

Change of Status Informational Guide (June 2016)

If you are currently in the U.S. on a different immigration status and want to change to the F1 status, you can apply to USCIS for a Change of Status.

BASIC STEPS ON HOW TO APPLY FOR CHANGE OF STATUS TO F-1

- 1) Gain admission to the University of Washington Bothell and receive your I-20 immigration document from CIE.
- 2) Submit your Change of Status application (including your UW Bothell I-20) either to a U.S. Consulate (travel option) or the USCIS (non-travel option). See back page for further details about these options.
- 3) Notify CIE when you receive notification (approval or denial) of your Change of Status application.

ELIGIBILITY FOR CHANGE OF STATUS

- You are maintaining your current status; AND
- You are eligible for the new status; AND
- Your current status does not prohibit change of status in the U.S. (see below for restrictions)
- A change of status may be granted for a period up to 30 days before the report date or start date of the course of study listed on Form I-20.
- You must maintain your current, or other, nonimmigrant status up to 30 days before the start date of the course of study listed on Form I-20 or your requested change of status may not be granted.

ELIGIBILITY RESTRICTIONS

- Individuals whose period of authorized stay in the U.S. has expired generally cannot change status
- Individuals who have violated the conditions of their current status generally cannot change status
- Individuals in J status who have the 2-year home-country residence requirement can change only to A or G.
- Persons admitted under the Visa Waiver Program (marked "W/T" or "W/B" on the I-94) cannot change nonimmigrant status.
- Persons who hold C, D, or K status cannot change nonimmigrant status.
- A vocational student in M status cannot change to F status.

B VISA HOLDERS

B visa holders (tourists) **cannot** enroll in a course of study or begin classes until they have first submitted a change of status application, **and** have received an approval notice granting that change of status to F-1 status. CIE generally recommends applying for the F1 visa at a U.S. Consulate in your home country, rather than doing a Change of Status, due to the nature of the initial B visa that you were granted by immigration.

F-2 VISA HOLDERS

- Cannot engage in any kind of employment or engage in a full course of study.
- Can pursue a degree but must study "less than full time".
- A study that is "avocation or recreational in nature" is permitted "up to and including on a full-time basis".
- F2 children can engage full-time study in K-12 level.

H-4 VISA HOLDERS

H-4 visa holders may enroll full-time in a course of study.

Requirement While on Your F-1 Visa

Full Course of Study

You must pursue a full course of study each quarter to maintain lawful status. A "full course of study" is 12 or more credits per quarter for undergraduates, and 10 or more credits per quarter for graduate students. Only one online class may count towards your minimum credit amount. In your final quarter you may take as few credits as required to complete your degree as long as you register for at least one credit and receive authorization for a reduced course load from CIE in advance. An online class cannot be the only class on your final quarter schedule.

If your Change of Status is adjudicated mid-quarter, the full-time requirement will come into effect the subsequent quarter. This means that you will be OK if you are enrolled less than full-time for a quarter in which your Change of Status is approved.

Reduced Course Load

You may enroll part-time due to valid academic/medical reasons during a quarter if you obtain a Reduced Course Load authorization from CIE in advance. You must discuss with CIE to determine if you are eligible for the benefit. Do not register for fewer than the required number of credits or withdraw from a course without first receiving permission from CIE.

Vacation Quarter

To be eligible for a vacation quarter, a student must have been a full time student for at least 3 consecutive quarters. Time spent as a full time student in another non-immigration status (such as H4 visa) can be counted towards this requirement.

If your F1 status begins in winter or spring quarter, you may take your first summer as a vacation quarter if you weren't enrolled in fall quarter. However, please confirm your eligibility to do so with CIE. You cannot take vacation in your final quarter. CIE recommends that you take summer as your annual vacation due to limited course offerings.

Health Insurance Requirement

Washington state laws require that international students maintain adequate health insurance while attending the University of Washington. All matriculated international students in F-1 status at the University of Washington are required to enroll in the University of Washington Student Health Insurance every quarter they are enrolled in courses. This requirement may be waived only if you meet the eligibility criteria, see: www.uwb.edu/cie and click on "Health Insurance" for Waiver Eligibility information and waiver application deadlines.

Employment Eligibility

If your current immigration status does not allow you to work, then you cannot begin employment until the change of status to F-1 is approved. Contact CIE to learn more about your employment opportunities on an F-1 visa, such as on-campus employment, Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT).

CPT & OPT Eligibility

To be eligible for CPT, a student must have been a full time student for at least one academic year (3 quarters; doesn't have to be consecutively) and be in F1 status by the start of the quarter they wish to do CPT in. Time spent as a full time student in another non-immigration status (such as H4 visa) can be counted towards this requirement.

To be eligible for OPT, a student must have been a full time student for at least one academic year (3 quarters; doesn't have to be consecutively) and be in F1 status by the start of their final quarter. Time spent as a full time student in another immigration status (such as H4 visa) can be counted towards this requirement.

Options for How to Change to F1 Status:

1. Travel Option

This is the traditional way most students enter the U.S. to study on a F1 visa. In your situation, you must leave the U.S., apply for your F-1 visa at a U.S. consulate, and reenter the U.S. with the F-1 visa and other relevant documents. You will gain your new status when you enter the U.S.

