



Changing to F-1 Student Status

(rev 10/29/19)

Who is this information for?

- You are already in the US in a valid non-immigrant status
- You have been admitted to a full-time program at the University of Oregon and
- You have received your Form I-20 from the University of Oregon
- You have decided to change your status from inside the United States

What are the requirements for obtaining F-1 student status by applying to USCIS?

The main requirements include the following:

- Submission of Form I-539 to USCIS, along with supporting documents and I-539 filing fee (\$370) and \$85 biometric fee
- You must apply for a change of status before your current status expires
- Your current status must be valid up to at least 30 days before your requested F-1 status begins
- If you are or were in J-1 or J-2 Exchange Visitor status, you must not be subject to the two-year home residency requirement (Section 212e). If you are subject to the two-year home residency requirement, you will need to obtain F-1 status by leaving the US and returning with your I-20 and an F-1 student visa.

What if I have a gap in status?

If your current nonimmigrant status will expire more than 30 days before your F-1 program start date and you wish to remain in the United States until your start date, you must find a way to obtain status all the way up to the date that is 30 days before your program start date (“bridge the gap”). You may need to file a separate Form I-539 to request to extend your current status or change to another nonimmigrant status, in addition to your other Form I-539 application to change to F-1 student status. If you do not file this separate request prior to the expiration of your current status, USCIS will deny your Form I-539 request to change to F-1 status. Please continue to check the [USCIS processing times](#) while your Form I-539 change of status request is pending to determine if you need to file a request to extend or change your nonimmigrant status.

Note that due to USCIS processing times, your F-1 program start date can be deferred to the next available academic term if USCIS does not make a decision on your change of status application before your intended F-1 program start date. In this instance, you will need to obtain status all the way up to the date which is **30 days before your new program start date**. If you filed an I-539 to bridge the original gap, you may need to file another I-539 to bridge the new gap.

Because extending or changing nonimmigrant status to bridge the gap and changing to F-1 status are two distinct benefits, you must pay a separate filing fee for each request.

DIVISION OF GLOBAL ENGAGEMENT

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What if my current status doesn't allow me to enroll in classes?

If you are requesting to change from another nonimmigrant status to F student status and your current nonimmigrant status does not permit you to enroll in classes, do not enroll in classes or begin your studies until USCIS has approved your change of status. If USCIS has not adjudicated your change of status at least 15 days before the program start date on your Form I-20, contact the DSO at your new school. If USCIS does not grant your request to change status prior to the start date of classes, you will need to defer attendance and wait until the following term in order to begin your studies at the school in F status.

Please note that you must maintain a valid nonimmigrant status while your Form I-539 change of status application is pending.

We encourage all students and prospective students to work closely with International Student & Scholar Services to coordinate the timing of applying for change of status and enrolling in a course of study.

Alternative: Leaving the U.S. to become an F-1 student

You may consider consular processing if you are concerned about maintaining your nonimmigrant status to within 30 days of your program start date (which may be deferred as described above) or are otherwise not eligible to change status in the United States. You will need to do the following:

- Apply to and receive acceptance from the University of Oregon
- Receive a new initial Form I-20 from your designated school official (DSO).
- Pay the [I-901 SEVIS fee](#).
- Apply at a U.S. consulate or embassy for an F-1 [visa to travel to the United States](#) in order to seek admission as a student.
- If you are from a country where no visa is required, such as Canada, you may proceed directly to a U.S. port of entry or a U.S. pre-clearance/pre-flight inspection station and apply for admission to the United States as an F-1 student.
- Once admitted by an immigration officer in F-1 status, you may begin your studies.

What happens after I have obtained F-1 status?

You are required to comply with all F-1 rules once you have changed to F-1 student status by travel or by application. These rules include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Maintain an unexpired passport valid at least six months into the future at all times
- Maintain an unexpired I-20
- Maintain full-time enrollment or obtain authorization for reduced course loads prior to dropping to part-time enrollment
- Make normal progress toward degree completion



Application Process

Step 1: Meet with an international student advisor to request a change of status I-20

- Call 541-346-3206 to make an appointment

Step 2: Prepare your I-539 Application Packet

- Make a copy of your complete application packet for your records

- Completed USCIS Form G-1145 (download from <http://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>)
- Completed and signed USCIS Form I-539 (download from <http://www.uscis.gov/i-539>).

Beginning March 11, 2019 there are several significant changes:

- USCIS will only accept the revised Form I-539 with an edition date of 02/04/2019.
 - Every co-applicant included on the primary applicant's Form I-539 must submit and sign a separate Form I-539A. Parents may sign on behalf of children under 14.
 - Every applicant and co-applicant must pay an \$85 biometric services fee, except certain A, G, and NATO nonimmigrants as noted in the new Form I-539 instructions to be published on March 1, 2019.
 - Every applicant and co-applicant will receive a biometric services appointment notice, regardless of age, containing their individual receipt number. The biometric services appointments will be scheduled at the Application Support Center (ASC) closest to the primary applicant's address. Co-applicants who wish to be scheduled at a different ASC location should file a separate Form I-539.
- I-539 filing fee – refer to <http://www.uscis.gov/i-539> for current filing fee
 - Copy of signed I-20 from the University of Oregon issued for change of status
 - Copy of UO admission letter (for new admitted students) or UO official transcript (for currently enrolled students)
 - Proof of I-901 SEVIS Fee payment (pay the fee at <http://www.fmjfee.com>)
 - Copies of financial documents (e.g., bank statements, scholarship letters, graduate employment contracts) showing adequate financial resources for full-time study and dependent expenses (if any)
 - Personal letter explaining why you are applying for a change of status
 - Copy of passport ID page (passport should be valid at least six months into the future)
 - Most recent I-94 record (print out from <http://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>)
 - Copy of most recent US entry visa (if applicable)
 - Copies of current immigration documents showing that you are currently in valid nonimmigrant status and will be in valid status until at least 30 days prior to the start of your F-1 program. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. If you are currently in J-1 status, copy of your Form DS-2019 and evidence of current status, such as official transcripts showing have maintained full-time enrollment
 - b. If you are currently in F-2 status, copy of your F-2 I-20, I-94 and F-1 principal's I-20, I-94, and transcripts showing that your F-1 principal is in valid F-1 status
 - c. If you are currently in H-4 status, copy of your H-1B principal's H-1B approval notice, passport ID page, and I-94 record



Step 3: Mail your I-539 Application Packet to US Citizenship and Immigration Services

U.S. Postal Service:

USCIS Dallas Lockbox
P.O. Box 660166
Dallas, TX 75266

USPS Express Mail/Courier:

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

Step 4: Wait for your I-797 Receipt Notice. Update address information as necessary. Notify ISSS when your application has been approved.

- You should receive a receipt notice within 2-4 weeks after USCIS has received your application. Keep the receipt for your records.
- Once your application has been approved, bring a copy of the official approval notice to the Office of International Affairs for inclusion in your F-1 immigration records.

SPECIAL NOTES

- Applications may take 6 months or longer to be processed. Please plan ahead!
- You may or may not be allowed to begin full-time study while your change of status application is in process:
 - F-2 dependents are not permitted to study full-time until the application is approved
 - H-4 dependents may begin and/or continue full-time study while the application is in process
 - B-1/B-2 visitors (business visitors / tourists) are not permitted to study at all until the application is approved and may need to extend B-1/B-2 status while the change of status application is pending
- Persons whose current status are not based on an UO affiliation are strongly recommended to consult with a qualified immigration specialist or attorney.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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