and listen carefully to DMV officials’ instructions. It will take a long time and may be very stressful and frustrating, but be cooperative and kind, and everything should go well. 😊 If you pass the tests the first time, you won’t have to come back!

7. **Should I study for the written test?**

8. **What is the cost for an Alabama driver license?**
The fee for the Alabama driver license is $36.25 in cash or debit/credit card. No checks!

9. **When will my license arrive in the mail?**
It should arrive within 30 calendar days. If it does not, call (334) 242-4400.

10. **How and when can I renew my driver license?**
To renew a license, you must have at least 160 days (not including grace period) left in your immigration status as reflected by the program or status end date on your Form DS-2019. You can apply to renew the license within 180 days of its date of expiration.

11. **Can my spouse get a driver license?**
Yes! However, they must bring the same documents and must have at least 160 days of validity remaining on their Form DS-2019, too. It is very helpful if you, as the primary J-1 visa holder, accompany your spouse to the DMV to apply for the license. You can also request a letter of good standing for your spouse by emailing isss@uab.edu.

12. **What is an Alabama Identification Card?**
This document (“state ID”) is used solely for identification and is **not** valid for driving. It costs $36.25 in cash or a check payable on an Alabama bank account. The state ID card is issued at the same location as the driver license (i.e., Bankhead Highway).