

CHANGE OF STATUS TO F-1

International Student and Scholar Services Florida International University

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If you are in a valid non-immigrant status other than F-1 but wish to change your status to F-1, you must request an FIU I-20 by following the procedure below. You may either travel to your home country and use the I-20 to apply for an F-1 visa or remain in the U.S. and apply for a change of status through U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. In the latter case, you should keep in mind that USCIS processing times will vary and there is **NO GUARANTEE of approval**. Should your application be approved, you will be in **F-1 status but will NOT have an F-1 visa**. An F-1 visa (stamp in your passport) can only be obtained at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy abroad (specifically in your home country) and approval of your change of status application **does NOT GUARANTEE** you will be issued the F-1 visa when you apply for one. Generally, applying for a change of status in the U.S. is not advisable if you have plans to travel outside the U.S. within the next three months. **You should discuss your situation in detail with an ISSS advisor before you apply for a change of status.**

NEWLY ADMITTED STUDENTS applying for a change of status to F-1 will receive an I-20 from the Office of Undergraduate Admissions/Graduate Admissions if all necessary documents have been submitted (if you have not yet received an I-20, contact the appropriate admissions office).

CURRENTLY ENROLLED STUDENTS must request an I-20 from ISSS by submitting the following:

- _____ 1. **ISSS Document Request Form** (indicate that you will apply for a CHANGE OF STATUS on page 2 of the form). **If you will travel and will use the I-20 to apply for an F-1 visa abroad, please indicate this, as well as your travel dates, on the request form.** Please note the processing of your I-20 may take up to 5 business days.
- _____ 2. **ISSS Student Data Sheet** AND COPY OF **Passport, Entry Visa and Form I-94**
- _____ 3. **ISSS Academic Certification Form** completed by your academic advisor to help ISSS determine your degree completion date
- _____ 4. **Proof of Funds** to show sufficient money to cover tuition, school fees and ALL other expenses for at least one academic year. Documents provided must be originals (not photocopies) and should be addressed to "U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services." Valid documents to prove funds:
 - MUST BE IN ENGLISH
 - MUST SPECIFICALLY STATE TOTAL AMOUNT OF MONEY AVAILABLE to you in US dollars
 - MAY INCLUDE:
 - (1) current bank letter and (if not your own account) signed letter from sponsor
 - (2) current scholarship letter from sponsoring agency or organization
 - (3) official and current letter verifying educational loan awarded to you
 - (4) ISSS Graduate Stipend form completed by department and signed by the Dean
- _____ 5. **Acknowledgement Statement: Change of Status to F-1 Visa Classification** signed by you, indicating your willingness to accept all responsibilities and conditions inherent in F-1 status

NOTE:

- If you are currently paying in-state tuition rates, applying for a change of status to F-1 will result in your tuition billing rate being changed to **out-of-state**. The Registrar's Office will update your billing status effective for the semester start date indicated in item five of the I-20.
- As an international student, you will be responsible for submitting proof of medical insurance each semester that meets the requirements of both the university and the State of Florida Board of Governors. A registration hold will be placed on your record preventing enrollment until such proof is submitted to Student Health Services.

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The change of status application packet may be mailed to USCIS at the address provided below OR **may be submitted electronically by using ELIS, the USCIS Electronic Immigration System**. If you are interested in applying online using ELIS, go to <http://www.uscis.gov> and click on the ELIS icon on the right side of the page to view more detailed instructions. In ELIS, you must create an online profile with USCIS and upload all documents needed to complete the application. Whether mailed to USCIS or submitted online through ELIS, the application MUST include:

- _____ 1. **Photocopy of the FIU I-20** (indicating a change of status is being requested)
- _____ 2. **Proof of Funds** as specified on page 1
- _____ 3. **Form I-539: Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status** – If mailing the application, download the form by visiting the USCIS website at <http://www.uscis.gov>. Click on "Forms" and find Form I-539 by scrolling down the page. You should type all the information on the form (NOTE: under Part 3, in answer to question 1, indicate "D/S"), print it out, and sign where stated.
- _____ 4. **Application Cover Letter** - You must address this letter to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and **in it**, you must include at least the following:
 - _____ a. Explain clearly why you are choosing to apply for a change of status in the U.S. instead of travelling abroad to obtain an F-1 visa from a U.S. Consulate
 - _____ b. Provide details of your most recent entry into the U.S. (i.e. date, place, visa status)
 - _____ c. Explain your reasons for application to FIU and related details (i.e. date of application, date of acceptance to FIU, date I-20 was issued)
- _____ 5. **\$370 Application Fee** – If mailing the application, prepare a personal check or money order payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security." This is a NON-REFUNDABLE fee.
- _____ 6. **Photocopies of Immigration Documents:** passport identification page and expiration/validity page, entry visa in passport, Form I-94 (front and back sides of your I-94 card, if you have one, or a printout of your I-94 record at www.cbp.gov/i94 if your record is online). NOTE: Dependent visa holders applying for a change of status to F-1 should also include in their application photocopies of the above documents for the principal visa holder (their parent or spouse). Applicants with dependents should provide photocopies of the above documents for their dependents (spouse and children) if they are applying for a change of status to F-2.
- _____ 7. **SEVIS I-901 Fee Receipt** – The SEVIS Fee must be paid after the I-20 is issued but before submitting the change of status application. The fee may be paid online at www.fmjfee.com. Print your receipt after paying the I-901 fee and enclose a **copy of the receipt** with your change of status application.

If sending your application by mail, ISSS recommends using Certified Mail/Return Receipt or Express Mail at a U.S. Post Office. Mail the application to:

USCIS
P.O. Box 660166
Dallas, TX 75266

IMPORTANT REMINDERS:

- If you are receiving a graduate assistantship, you will NOT be able to begin work until you have received an Approval Notice from USCIS.
- If you are currently in the U.S. on a B-2 (tourist) visa or F-2 (dependent) you are prohibited by USCIS to enroll in classes until your change of status to F-1 is approved.
- If you entered the U.S. on a "Visa Waiver" (a "W-T" is stamped on your green Form I-94), YOU CANNOT APPLY FOR A CHANGE OF STATUS. You MUST travel to your home country, apply for an F-1 visa at a U.S. Consulate, and make an entry into the U.S. in F-1 status.