

## **CHANGE OF STATUS (COS) to F-1**

### **Important Information**

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- Not all visa classifications permit an individual to be enrolled as a full-time degree seeking student. Speak with an advisor in International Student Services (ISS) to determine your eligibility to study and whether you should apply for a change of status to F-1.
- F-1 students may only work on-campus up to 20 hours per week while school is in session. During official holiday periods, such as summer and winter breaks, students may work on-campus full-time. Working off-campus is permissible only with authorization, and generally limited to internship opportunities directly related to the student's field of study. For more detailed information on F-1 employment regulations, please see an advisor.
- The applicant must be in legal status to be eligible to apply for a change of status. If an applicant is in a dependent visa status (e.g. F-2, H-4), the primary visa holder (e.g. F-1, H-1B) must also be in legal status in order for the dependent to apply for a change of status. If the primary visa holder is out of status, please visit with an ISS advisor to see if you are eligible for a change of status in the United States.
- A "Change of Status" may either be submitted to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) by an ISS advisor or done by leaving the U.S., presenting a SEVIS I-20 to obtain an F-1 visa stamp at a U.S. Embassy/Consulate, and then re-entering the U.S. as an F-1.
- J-1/J-2 Exchange Visitors subject to the two year home residence requirement are not eligible to change status to F-1 in the U.S. In such case, a change of status via travel is the only option for obtaining F-1 status. Individuals in other visa status should speak with an ISS advisor to determine their eligibility for a change of status in the U.S.
- If a change of status to F-1 is granted by DHS, the next time the student leaves the country, he/she must apply for an F-1 visa stamp at a U.S. Embassy/Consulate in order to re-enter.
- The promise of Texas A&M employment is acceptable as a source of funding for the applicant, but the compensation (or benefits such as in-state tuition or health insurance) may not be accepted until the change of status documentation is returned by DHS to the applicant.
- If there are dependents to be included in the change of status application to F-2, the ISS advisor will issue a new SEVIS I-20 for each dependent. These I-20's must be included with the change of status application.
- The application must include a SEVIS I-20 from the school the applicant will attend full-time.
- Change of status applicants who are citizens of countries benefiting from tax treaties with the U.S. should be aware that they may not be eligible for the tax treaty benefit unless they originally entered the U.S. as an F-1/J-1, or if they entered the U.S. as an F-1/J-1 after being outside the U.S. for at least 365 days.
- Applicants who are eligible for in-state tuition based on their current visa classification (e.g. H, L) should be aware that this benefit is not available in F status.
- Change of status applicants should ask an ISS Advisor for a handout outlining the F-1 regulations.

#### Information for changing from F-2 to F-1

- To be a full-time degree-seeking student an F-2 must first be granted a change of status to F-1 by DHS.
- Although an F-2 cannot be enrolled in a degree-seeking program, an F-2 may take courses that are avocational or recreational in nature.
- Beware! If an F-2 intends to change status to F-1 and put the non-degree courses towards a degree program there is potential for problems in the change of status application. An F-2 considering enrolling in a non-degree program should be aware that it is undetermined if DHS finds this acceptable.
- If the applicant is an F-2, the primary F-1 visa holder must see an ISS advisor after the change of status is approved to have the former F-2 dependent removed from their SEVIS I-20

## CHANGE OF STATUS (COS) to F-1 Application Process & Documents Required

Documents needed for a change of status application are listed below. Please note that additional documentation may be requested as needed.

1. **Financial Support:** Current evidence, not more than 6 months old, of all sources.

Source	Documentation Needed
Personal Funds	Bank letter and bank statements from the last 3 months
Family Funds Abroad	Letter from sponsor and bank letter
Sponsor in U.S.	Bank letter and 90 days worth of bank statements
	I-134 Affidavit of Support and supporting documents (if sponsor is U.S. citizen or permanent resident)
	Letter from employer and copy of H-1B Approval Notice (if sponsor is in H-1B status)

**Documentary Specifications:**

**Bank Letter:** Financial bank documents must be presented on letterhead, dated, and signed by an official. Please ask the bank official to include the account holder information, the account number, the date the account was opened, the current balance, and the average balance.

