Change Status to F-1

If you are currently in the United States in a non-immigrant status (such as H-4 or L-2 status), you may be able to study in your current status. See **Nonimmigrants: Who Can Study?**

Change of status to F-1 could be a lengthy process. You should speak to an International Student Advisor at ISO as early as possible so you can plan ahead.

There are two ways to change to F-1 status:

- **Change by Travel:** travel outside the U.S. and re-enter the U.S. with a new "initial attendance I-20", or

- **Change by Mail:** stay in the U.S. and request a change of status by filing I-539, Application To Extend/Change Nonimmigrant to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Travel/Re-Entry vs Change of Status		
	TRAVEL/RE-ENTRY	**CHANGE OF STATUS**
Cost	- Plane ticket to home country - Visa application fee (if you need to apply for a new F-1 visa) - I-901 SEVIS Fee: $350	- Filing fee for I-539: $370 - Biometric Fee: $85(per applicant) - I-901 SEVIS Fee: $350
Processing Time	Varies depending on country	Always check the USCIS website for up-to-date fees and information: https://www.uscis.gov/i-539 USCIS Processing Time: 3-5 months, or longer. This processing time can change at any time and is not guaranteed. While your I-539 change of status application is pending, you should: - Maintain your current immigration status - Register for a full-time course load (if eligible) - Physically remain in the U.S. This process does NOT provide you a new F-1 visa stamp in your passport. The next time you travel outside the U.S. you will need to visit a U.S. consulate or embassy to apply for an F-1 visa.

Travel/Re-Entry vs Change of Status

	TRAVEL/RE-ENTRY	CHANGE OF STATUS
Other Concerns	It may be difficult to travel in the middle of the term. You will not be eligible for F-1 benefits (including On-Campus Employment) until you have obtained F-1 visa and entered the U.S. in F-1 status	If USCIS denies your change of status application, you must leave the U.S. immediately when your current status expires.

Change by Mail

Applying for change of status by mail is a two-step process. Students should submit application materials to ISO to receive a change of status I-20. After receiving the I-20, you should mail the filing fee, I-539 application, photocopy of the change of status I-20, and all the supporting documentation to USCIS.

Step 1

To request a change of status with the USCIS, you need to collect the following documents. Be sure to check the USCIS website for additional information and documentation you may need: https://www.uscis.gov/i-539

- **I-539: Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status:** Complete and sign **I-539**. I-539 is a fillable PDF form. We advise you to type the application instead of filling it out by hand.

- **Photocopy of the identification page(s) in your passport.**

- **I-94 Admissions Verification:** Print the most recent I-94 at **http://www.cbp.gov/i94**. If you entered the U.S. prior to April 30, 2013, provide a front and back copy of the I-94 card stapled to the passport.

- **Proof of Current Status:** Photocopies of current visa stamp and biographical page of your passport, or photocopies of USCIS approval of you current status.

- **Dependent(s):** If the change of status application involves dependents (spouse/children), include copies of dependent(s)' passport biographical and visa pages, I-94 admissions verification or I-94 card, and proof of their relationship to the applicant (marriage certificate, birth certificates of children).

- **Letter of Explanation:** the letter should be written by the applicant and should be addressed to the USCIS requesting the change of status and explaining applicant's circumstances. The letter should include why (and the date) you entered the U.S. in your current status, why and how your intentions changed after your arrival in the U.S., the reasons why you have now decided to apply for a change to F-1 student status, and any other important information. **Your letter should be written in as much detail as possible as this will be your only opportunity to explain your situation to the USCIS.** (see sample letter on the last page)

- **Proof of Finances:** you and/or your sponsor(s) must prove that you have the financial ability to pay for school costs plus living expenses for one academic year. (more information on the 4th page)

- **Financial Affidavit**

- **Form G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance:** This form is optional. If you would like to receive a receipt notification of your application electronically either via email or text, complete this form.

Step 2

Mail out the I-20 before the Program Start Date.

Submit the application materials to:

For U.S. Postal Service (USPS) deliveries:
USCIS, P.O. Box 660166, Dallas, TX 75266.

(ISO recommends that you send your application by Priority Mail - additional fee will apply)

For FedEx, UPS, and DHL deliveries:
USCIS, ATTN: I-539, 2501 S. State Highway 121, Business Suite 400, Lewisville, TX 75067

A completed change of status application should have all the materials you picked up at ISO, plus the following items:

1. **Filing Fee: $370**. Money order or check payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security".
2. **Biometric Fee: $85** (Every applicant and co-applicant must pay an $85 biometric services fee), submit together in **ONE CHECK/Money Order**
3. **$350 SEVIS I-901 Fee Payment Receipt:** You must pay **$350 SEVIS I-901 fee online** after receiving the I-20. Print the receipt and mail it with your application.

