

In order to change your status while in the U.S. to an F-1 student from another nonimmigrant status, you will need to be admitted to a full-time academic program and obtain a Form I-20 from the admitting institution. Also, you should continue to maintain valid nonimmigrant status and should not leave the U.S. while the change of status application is pending at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services or the petition will be deemed abandoned.

If traveling outside the U.S., the applicant may see to obtain the desired status upon reentry if they have obtained an F-1 visa at a U.S. consulate. Upon obtaining the F-1 visa, the applicant may travel to the U.S. as an F-1 student.

Applying for a change of status to F-1 does not automatically make you eligible to enroll in classes or for on-campus employment.

It is your responsibility to make sure that there will be **no gap in your authorized period of stay** between your current status end date and the start of F-1 status.

If you are an **F-2** status holder, you are not eligible to begin study until after the F-1 status has been granted.

As an **H-1B/H-4**, you are able to attend school part-time or full-time, providing it does not interfere with your primary purpose in the U.S.; therefore, you will need a valid reason for requesting the change to F-1, such as (examples only):

- An offer of a graduate student assistantship by the school you wish to attend
- A written request from your sponsor requesting you to change status to F-1
- Your H-1B/H-4 status is expiring and/or you want to complete the current program
- You are turning 21 and can no longer remain as an H-4 dependent of your H-1B parent

Due to the complexity of **J status** regulations, International Student Services recommends that you speak with an International Student Services advisor before you begin the change of status application process. If you are subject to the "two year home country physical presence requirement," you cannot change to F-1 status in the U.S. unless you have received a recommendation for a waiver of the requirement from the Department of State or have obtained a waiver approval from USCIS.

B-1/B-2 status holders may not attend classes under any circumstances until after F-1 status has been granted.

International Student Services
Southwest Minnesota State University (SC 237)
1501 State St. Marshall, MN 56258
(507) 537-6445
Fax: (507) 537-7224

It may take up to six months to get a response from USCIS. You may check the USCIS website for a case status update at <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard.do>. If you have not received an answer prior to the program start date listed on your I-20, please see an advisor in International Student Services.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Your request to USCIS for change of status should consist of the following:

- Letter from you requesting change of status to F-1. This letter should provide a brief overview of your stay in the U.S. and the reasons for the status change to F-1.
- Completed and signed Form I-539 (<http://www.uscis.gov/i-539>)
- Completed Form G-1145 (<http://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>)
- Personal check for \$370 payable to the Department of Homeland Security; **note: fee increased to \$370 on December 23, 2016.**
- Original I-20, signed and dated at item #11
- Proof of SEVIS fee payment (<https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.jsp>)
- Arrival/Departure record (I-94) (www.cbp.gov/i94)
- Photocopy of Form I-797 if applicable
- Photocopy of the passport data page(s) showing both the picture and expiration date
- Financial support documents that appear on Form I-20 (i.e., bank statement, assistantship offer letter, etc.)
- If your dependent family members are currently in the U.S. and plan to change their status, their information should be included in the Form I-539. And send photocopies of their passport data page(s), Form I-797 if applicable, Arrival/Departure record (I-94), marriage or birth certificate, etc.
- If you are currently in H-1B, O-1, TN, E-3, L-1, enclose a copy of 2-3 recent pay stubs
- If you are currently in dependent status (e.g. F-2, H-4, L-2, TD, O-3, etc.), include your main status holder's passport, Arrival/Departure record (I-94), I-20/DS-2019, Form I-797 if applicable, marriage or birth certificate, etc.

Make an appointment with an advisor in International Student Services and bring all items listed above. Then, send your change of status application by certified mail with return receipt to:

USCIS
ATTN: I-539
2501 S State Highway 121 Business
Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

NOTE: If you have been offered an assistantship, please include a cover letter (in bright color) and highlight in your letter: "Please expedite: assistantship pending." Also, write on bottom left corner of the envelope "Expedite: Assistantship pending."

For more information, please see an advisor in International Student Services.