

Filing for a Change of Status

Who is ineligible to change their status to F-1?

- Nonimmigrant's in C, D, K or M status.
- Nonimmigrant's who are in the U.S. under the Visa Waiver Program. (Citizens of certain countries can visit the US as tourists up to 90 days)
- J exchange visitors who are subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement.

Who should not file for a change of status?

Those on a B1/B2 visitor's visa. These visas have a high rate of denial when trying to change status. The person should return home, receive an I-20 from our school, apply for an F-1 visa and enter the U.S.

Timely Filing

A nonimmigrant who wishes to change status to F-1 must do so before their current status expires.

Who is eligible to change their status?

In order to file a change of status, the nonimmigrant must be:

- In an immigration status that allows for that change.
- In valid status. (the applicant must not have violated their status)
- Fully admitted to an academic program and received an I-20.

How do I change my status?

Complete all documentation listed below and then make an appointment with the Assistant Director of Immigration in the International Admissions Office. Be sure to bring all COMPLETED documents to your appointment.

Documentation you need if changing to F-1

- Filing fee as stated in the I-539 form.
- I-797 Receipt showing payment of SEVIS fee (See the section "SEVIS Fee" for details.)
- Completed Form I-539: Download the Sample I-539 for instructions on filling out the form. You can download the original I-539 here: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-539.pdf>
- A photocopy of your Form I-94 (front and back)
- A photocopy of your passport personal data page(s) (i.e., the page(s) with your photograph and the expiration date of your passport)
- A photocopy of your current visa
- Your complete, original I-20, signed by you
- Evidence of financial support
- A letter stating why you wish to change your status.

Documentation you need if changing from F-1 to F-2.

An F-1 student currently studying in the U.S. may change immigration status to F-2 (dependent of an F-1) provided that:

- 1) The F-1 who wishes to change to F-2 status is currently maintaining proper F-1 status.
- 2) The F-1 spouse for whom the student will be an F-2 dependent is currently maintaining F-1 status and can prove that he/she has the finances necessary to support the F-2.

To change status from F-1 to F-2 the following documents will be required:

- Completed Form I-539: Download the Sample I-539 for instructions on filling out the form. You can download the original I-539 here: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-539.pdf>
- A check made out to the Department of Homeland Security for \$300.00.
- An I-20 issued for the F-2 Dependent. Apply for an F-2 I-20 with Debbie VanAtta in the International Admissions Office. She will create an F-2 I-20 needed for the application.
- Copies of passport, visa, I-94 card (front and back) and all I-20's for the F-1 wishing to change to F-2 status.
- Copies of passport, visa, I-94 card (front and back) and all I-20's for the F-1 who will support the prospective F-2.
- Proof of marriage of the F-1 and prospective F-2.
- Proof of financial support for the F-1 and F-2.
- Short letter explaining why you want to change status.

Paying the SEVIS Fee

What is the SEVIS fee and do I have to pay it?

The SEVIS fee is a charge whereby all F-1 and J-1 visitors to the U.S. must pay a fee to supplement federal government expenses involved in the maintenance and administration of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

If you are attempting to change status, you will be required to pay the SEVIS fee before you can mail in your change of status application.

To Pay Online

1. Find the Form I-901 at www.FMJfee.com
2. Complete the form online and supply the necessary Visa, MasterCard or American Express information. Be sure to write your name exactly as it appears on your I-20 form.
3. Print a copy of the online receipt.

4. Be sure to make copies of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents. You will need to submit a copy of this receipt along with your other change of status application material.

Where do I send my application?

After receiving your completed Change of Status Packet from the Assistant Director of Immigration you will mail your packet including your check or money order to:

**USCIS California Service Center
P.O. Box 10539
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607-1053**

What happens when the Service Center approves my application?

If your application is complete, our office will receive a Form I-797 Notice of Action/Receipt Notice from the Service Center within two to four weeks, and we will then notify you by email that the Notice of Action arrived. Your Notice of Action is very important, both because it proves that you filed your application and because it provides the "LIN number" which you must use if you need to track your application's progress.

When your application is finished processing the Service Center will return your I-20 to our office, with a notation in the upper right corner of your I-20 indicating approval of your change of status application. You will also receive a second Notice of Action/Approval Notice, with your new I-94 printed in the lower right-hand corner. You will want to cut out and staple your new I-94 into your passport, after making a copy of your entire Notice of Action/Approval Notice and I-20 to keep separately in a safe place.

How long will it take to receive my approval?

It can take 2-3 months and sometimes even longer.