



# Change of Status to F-1 by Application

International Student Services – Texas A&M University

There are two ways through which a nonimmigrant can change their status to F-1:

- *Change of Status by Application* - Obtain an I-20 from ISS and submit an application to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) while you remain in the U.S.
- *Change of Status by Travel* – Obtain an I-20 from ISS, depart the U.S., apply for an F-1 visa, re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status, and check-in with ISS (submit copies of all immigration documents).

**This handout describes the procedures for any new or current student at Texas A&M University interested in doing a Change of Status to F-1 by Application.**

For information about F-1 status, refer to the Maintaining F-1 Status handout available at <http://international.tamu.edu/iss/immigration/f1students.asp>.

If you are currently in a dependent visa status (i.e. F-2 or H-4) then the term “primary visa holder” refers to the person who has applied to have you as their dependent (i.e. the person in F-1 or H-1B status).

## **Information about Change of Status to F-1 by Application**

- All individuals interested in doing a Change of Status to F-1 by Application must schedule an appointment to meet with an International Student Services (ISS) advisor to determine your eligibility.
- Both the applicant for F-1 status as well as their current primary visa holder (e.g. F-1, H-1B), must be in legal status in order to be eligible for a Change of Status to F-1 by Application.
- Individuals who have applied for Lawful Permanent Residence should speak with an Immigration Attorney before considering a Change of Status to F-1.
- If a Change of Status to F-1 is granted by DHS, the applicant obtains F-1 status, but not an F-1 visa. The next time they leave the country, they must apply for an F-1 visa at a U.S. Embassy/Consulate in order to re-enter the U.S.
- Applicants currently in a status that does not permit full-time study (i.e. F-2, B-1, B-2, etc.), must wait for the Change of Status to be approved by DHS before enrolling.

## Documents Required

(Please note that additional documentation may be requested as needed.)

1. **Proof of financial resources.** Current evidence of all sources of financial support for the applicant. For detailed information about acceptable proof of financial resources, please visit the ISS Proof of Financial Resources page at [http://international.tamu.edu/iss/financial/i20\\_ds2019financial.asp](http://international.tamu.edu/iss/financial/i20_ds2019financial.asp).
2. **Original I-94 card for the applicant for F-1 status.**
3. **Photocopies of all immigration documents ever received by the applicant for F-1 status.** Immigration documents include the passport, visa, I-94, Approval Notices (if the applicant ever changed status within the U.S. in the past) and any Certificates of Eligibility (i.e. I-20 or DS-2019).
4. **Photocopies of all immigration documents ever received by the applicant's primary visa holder and/or by any dependents requesting F-2 status.** Refer to the explanation above for details.
5. **Employer Letter.** If the applicant or their primary visa holder is currently in a status that is dependent upon employment in the U.S. (i.e. H-1B or F-1 OPT), ISS must also receive written proof of that employment from the employer.
6. **Original Form I-539.** This form is available on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website at <http://uscis.gov/> under Forms. Complete all applicable pages.
7. **Personal check or money order.** Personal checks are recommended as they are easier to track and the receipt number of your application will be printed on the back of the check once it is received. Make the check or money order payable to "Department of Homeland Security." The fee amount for filing Form I-539 is located on the USCIS website under Forms.
8. **University Letter of Acceptance:** Required for any new student.
9. **Academic department letter(s)**
  - If the applicant for F-1 status is currently enrolled as a student, ISS must receive a letter from their department.
  - If the applicant's primary visa holder is currently a student, ISS must receive a letter from their department.
  - The letter must be composed on department letterhead and addressed "To Whom It May Concern." The letter must state the following: (a) when the student began the present program, (b) that the student is a full-time student in good academic standing, (c) the specific program requirements remaining, and (d) the student's expected date of graduation (month/year). Titles and printed names should accompany all signatures.
    - For undergraduate students, this must be written and signed by the Academic Advisor.
    - For graduate students, the letter must be written and signed by the academic advisor and also signed by the graduate faculty member identified by the Office of Graduate Studies as authorized to sign as Department Head (Department Graduate Advisor).
10. **Personal Statement:** Addressed "To Whom It May Concern" stating (a) that the applicant (and primary visa holder) is in legal status, (b) asking that the applicant's status be changed to F-1, and (c) stating the reasons the change is desired or necessary.
11. **Transcripts:** Provide transcripts from all U.S. schools attended by both the applicant for F-1 status as well as the primary visa holder. Print unofficial transcripts for Texas A&M University at <https://howdy.tamu.edu>.
12. **Marriage / Birth Certificate:** If the F-1 applicant is the spouse of their primary visa holder or if they will include an F-2 spouse dependent with their application, submit a copy of the Marriage Certificate (in English or translated into English). If the F-1 applicant is the child of their primary visa holder or they will include any F-2 children dependents with their application, submit a copy of the birth certificate or other legal document(s) verifying the relationship to the parent (in English or translated into English).
13. **Sponsored students** or dependents of sponsored students must obtain a letter from Sponsored Student Programs (SSP), stating that the sponsor has no objection to the Change of Status.
14. **I-901 Receipt (SEVIS Fee):** All individuals applying for a Change of Status to F-1 must pay the SEVIS Fee after ISS issues the I-20. For online submission of the SEVIS Fee, visit <https://www.fmjfee.com/index.jhtml>. See the ISS SEVIS Fee handout for more information: <http://international.tamu.edu/iss/immigration/sevisfee.asp>.