



Background checks: How to Guide

When is a background check required for students?

There are a variety of circumstances in which Pacific University may need to run a background check on a student. For students completing internships, practica, civic engagement activities, job shadows or some jobs within the university, a background check may be required. This is especially true when students will be working with vulnerable populations (children, elderly, disabled, etc.). Most of the time, outside organizations will complete their own background checks for students, but occasionally an organization may request Pacific University to do this. In these cases, Tiffany Fieken can initiate the process for the background check to be completed. It is important to communicate to community partners that background checks are not automatically run on all students entering the field.

What is the process for getting a background check done on a student?

When you are in need of a background check for a student, please send Tiffany Fieken an email with the student's first and last name and Pacific University email address. Additionally, please inform me if the student is an international student as additional paperwork is necessary to conduct an international background check. Pacific University utilizes candidate generated orders, so the student will receive an email from our contractor, Employment Screening Services (ESS) to complete a release for a background check to be done on them. Students have 72 hours to respond to the email before the order is cancelled. Once they've submitted their release, ESS will then run the Expanded Criminal History Search. Tiffany Fieken will then receive an email with the results of the criminal history search and inform the person requesting the background check whether the student is "clear" or "not clear." In situations where there are concerns, Tiffany Fieken will seek legal advice on how to proceed.

How long does a background check take?

Generally, background checks come back within 1-2 weeks of students submitting their release, however some background checks take several weeks or longer with international background checks. See Employment Screening Services IRAS website for turnaround times per country -- <https://iras.essclientservices.com/>. Please plan accordingly when requesting background checks.

What are the costs associated with background checks?

There is a flat fee of \$39; even if the applicant has lived in many different locations in the U.S., the price does not increase (court fees may apply). The costs will vary for international students. Additional fees per country can be found on the Employment Screening Services IRAS website -- <https://iras.essclientservices.com/>. The department ordering the background check is responsible for paying the fee for the background check(s). Tiffany Fieken will need the account number for the department requesting the background check for payment of

invoice. In cases where a student is needing a background check and no specific department is covering the cost, the student will be required to complete a form authorizing Pacific University to charge their student account for the background check. This form can be obtained by contacting Tiffany Fieken.

How long is a background check good for?

A background check done for Pacific University activities is good for the entire length of the time the student is enrolled in the school (as students are required to report any felony convictions to the Dean of Students). However, outside organizations may have different requirements (e.g. background checks needing to be done yearly). When a student participates in a yearly program, please verify with Tiffany Fieken whether the student has successfully passed a background check in the past and she will verify with the Dean of Students whether or not the student has reported any new felony convictions since the background check was completed.

How thorough are the background checks?

The Expanded Criminal History Search is the most comprehensive option available because it checks county/state and federal levels, and it checks in all locations found (locations are based on all documents provided, and from the independent address history found in the Social Security Number Trace.) The information below details the 5 step criminal history search:

- 1) Appropriate Search Location:** ESS selects the most appropriate location(s) to search for criminal records. It may not necessarily be where the applicant is living now. If s/he recently moved there, it makes more sense to check where s/he came from. They thoroughly research the applicant's residence history and choose the most suitable location(s).
- 2) On-site Courthouse Visits:** ESS sends expert records retrieval specialists to the various courthouses in the given jurisdiction to gather all felony and misdemeanor conviction records. They are gathering the most up-to-date information--or they obtain criminal information from the state repository if a statewide search is available.
- 3) Criminal History Notification:** If an application for employment/internship/civic engagement is submitted along with the release, ESS looks at the application to see how the applicant responded to any questions regarding criminal convictions. They note any discrepancies between what they say and what the actual records show.
- 4) Global Terrorist Search:** ESS searches the federal government's Specifically Designated Global Terrorist databases to see if the applicant's name matches or approximates any on the list. They also search federal databases listing known international drug traffickers.
- 5) Auxiliary National Criminal Index Search:** Their index is a collection of databases from all across the country containing over 130 million criminal records. It expands the scope of criminal searches exponentially.

How do I find out if there have been on-campus conduct issues?

In some cases, it may be beneficial to have information on student conduct on campus. Students may have issues that have been raised to the attention of the Dean of Students. While these issues may not have resulted in criminal convictions, they still may provide information on goodness of fit for a particular community organization or on-campus position. This information may be released by having the student complete a release for you to speak to the Dean of Students or his administrative assistant, Jessica Kersey, to gather this information. Prior to contacting Jessica, please identify which conduct issues may be relevant to your positions (e.g. drug/alcohol issues, thefts or sexual misconduct). Please contact Jessica Kersey at jakersey@pacificu.edu or by phone at 503.352.2254.

What if the student is undocumented?

If the individual is undocumented, there may be an issue with Employment Screening Services completing the Social Security Number Trace, should they submit one. If they have been provided a nine digit tax payer ID number, then the verification process will be normal. All other aspects of the background check can be completed the same as a typical background check.

What if the student is an international student?

If the location of a criminal background search is outside the U.S., additional fees and likely an extended turnaround time will apply. They vary per country – additional fees and turnaround times per country can be found on the Employment Screening Services IRAS web site -- <https://iras.essclientservices.com/>. Please plan accordingly when requesting a background check for an international student. The international student will need to complete an International Disclosure and Authorization for Employment Screening Services to complete an international background check. Please inform Tiffany Fieken of students needing an international background check and the appropriate forms will be provided for the student to complete.

When considering whether or not to have an international background check done on a student, it may be helpful to know that prior to becoming a student at Pacific University, all international students must obtain a visa and undergo a background check to be approved for a visa. Before issuing a visa, a U.S. consular officer must determine whether the visa applicant is subject to any of the grounds of inadmissibility or visa ineligibility listed in Section 212 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), or other provisions of law.

DOS has developed standardized procedures for consular officers to follow. These include interviews, review of the applicant's responses on the DS-160 visa application, review of supporting documentation submitted by the applicant, name and biometric data checks against consular and law enforcement databases, and requests for advisory opinions and security advisory opinions initiated by the consular post.

Who do I contact if I need a background check done on a student?

Please contact Tiffany Fieken, Social Sciences Internship Coordinator via email at tiffanyfieken@pacificu.edu. In the email, please list the name of the student(s) and email address(es) to reach the student. Please inform me of any students needing an international background check as the process is slightly different. Allow at least two weeks for checks to be completed (may be extended for international background checks). You can also reach Tiffany Fieken at (503)352-2012 with questions.

Please keep in mind that each background check will cost \$39 (court fees may also apply and additional fees will apply for international background checks). In the body of the email, please identify the name of the department and the account number to be billed. In cases where you're asking for the student to cover the cost, the student will need to contact me first to complete a form for the business office so they may be billed for the cost of the background check.