



Changing Status to F-1 Status

To change your U.S. visa status, you can either a) travel out of the U.S., apply at a U.S. consulate for the new visa type, and re-enter the U.S. in the new status **OR** b) apply for a change of status within the U.S. by sending an application to an immigration service center as described in this handout (note that this second option does NOT obtain for you an F-1 visa, only the status). You should meet with your international student advisor to decide which is the better option for you.

To apply within the U.S. to change your status, you must prepare the following checklist items and then meet with your international student advisor. You will receive a new I-20 and then mail the complete application page to United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). USCIS will review your change of status application and render a decision of approval or denial. Decisions on change of status cases can take an extended period of time, sometimes up to 18 months or more.

The change of status process requires that you have and maintain a legal status in the U.S. until the new status is approved. If the request is approved, then the applicant will gain the new status and need to be able to fulfill all requirements of the status from the approved start date.

Steps to file a change of status application:

1. Meet with your international student advisor to discuss the process, using this handout.
2. Request an I-20 from your advisor, providing completed 'I-20 Request Form' and financial documentation.
3. Pay the SEVIS fee (\$350) at <https://www.fmjfee.com/#> with your SEVIS number and print receipt
4. Prepare all the following items:
 - A letter from you, requesting the change of status and explaining your circumstances and plans (why have you decided to change your status to F-1).
 - Completed Form I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status (download this form from www.uscis.gov). Your ISSS adviser can help you with items you don't understand; remember to fill out all pages
 - Application fee for I-539 (\$370 plus an \$85 biometric services fee). Please write your check or money order payable to the Department of Homeland Security. Write your I-94 number and the type of application you are requesting on your check or money order.
 - Photocopies of your immigration documents:
 - ID page of your passport, including expiration date
 - Current U.S. visa page and entry stamp showing status (or other status documents)
 - Your current/latest I-94 showing your current status
 - Any other immigration document showing current status (such as F-2 I-20 for F-2 status)
 - A photocopy of your new F-1 I-20 for change of status. Request the I-20 from your international student advisor. Be sure to sign before copying.
 - Your receipt for payment of the SEVIS I-901 fee.
 - A copy of your admission letter for your academic program.
 - Financial documentation: evidence which supports the Financials section on your I-20 (a personal or family bank statement, financial sponsorship letter, etc.)
5. Send all items to USCIS according to I-539 instructions.
6. Track your case via the receipt number that you receive, at www.uscis.gov. Keep your international student advisor informed.

Important:

An applicant for F-1 status CANNOT study until the change of status is approved, unless the current status allows it.

If your change of status is approved, that will allow you to remain in the U.S. in your new F-1 status (if you maintain your status correctly). If you depart the U.S. and need to re-enter, however, you'll need to obtain an F-1 visa in your home country.