Always check the most recent fees directly on the USCIS website: https://www.uscis.gov/i-539. We recommend that you scan or make photocopies of the application package for yourself before mailing it to USCIS.

After You Submit the Application to USCIS

You should receive an **I-797C, Notice of Action** 3-4 weeks after you mailed the application. I-797C is the receipt letter and it indicates your receipt number. You can check your application status by entering this number at USCIS's website: **http://www.uscis.gov/**. Call **the USCIS customer support** if you did not receive an I-797C.

Request for appearance.

According to USCIS, an applicant, a petitioner, a sponsor, a beneficiary, or other individual residing in the United States at the time of filing a benefit request may be required to appear for fingerprinting or for an interview. A petitioner shall also be notified when a fingerprinting notice or an interview notice is mailed or issued to a beneficiary, sponsor, or other individual. The applicant, petitioner, sponsor, beneficiary, or other individual may appear as requested by USCIS, or prior to the dates and times for fingerprinting or of the date and time of interview:

Request of Evidence (RFE)

If the USCIS needs further clarification from you regarding your application, a Request for Evidence (RFE) notice will be sent to you. It is important to follow the instructions on the RFE carefully and by the noted deadline. If an RFE is not filed correctly in a timely manner, it may result in denial of your change of status application.

If you receive an RFE, send ISO a copy of the RFE so we may review to see if our office needs to provide documentation.

Approval

After approval, USCIS will mail you an Approval Notice with an I-94 card at the bottom. The new I-94 will have the F-1 designation and "Valid for Duration of Status" remarks on it. Provide the proof of your F-1 status to ISO after you receive it by mail.

You are responsible for following the F-1 regulations and maintaining full-time status while you are in the United States.

If you are planning to travel outside the U.S. after the approval, be sure to apply for an F-1 visa which reflects your changed status before you return to the U.S.

Requirement from the USCIS

Finances:

• If you are self-supporting: Provide evidence that you have sufficient financial support to pay your tuition and living expenses as stated on the U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Form 1-20 during your proposed period of study. This evidence may include, but is not limited to, complete and most recent bank statements, employment records, tax records, business records, property records, etc. Bank letters alone may not be sufficient.

• If your sponsor is from overseas: Provide support letter from your sponsor. Also, provide evidence that the sponsor has the financial ability to meet your tuition and living expenses as stated on the ICE Form 1-20 during your proposed period of study. This evidence may include, but is not limited to, complete and most recent bank statements, employment records, tax records, business records, property records, etc. Bank letters alone may not be sufficient.

• If your sponsor is in the United States: Submit a properly signed and completed Affidavit of Support (Form 1-134). Also, provide evidence that the sponsor has the financial ability to meet your tuition and living expenses as stated on the ICE Form I-20 during your proposed period of study. This evidence may include, but is not limited to, complete and most recent bank statements, employment records, tax records, business records, property records, etc. Bank letters alone may not be sufficient.

Sample change of status letter
(Note that the letter below is a sample only. Your letter should be specific to your situation and include any additional information you believe is important to your request.)

[Date]

[USCIS address—Note that USCIS has many offices across the United States. Send your Form I-539 and this letter to the address specified in the Form I-539 instructions.] Attn: I-539

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am submitting this letter in support of my application for a change of status from [type of visa you currently have] to F-1 student status. I originally entered the United States in order to [state the reason for your initial entry]. Now, I have been offered the opportunity to study for my [degree or diploma program, including level and field of study] at International Technological University starting with the [Spring, Summer, or Fall] [year] trimester.

[Explain why you did not enter the U.S. in the F-1 status you now seek.]

After you entered the U.S., you decided to attend school. What information or other factors led you to make that decision.

([Explain where you intend to live outside the U.S. after you have completed your studies in the United States.]

[Explain how your course of study will help you academically or professionally after you leave the United

States.]

I can assure you that I have not worked illegally at any time since my arrival in the United States. I can also assure you that I will maintain my status as a full-time student if you approve my request. Please find my I-539 application, I-20, I-94, and supporting materials Thank you in advance for your consideration of my application to change to F-1 student status.

Sincerely,
[Your signature]
[Your name (printed)]
[Your U.S. address]