



**THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS**  
**International Student Services Office**

**Change of Status to F-1**

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**For Assistance**

If after reading this guide you wish to speak with an advisor, call 972-883-4189 to schedule an appointment. (Walk-in advising is not suitable for this topic.) You can also file through an immigration attorney.

*This guide is provided by the UT Dallas International Student Services Office to prospective and current UT Dallas students considering a change of visa status. The information is not intended as legal advice. For legal issues, please consult an immigration attorney.*

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### ELIGIBILITY

With certain exceptions, an alien already in the United States in valid non-immigrant status can apply for a change to F-1 status. The basic eligibility requirements are:

- Unexpired non-immigrant status in any category except C, D, K, M, WT, WB, or J subject to the 212(e) foreign residency requirement
- Admission to an academic program that:
  - Culminates in a degree (e.g. bachelor's, master's, doctorate)
  - Meets immigration requirements for full-time enrollment.\*
- Unmarried dependents must apply for the change of status before their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday

\* Not all UT Dallas academic programs meet the full-time enrollment requirement. See page 3 for details.

### PROCESS OVERVIEW

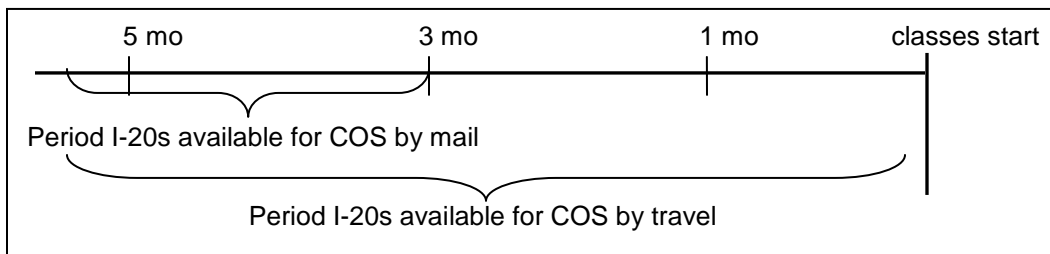
There are two ways to change status:

1. Depart the U.S. and apply in person at a U.S. consulate
2. Remain in the U.S. and apply by mail to USCIS

In both methods you will:

- Submit documents to the ISSO
- Obtain a Form I-20
- Provide that I-20 plus supplemental documents to a U.S. government office
- If approved, obtain documentation of your change to F-1 status

NOTE: To coordinate with USCIS processing times, requests for USCIS I-20s must be submitted at least 3 months prior to the semester start date.



### F-1 REQUIREMENTS

If approved for a change to F-1 status, you will be required to meet the following requirements.

### ORIENTATION

Students changing their status to F-1 are required to attend international student orientation and cannot register for classes until this requirement is met. The orientation schedule is located on the ISSO website at <http://www.utdallas.edu/student/international/new/orientation.html>.

## ENROLLMENT

There are a number of federal requirements for F-1 students regarding enrollment. The basic requirements are:

- Full-time enrollment each fall and spring semester, full-time enrollment in summer if it is the first semester in a new program
  - Only 3 hours of online courses can count toward the full-time requirement
  - All courses must apply to the degree listed on the I-20
  - At least one course each semester must extend through the full session. You cannot take all your courses in one 8-week session
- If it is your last semester and you lack only one class to complete your degree, that course cannot be taken online.
- More information about full-time enrollment requirements is located on the ISSO website at <http://www.utdallas.edu/student/international/current/>.

\* Not all UT Dallas academic programs meet the full-time enrollment requirement. For questions about available academic programs and if they meet full-time requirements, contact your academic advisor.

## HEALTH INSURANCE

The University of Texas System requires all international students to maintain medical and repatriation insurance each semester of enrollment. You are considered an international student unless you are a: U.S. citizen, Permanent Resident (PR card required), Conditional Resident, Temporary Protected Status, Refugee, Asylee, Public Interest Parolee, Temporary Residence-Amnesty or undocumented alien.

- To assist students in meeting this requirement, UT Dallas provides insurance that meets the UT System requirements.
- A fee for this insurance is assessed each semester of enrollment.
- Students with comparable insurance may apply for a fee waiver through the Student Health Center during designated waiver periods.
- Additional information about health insurance requirements and the waiver procedure can be reviewed at <http://www.utdallas.edu/insurance/>.

## TUITION RATES

Changing visa categories could affect your tuition rate. This will be determined by the Registrar's Office. Residency information is available at <http://www.utdallas.edu/residency/>.

## F-1 EMPLOYMENT

F-1 visa benefits include work and training authorizations. It is not legal to begin employment until you receive F-1 approval, as demonstrated by an F-1 I-94.

### ***On-Campus***

F-1 students are eligible for part-time work (up to 20 hours per week), on-campus employment during spring and fall semesters and full-time (20 hours or more per week) during official school breaks. On-campus employment does not have to be in the student's field of study. On-campus employment authorization begins upon receipt of written approval of the change to F-1 status.

### ***Off-Campus***

Students who have been full-time enrolled for at least one academic year (fall/spring or spring/fall) and who are currently in F-1 status are eligible to apply for the following work authorizations. Full-time enrollment in consecutive semesters in a visa type other than F-1 can count towards eligibility:

- Economic Hardship
- Curricular Practical Training
- Optional Practical Training

For more information regarding F-1 employment, please see the ISSO website at: <http://www.utdallas.edu/student/international/current/employment.html>.