2. Non-Travel Option (This is called “Change of Status”)

Submit an application to the USCIS for a Change of Status. This option allows you to change your nonimmigrant status while remaining in the U.S. With this option you may gain the new status but you will not receive a new visa; visas are only issued outside the U.S.

Travel Option		
Important Information	Considerations	Documents Required to Apply
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You cannot enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the start date on your I-20. 	<p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually faster than the Change of Status option You will obtain the visa <i>and</i> the immigration status, which gives you flexibility to travel in/out of the U.S. Great option if you need to be on F1 quickly and definitely by a certain date. <p>Disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possibility of processing delays Expense of travel back home 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> A UW Bothell I-20* (see below). Proof of payment of SEVIS fee, which can only be paid after your I-20 is issued. (www.fmjfee.com) Valid passport UW Bothell Admissions Letter (if your COS will begin at the same time as your admission to UWB). UW Bothell Official Transcript (if you are already a current UWB student). Financial support documents (originals are best) Other documents as required – check the website of the U.S. Consulate where you plan to apply for your F1 visa: www.usembassy.gov

***Documents required in order to receive a UW Bothell I-20:**

- I-20 Request Form (available at www.uwb.edu/cie)**
- Photocopy of current status document, such as H4 or F2 visa stamp or the I-797 Form that shows your current approved status.**
- Photocopy of passport ID page (include any passport extension page(s) if applicable).**
- Photocopy of the passport ID page and current status document(s) of your spouse/parents (only applies if you are on a dependent visa).**
- Photocopy of I-94 electronic travel history (available at: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html>)**
- Financial Support Documents (information regarding these requirements are described on the I-20 Request Form).**

Non-Travel Option / Change of Status

Important Information	Considerations	Documents Required to Apply
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing times vary, so be prepared to wait three to six months to learn the outcome of your application. You should submit your application several months in advance. • F-1 status cannot begin earlier than 30 days before the start date on your I-20. • You must be able to maintain your current status until 30 days before the I-20 start date. If your current status will expire prior to 30 days before your I-20 start date, your application will most likely be denied. • If your application is likely to be denied, the travel option may be a better fit for you. • Remaining in the U.S. during processing: You may remain in the U.S. while your application is pending, even if your original status expires during the application processing. • Travel outside the U.S. while your application is pending: Do not travel outside of the U.S. while your change of status case is pending. If you leave the country, USCIS will consider your application abandoned. • Approval or denial: USCIS will notify you of their decision by sending you Form I-797. This form is important and should be kept with your passport and I-94 card. The I-797 is proof of your F-1 immigration status, but you will not receive an F-1 visa stamp in your passport (visa can only be obtained from a U.S. Consulate). The denial letter or approval notice will be mailed to the address listed on Form I-539 in your application. Note that if you change your address, the postal service will not forward mail sent to you by USCIS. Please provide CIE with a copy of your I-797 and approval notice. • Travel outside the U.S. after application is approved: In order to re-enter the U.S. after a trip abroad (except for brief trips to Canada or Mexico under 30 days), you must visit a U.S. consulate to request an F-1 visa stamp to match your new status. 	<p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to stay in the U.S. during processing • Avoid the hassle of a visa application process (for now) <p>Disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processing can be very slow (three to six months), which may jeopardize your ability to begin your new activity, such as studying or campus employment • You must stay in the U.S. during processing; exiting the U.S. cancels the application • You must still obtain a visa stamp to match your status the next time you travel outside the U.S. • The application may be denied, which could require you to quickly depart the U.S. 	<p>You may submit your own change of status application or an immigration attorney can handle your application. If you decide to submit your own application documents, the mailing address is provided on the USCIS website at:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Form I-539: www.uscis.gov (parts 1 through 5 of the form. On pg. 4, for part 4, question 3g: you must attach proof of how you will support yourself financially); 2) A letter addressed to USCIS requesting a change of status. This letter should state the reason(s) for the change, reasons/justification meeting the criteria for change of status, as well as how and why your intentions changed once in the U.S., and any other relevant information; 3) Documentation indicating financial support (i.e., bank letter or statement); Original documents are recommended 4) Letter of admission to UW Bothell (if your COS will begin at the same time as your admission to UWB). Or your or Official UWB Transcript (if you are a current student at UW Bothell). 5) Photocopy of your current I-94 record; available at: https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/request.html 6) Photocopy of your passport ID page; 7) Photocopy of your current immigration status (such as H-4 or F-2 visa stamp, I-797 Form); 8) Photocopy of the passport ID page and current status document(s) of your spouse/parents (only applies if you are on a dependent visa); 9) Personal check or money order for the I-539 fee. Fee is \$370 as of 12/23/2016. 10) COPY of I-20 from UW Bothell, which indicates a Change of Status request (see pg 3); 11) Proof of payment of the SEVIS fee, which can only be done after your I-20 is issued (www.fmjfee.com); 12) Other applicable documentation & current mailing address of application – see I-539 for information on your specific application at www.uscis.gov/i-539