

How to Change Your Status to F-1

If you are currently in the United States under a different non-immigrant status (except C, D, K, or M, and in some cases J) and have maintained lawful status, you may apply to change your status to F-1. **Note: Premium processing (Form I-901) is mandatory to complete status changes through the IEC.**

There are two primary methods to obtain F-1 status:

1. **Leave the US and Apply for an F-1 Visa from Your Home Country**
2. **Apply to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for a Change of Status**

Option 1: Leave the US, Then Return Under F-1 Status

Steps to Follow:

1. **Receive an Acceptance Letter and F-1 I-20 from the Intensive English Center (IEC)**
2. **Return to Your Home Country**
3. **Pay the [SEVIS I-901 fee](#).**
4. **[Apply for an F-1 Visa](#) at Your Home Country's US Embassy/Consulate**
 - a. Complete the [DS-160 form](#) online and schedule a visa interview at your home country's US embassy or consulate.
 - b. Prepare the necessary documentation, including your I-20, SEVIS I-901 fee payment receipt, acceptance letter, financial documentation, and passport.
5. **Re-enter the US in F-1 Status**

Option 2: Stay in the US and Premium Processing

1. **Receive an Acceptance Letter and F-1 I-20 from the Intensive English Center (IEC)**
2. **Visit the USCIS website and complete Form I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status.**
 - Visit the USCIS website and complete [Form I-539](#), Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status. **You can complete the form online through the USCIS Online Account System or by mail.**
 - Include the required documentation, such as:
 - Your I-20 form
 - SEVIS I-901 fee payment receipt
 - Financial documentation
 - Copies of your current visa and I-94 form

- A letter explaining your reasons for changing status and your intent to return home after completing your studies

3. Submit Your Application

- If filing online, upload your completed Form I-539 and supporting documents through the USCIS Online Account System.
- Pay the required application fee online.

4. Premium Processing

- USCIS offers premium processing for Form I-539, which expedites the processing time for an additional fee.
- To request premium processing, file [Form I-907](#), Request for Premium Processing Service, and Form I-539.
- Pay the additional premium processing fee.
- Note: Premium processing guarantees a response within 15 calendar days.

5. Approval and Change of Status

- a. If approved, you will receive a Form I-797 Notice of Action indicating the change to F-1 status.
- b. Follow all regulations to ensure you maintain your F-1 status, including full-time enrollment and reporting changes to your school's Designated School Official (DSO).

Important Tips

- **Maintain Lawful Status:** Ensure you maintain your current lawful status throughout the application process.
- **Start Early:** Begin the process as soon as you receive your I-20 to allow ample time for processing.
- **Seek Assistance:** For guidance and support throughout the process, contact the DSO at the IEC (Office: 615-963-2183)