

Change of Status to F-1

There are two ways to change your visa status to F-1.

1. Change of Status by traveling outside the U.S.

If you are traveling outside the U.S. to change your status, you will need to work with the IES Office to provide the necessary proof of funding and other required documents in order to obtain an I-20 from UMBC. Using the SEVIS number on your I-20, complete an F-1 visa application and make an appointment with the U.S. Embassy in your country or any U.S. Embassy worldwide that allows for Third Party Nationals (most do but check their website). For more information and directions on applying for an F-1 visa, use this website:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html

2. Change of Status without leaving the U.S.

It is also possible to change your status without leaving the U.S., though **you cannot travel outside the U.S. while the change of status application is pending with U.S.C.I.S.** To do this you will need to submit an application and supporting documents to U.S.C.I.S., requesting that they change your status to F-1. The change of status application processing time varies. It could take as little as one month to as long as three months at most. The processing fee that U.S.C.I.S. charges is **\$290**. Note that there is also an **additional \$200** SEVIS fee that you have to pay before your embassy appointment or submitting the application to U.S.C.I.S.

Please note that if you entered the U.S. on a B-2 visa (tourist status), there is very strong chance that your request to change to F-1 will be denied. The exception to this would be if your visa is marked as “prospective student.” You are **NOT** allowed to attend classes while in B-2 status, or while you are in F-2 status, except if those classes are “recreational or non-vocational.” For other visa categories please check with the IES office.

If you are changing to F-1 from J-1 or J-2 status, please be aware that changing status will NOT allow you to avoid the requirements of the two-year home return policy if you are subject to provision 212 (e). You will need to request a waiver from your home government or the agency that is sponsoring you for that to happen.

Please keep copies of all materials sent in for your change of status request. We will keep a copy of all materials in our files for reference.

Once the forms and other documents have been collected and completed, they should be mailed to one of the following addresses:

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS):

USCIS
PO Box 660166
Dallas, TX 75266

For Express mail and courier service (FedEx, UPS):

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

(Continued)

In two or three weeks you should receive a printed receipt in the mail at the address you specified on your application. This receipt will include a reference number specific to your application, which must be used when contacting USCIS about your case. You can follow the progress of your application on the web at <http://uscis.gov>, under “Case Status and Processing Dates.” Eventually your approval notice and stamped student copy of the I-20 (presuming you are changing to an F-1 visa) will be returned to you at the same address, although they will probably arrive in separate envelopes. There may also be a gap of two weeks or more between the arrival of the two documents.

Once your change of status has been approved, you will be in legal status within the U.S. **But, if you leave the country and do not have a valid F-1 visa in your passport, you will need to apply for and obtain one at a U.S. Embassy or consulate before returning to the U.S.** Re-entering the country using your earlier visa will place you back into your original status, and necessitate you repeating this procedure of changing your status.

If you have any questions about any aspect of changing your status, please contact the International Education Services office at 410-455-2624, or by email at ies@umbc.edu.

SEVIS Fee – For ALL F-1 Change of Status applications:

If you are changing to an F-1 visa status, you will need to pay a one-time \$200 fee known as the “SEVIS Fee.” This fee is required before submitting the application to U.S.C.I.S. or before your embassy visit, and you MUST have a receipt showing proof of payment. You can pay this fee on-line by filling out the online Form I-901 and using a credit card at www.fmjfee.com. An online receipt can be printed and submitted as proof of payment. You can also complete the Form I-901 and pay the SEVIS fee by issuing a check drawn on U.S. funds, and by mailing it to the address listed on the Form I-901. A receipt will be mailed to you. The Form I-901 is available for downloading at the below website: <http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/i901/index.htm> A SEVIS number is required to pay the SEVIS fee. Your SEVIS number can be found on your I-20.

***Please use the enclosed checklist to guide you in preparing to file your change of status request.**

***This information is geared towards students changing to an F-1 visa. If you need more information or specific requirements of changing to another visa status, please use this website:**
<http://www.uscis.gov/USCIS/Resources/C2en.pdf>

Helpful Links:

I-539 Change of Status Application: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-539.pdf>

I-539 form directions: <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-539instr.pdf>

SEVIS fee/I-901 form: <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html>

USCIS Home page: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>

Check List for Change of Status Application

- Completed form I-539. See link. <http://www.uscis.gov/files/form/i-539.pdf>
- Evidence of Financial Support (Letter or Affidavit from Sponsor, and account balance or bank statement for appropriate amount – see the International Student Advisor to get the exact amount based on your situation)
- Original Form I-20 (provided by International Student Adviser after seeing proof of finances, and proof of enrollment or admission) (Only if changing to an F visa)
- Receipt showing payment of \$200 SEVIS registration fee (I-901 fee) (can only be paid after receiving the I-20)
- A letter written to USCIS requesting and explaining the reason for the change of status.
- Copy of your passport biographical & visa pages.
- Original I-94 card (entry card stapled into your passport when you arrived in the US)
- Check made out to “Department of Homeland Security” for \$290 (I-539 processing fee)

Additional Information Required from Primary Visa Holder, if you are applying for a Dependent Visa (example, F-2)

- Copies of Primary Visa Holders documents:
 - *I-94 Card
 - *Passport biographical & Visa pages
 - *I-20 or H-1B documents (or other status documents that apply)
- Financial Support letter (for yourself)
- Copy of Marriage Certificate, if relying on your spouse for your status
- Copies of transcripts (if applicable)
- Copy of the EAD card (if applicable)