

## Change of Status

If your primary purpose for being in the United States has changed, you may need to change your immigration status or depart the U.S. by the end date of your current program. Applying for a change of status can be a complicated procedure. The steps outlined below may help to guide you through the process, but the change of status application is your application, signed by you. You may wish to consult an immigration attorney to assist you. Most non-immigrants can change their immigration status in two ways:

1. Apply to the United States Citizenship & Immigrations Service (USCIS) for a change of status within the United States.
2. Travel out of the U.S. and re-enter in the new visa status – you may need to return to your country of citizenship or legal permanent residence where you can apply for a new visa at a U.S. consulate or embassy.

Please be aware that if you have both a student and a tourist visa in your passport, you are not automatically able to transfer from one status to another. You need to formally apply to change your status with USCIS before your grace period or Form I-94 expires.

### Paying the SEVIS Fee

Payment of a SEVIS fee is required for individuals applying for an F-1/J-1 visa to begin a program, and for individuals currently in the United States applying for a change of status to F-1/J-1. This fee must be paid prior to applying for a visa and prior to submitting a change of status application. The SEVIS fee is not refundable. Once you have received your I-20 from Minneapolis College, you must pay the I-901 fee online at [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com).

### Change of Status within the United States

Individuals in the U.S. may wish to change their status without departure from the U.S. Nonimmigrants in C, D, K, or M status, J-1 visa holders who are subject to the two-year home country requirement, or those who entered the United States under the Visa Waiver Program cannot change to F-1 status from within the U. S. Full-time students who enter the U.S. with a tourist visa may not begin studies until USCIS has approved their change of status to F-1 status.

*If you change your immigration status while in the U.S., the next time you leave the U.S. you will need to apply for a visa to re-enter in your new status.*

### Applying while remaining in the U.S.

To apply for a change of status from any non-immigrant status to F-1 from within the United States, you will need to submit the documents listed below to USCIS (Check the box next to the item when completed):

\_\_\_\_\_ Check or money order for \$455 (made out to U.S. Department of Homeland Security)

\_\_\_\_\_ Cover letter written by you explaining why you wish to apply for a change of status, why you did not initially enter the U.S. in the appropriate status, why you are now requesting the change of status, and why your goals/intentions changed after arriving in the U.S. You should also demonstrate strong ties to your home country to show that you do not intend to immigrate to the U.S.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Original Form I-20 from Minneapolis College
- \_\_\_\_\_ Copy of automated Form I-94
- \_\_\_\_\_ Proof of SEVIS Fee payment (payable at [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com))
- \_\_\_\_\_ Proof of financial support (bank/sponsor documentation)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Photocopy of your previous visa or notice of immigration status
- \_\_\_\_\_ Photocopy of the page in passport which indicates its validity for at least six months into the future & photo page
- \_\_\_\_\_ Any other documentation indicating you have maintained your current immigration status

**Additional Criteria for Specific Non-Immigrant Visa Categories**

Individuals in certain immigration categories will need to supply additional documentation with the change of status application and/or meet certain eligibility criteria. Please consult with your International Admissions Advisor with any questions about documents or eligibility requirements.

**Changing from H-1 or H-4**

In addition to the items in the section above, applicants should include (Check the box next to the item once completed):

- \_\_\_\_\_ Copies of all previously issued Forms I-797 showing H status
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evidence that the individual has maintained valid H status e.g. a letter from the H-1 employer confirming current employment and 2-3 most recent pay stubs
- \_\_\_\_\_ For H-4: Copies of spouse's or parent's H-1 immigration documents: passport, copy of automated Form I-94, Forms I-797, and 2-3 recent pay stubs
- \_\_\_\_\_ Once the change of status to F-1 or J-1 student is effective, the individual must cease work for the H-1 employer

**It is permissible to begin study while the change of status application is pending.**

**Changing from J-1 or J-2**

In addition to the items in the section above, applicants should include (Check the box next to the item once completed):

- \_\_\_\_\_ Copies of all previously issued Forms DS-2019
- \_\_\_\_\_ For J-2: Copies of spouse's or parent's J-1 immigration documents: Forms DS-2019, passport information page, visa stamp page and copy of automated Form I-94

**It is permissible to begin studying part-time while the change of status application is pending.**

Changing from F-2

In addition to the items in the section above, applicants should include (Check the circle next to the item once completed):

\_\_\_\_\_ Copies of all previously issued F-2 Forms I-20

\_\_\_\_\_ Copies of spouse's or parent's F-1 immigration documents: Forms I-20, Passport information page, visa stamp page and copy of automated Form I-94. If the spouse or parent is on post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT), the application should also include a copy of the spouse's or parent's Employment Authorization Document

**Part time study (no more than 11 credits per semester) on the F2 visa is permitted.**

Changing from B-1 or B-2

Applications for change of status from B-1 or B-2 to F-1 made by persons who have either already applied to US schools from abroad or who apply for a change of status shortly after entry to the U.S. are routinely denied. However, if the B-2 visa is marked "prospective student," the change of status may be approved. Please note: The F-1 status must be approved before beginning your studies.

**ONLINE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

Once all documents have been gathered in electronic format, please create an account with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Visit [USCIS](https://uscis.gov) to sign up for an account. Once you have created your account, please click on the option to file a form. Find I-539 in the options.

If you would like to get a preview of the entire application before starting the online application, please view the [i-539 Form](#) and scroll down to find the Form and Document Downloads section. There is a pdf of the form and instructions from USCIS. Some folks like to print a copy of the pdf form so they can fill out the online version quickly and easily.

Your obligations while a change of status is being adjudicated are as follows:

1. Provide Minneapolis College International Student Services with any documents you receive from USCIS, including the notice of receipt of your pending application (I-797) and notice of approval of your change of status when it has been adjudicated.
2. Report any change of address within 10 days to USCIS via the change of address form.

It can take from 3-5 months to process a change of status application. If your application is approved, you will receive a Form I-797 which will note the approved change of status. You will also receive a Form I-94 located in the bottom left corner of the of the I-797 approval notice.

Please email good scans or photos of these documents to [iss@minneapolis.edu](mailto:iss@minneapolis.edu) or bring them in to the Admissions Office (T.2800) to be scanned.

If your application is denied, you will be required by law to leave the U.S. within 15 days of receiving notice of the denial.

### Change of Status by Travel

If you decide to change your status by traveling, you must leave the United States by the date your current status expires. You can re-enter the U.S. with new immigration documentation (i.e. Form I-20) once you have paid the SEVIS fee and obtained the F-1 visa from the U.S. consulate in your home country. Upon re-entry you will be in your new status. You will not be allowed to re-enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the start date on your immigration document (I-20 form). Please remember that a change of status by travel usually requires a visit to the U.S. consulate or embassy to obtain a new visa. Please visit [Minneapolis College's International Student page](#) and click on New Student to view the admissions requirements for applicants applying for the F-1 visa from outside the U.S. Please also view the admissions deadlines for New Students on that page. If you have any questions about your change of status process, please contact the Minneapolis College International Student Advisor at [iss@minneapolis.edu](mailto:iss@minneapolis.edu).