**Sponsor Letter:** Should state the sponsor's willingness to provide funding for all or part of the student's educational and living expenses while studying at Texas A&M. This letter should be dated, signed and include the relationship to the individual.

**I-134 Affidavit of Support:** Form and instructions available from the USCIS web site at <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>.

**H-1B Employer's Letter:** Should be on letterhead and signed, stating title, location, annual salary, that the H-1B is currently employed and the duration of employment.

The ISS advisor must see "documentary evidence that the applicant has immediately available sufficient funds to provide all his or her expenses for the first year of study and that, barring unforeseen circumstances, adequate funds will be available each year thereafter in an adequate amount from the same or another financially reliable source [OI 248.7 (c) (2)]." Dependable sources of support generally include scholarships, fellowships, assistantships, sponsoring agencies, or family funds.

If the funding is a promise of employment from Texas A&M, the department letter (available from the payroll office) on department letterhead stationary must state: job or award title, dollar amount of award or monthly/hourly salary, expected duration of the funding (i.e. 9 months or 12 months), whether it makes the student eligible for in-state tuition and/or payment of tuition and or fees, and/or health insurance benefits.

2. **Immigration Documents:** All applicants should provide their valid passport with visa stamp and I-94 card. Applicants in H status should provide their Approval Notice(s) and applicants in F-2 status should provide all I-20s issue to them and their F-1 spouse. A J-1 applicant should provide all DS-2019. Also provide the above documentation for any dependent in the U.S. who needs to be included in the change of status application. The ISS Advisor will photocopy the original documents. Individuals in any other visa status should check with an ISS advisor regarding the exact documentation required.
3. **Form I-539:** This form is available on the USCIS website by at <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> and clicking on the link Immigration Forms. Please complete all pages.
4. **Check or money order** made payable to "Department of Homeland Security" and follow the link for the updated fee: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> and click on Immigration Forms. (This is not necessary if the student is doing a "New Entry").
5. **Personal Statement:** Addressed "To Whom It May Concern" stating (a) that the applicant (and primary visa holder if the applicant is in a dependent status) is in legal status, (b) asking that the applicant's status be changed to F-1, and (c) stating the reasons the change is desired or necessary.
6. **University Letter of Acceptance:** Required for any new student.
7. **Department Letter:** Required for any continuing student. Addressed "To Whom It May Concern" (on letterhead). For graduate students, this must be written and signed by the academic advisor and also signed by the graduate faculty member identified by the Office of Graduate Studies as authorized to sign as Department Head (Department Graduate Advisor). For undergraduates, this must be written and signed by the Academic Advisor. Titles and printed names should accompany all signatures. 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). This date can be no more than 3 years from the student's first semester for a Master's degree program or 7 years from the student's first semester in an undergraduate or doctoral program.
8. **Transcripts:** If the applicant is an F-2 dependent, provide the current F-1 student's transcripts from all U.S. schools attended in the current degree level (Bachelor's, Master's or PhD). If the primary F-1 is a Texas A&M student, the ISS advisor will print the TAMU transcript from the student information system. Transcripts should also be provided for an applicant who is a continuing student already enrolled in an A&M degree program.
9. **Marriage / Birth Certificate:** An applicant who is a spouse of a primary visa holder should provide the Marriage Certificate. A birth certificate should be provided for any dependents to be included in the change of status or for an applicant who is currently in another dependent visa status. These documents should be in English. The ISS advisor will photocopy the original documents.
10. **Employer's Letter:** If the applicant is currently in H-1B status, provide a letter from the employer on letterhead and signed stating that you are currently employed and for how long you have been employed.
11. **Sponsored students** or dependents of sponsored students must obtain a letter from a Sponsored Student Program (SSP) advisor, stating that the sponsor has no objection to the change of visa type.
12. **I-901 Receipt (SEVIS Fee):** All individuals applying for a change of status to F-1 must pay the SEVIS Fee, including individuals already in a SEVIS status. For online submission of the SEVIS Fee visit <https://www.fmjfee.com/index.jhtml>. See the ISS SEVIS Fee handout for more information. The student will pay the SEVIS fee after the ISS advisor has issued the new I-20.