



# Change of Status to F-1

International Student Services – Texas A&M University

There are two ways individuals in the U.S. in nonimmigrant status can change their status to F-1. All individuals interested in doing a Change of Status to F-1 must schedule an appointment to meet with an International Student Services (ISS) advisor to determine your eligibility.

## 1. *Change of Status by Travel*

- Submit required documents to ISS and obtain an I-20.
- Pay SEVIS fee at <https://www.fmjfee.com/>.
- Travel to a U.S. consulate to apply for F-1 visa.
- Re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status and check-in with ISS.

## 2. *Change of Status by Application (inside the U.S.)*

- Submit required documents to ISS and obtain an I-20.
- Pay SEVIS fee at <https://www.fmjfee.com/>.
- Apply for a Change of Status with United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) through the online ELIS system (<https://elis.uscis.dhs.gov>) or by mailing the Form I-539 to USCIS.
- While application is pending, applicants should remain in the U.S.
- Applicants should not start studies until the Change of Status has been approved unless current status allows enrollment. If unsure, consult ISS.
- Once approved, applicant needs to check in with ISS.
- If application is denied, the time between the end of student's legal status (for example, H-1B) and the date of denial may be counted as unlawful presence by U.S. government authorities.

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

- Once approved, student must comply with F-1 regulations, including full-time enrollment requirement upon entering the U.S. with F-1 visa, or from approval date listed on I-797 (approval notice). For information about F-1 status, refer to the Maintaining F-1 Status handout available at <http://iss.tamu.edu/ISS/media/ISS-Files/ISS-PDF/Current%20Students/F1VisaRegulations.pdf>
- 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).
- If you are on a J-1 or a J-2 visa and are subject to the 2 Year Home Stay Requirement (INA 212(e) Home Residence Requirement), you cannot change your status in the U.S.; you must travel to your home country to change your visa status.
- Both the applicant for F-1 status, as well as the 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.
- 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 USCIS, 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 they can enroll in classes.

<b>Documents Required</b> (Please note that additional documentation may be requested as needed.)	Documents required by ISS	Documents required by USCIS for Application	Documents required at Visa Interview*
<b>Photocopies of all immigration documents previously received by the Applicant for F-1 status:</b> Immigration documents include passport, visa, I-94, Form I-797A Approval Notices (if applicable), Employment Authorization Documents, and any Certificates of Eligibility (i.e. I-20 or DS-2019).	YES	YES	YES
<b>If applicant for F-1 status is currently in dependent status, photocopies of all immigration documents previously received by the Principal Visa Holder:</b> Immigration documents include passport, visa, I-94, Form I-797A Approval Notices (if applicable), Employment Authorization Documents, and any Certificates of Eligibility (i.e. I-20 or DS-2019).	YES	YES	YES
<b>Proof of financial resources:</b> Current evidence of all sources of financial support for the applicant. For detailed information about acceptable proof of financial resources, refer to <a href="http://iss.tamu.edu/Current-Students/Estimated-Cost-of-Attendance">http://iss.tamu.edu/Current-Students/Estimated-Cost-of-Attendance</a>	YES	YES	YES
<b>Employer Letter:</b> 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.	YES	YES	YES
<b>University Letter of Acceptance for Applicant:</b> Required for any NEW student. <i>If a current student, must submit Academic Department Letter (see below).</i>	YES	YES	YES
<b>Academic Department Letter for Principal Visa Holder:</b> Required if applicant for F-1 status is currently enrolled as a student or if the applicant is a Dependent of an F-1 or J-1 student. 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.	YES	YES	YES
<b>Personal Statement by Applicant:</b> Addressed “To Whom It May Concern” stating (a) that the Applicant for F-1 status is in legal status, (b) asking that Applicant’s status be changed to F-1, (c) stating the reasons the change is desired or necessary, and (d) Signed and dated.	NO	YES	YES
<b>Marriage / Birth Certificate:</b> If the F-1 applicant is the spouse of the primary visa holder they must submit a copy of the Marriage Certificate (in English or translated into English). If the F-1 applicant is the child of the 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).	NO	YES	YES
<b>Sponsored Students</b> 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.	YES	NO	NO
<b>Immigration Information Questionnaire (IIQ):</b> Students starting their first semester at Texas A&M University must complete an IIQ available under the “Prospective Students” section of the ISS website.	YES	NO	NO
<b>Online Orientation:</b> Students must complete the F-1 track of the Online Orientation at <a href="http://issapp.tamu.edu/checkin_orientation/orientation.asp">http://issapp.tamu.edu/checkin_orientation/orientation.asp</a> in order to receive the I-20 from ISS.	YES	NO	NO
<b>Transcripts:</b> 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 <a href="https://howdy.tamu.edu">https://howdy.tamu.edu</a>	NO	YES	YES
<b>International Address:</b> International addresses are required to issue an I-20. Please submit your international address with Change of Status application.	YES	YES	YES

\*NOTE: Be sure to check with the U.S. Embassy/Consulate where you will be applying for your F-1 visa to ensure that they do not require additional documents.