# APPLYING FOR F-1 STATUS

## OUTSIDE THE U.S.

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Faster process</li><li>• Can make change closer to semester start</li><li>• Provides F-1 visa for future travel</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Denial could prevent return to U.S.</li><li>• Travel costs</li><li>• Cannot re-enter U.S. more than 30 days before I-20 start date</li><li>• More emphasis on overcoming immigrant intent</li></ul>

### ***Application Process***

1. Review the ISSO Change of Status Guide and list any questions you may have.
2. Schedule an appointment with an international student advisor to review the process.
3. Verify in Galaxy that you have a correct local (home) and foreign (SEVIS) address listed.
  - Add or correct the local address, if needed.
  - Add or correct the foreign address, if needed. The system may not allow you access to the address fields. If so, submit a request to the Registrar's office.
4. Submit all required documents to the ISSO.
5. The ISSO issues a Form I-20 within 5 business days.
6. Return to the ISSO to pick up the Form I-20.
7. Pay the I-901 SEVIS Fee and print a receipt.
8. Schedule a visa appointment at a U.S. consulate or embassy.\*
9. Depart the U.S. and attend your visa appointment.
10. Within 10 days of re-entering the U.S., provide the ISSO with a copy of your stamped I-20, passport, F-1 visa and I-94.
11. ISSO staff activates the new F-1 record.

\*If you are not a citizen of Canada or Mexico, changing status in those countries can be problematic. Some consulates do not process visas for Third Country Nationals (TCNs), security checks can cause delays and you could be refused re-entry to the U.S. if your status change is denied.

### ***Submit to ISSO (Copies acceptable, submitted documents will not be returned)***

- Change of Status Request Form
- Copy of passport ID page
- UT Dallas Financial Affidavit
- Proof of funding (financial documents not more than six months old)
- Dependent information, if any

### ***When to apply***

Consider the following in order to choose your application dates:

- You can apply several months before the targeted semester.
- You must complete the process prior to the first day of classes of the targeted semester.
- To maintain F-1 status you must be full-time enrolled in the first semester you are F-1, even if that semester is summer.
- The earliest date you can enter the U.S. on the new status is 30 days before the program start date, the latest date is the I-20 start date.
- Access to visa appointments can affect your plans. You can get time estimates by going to the website of the consulate you plan to use.
- If you are B-1/B-2 or F-2, you cannot legally enroll until the change to F-1 is complete.
- Unmarried dependents must apply for the change of status before their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

## INSIDE THE U.S.

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allows you to remain in the U.S. while application is pending</li><li>• Allows you to continue classes while application is pending (not B-1/B-2s or F-2s)</li><li>• No travel costs</li><li>• Allows you to file individually or through an immigration attorney</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• USCIS processing takes 3-5 months</li><li>• International travel not allowed while application is pending</li><li>• F-1 visa not included</li></ul>

### ***Application Process***

1. Review the ISSO Change of Status Guide and list any questions you may have.
2. Schedule an appointment to review the process with an international student advisor.
3. Verify in Galaxy that you have a correct local (home) and foreign (SEVIS) address listed.
  - Add or correct the local address, if needed.
  - Add or correct the foreign address, if needed. The system may not allow you access to the address fields. If so, submit a request to the Registrar's office.
4. Submit all required documents to the ISSO.
5. The ISSO issues a Form I-20 within 5 business days.
6. Return to the ISSO to pick up the I-20 and mailing instructions.
7. Pay the I-901 SEVIS fee and print a receipt.
8. Assemble and mail the application to USCIS.
9. USCIS mails a receipt in 2-4 weeks.
10. If approved, USCIS mails a new I-94 and returns the I-20.

### ***Submit to ISSO (Copies acceptable, submitted documents will not be returned)***

- Change of Status Request Form
- Copy of passport ID page
- UT Dallas Financial Affidavit
- Proof of funding \*

\* USCIS has provided the following information regarding financial documentation:

- Funds must be liquid assets. Investment accounts are not acceptable.
- Bank statements, even if obtained electronically, are preferred over Internet printouts.
- Bank statements from your home country are acceptable if translated into English.
- If funds are not in U.S. dollars, include an Internet printout of the exchange value in U.S. dollars.

### ***When to apply***

You will want to consider the following when choosing your application dates:

- **An "Inside the U.S." Form I-20 can be obtained no later than three months before the first day of class of the targeted semester and must be sent to USCIS within 30 days of issuance.**
- There is a high risk for denial if your previous status expires more than 30 days before the start date of the requested status (first class day).
- There is a high risk for denial if a change of status is filed immediately after arriving in the U.S. on a B-1/B-2 visa.
- Unmarried dependents must apply for the change of status before their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

### ***Documents to assemble for mailing – All applicants***

- Check or money order for \$290 made out to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security"
- Form I-539
- Form I-20
- UT Dallas financial affidavit

- Proof of funding
- Copy of passport
- Copy of visa
- Copy of I-94
- Additional documents, as needed (see below)

## ***Additional documents to assemble for mailing - Specific visa types***

### **B-1/B-2**

- Letter explaining why you changed your intent from visitor to student

### **H-1 or L-1**

- Proof of status (Copies of last two pay stubs; employment verification letter on company letterhead)

### **All the following need:**

- Copy of proof of relationship to primary visa holder (Spouse/copy of marriage certificate; Child/copy of birth certificate or equivalent) *plus*

### **F-2**

- Proof of F-1 spouse/parent's status (Copies of I-94, visa, passport, I-20, status verification letter, transcripts)

### **H-4**

- Proof of H-1 spouse/parent's status (Copies of I-94, visa, passport, last two pay stubs, employment verification letter on company letterhead)

### **E-1/E-2**

- Proof of E-1/E-2's status (Copies of I-94, visa, passport, articles of incorporation, business account bank statement)

### **J-2**

- Proof of J-1 spouse/parent's status (Copies of I-94, visa, passport, DS-2019, status verification letter, transcripts)
- Proof of no residence requirement (If visa shows individual is subject to 212(e) residence requirement, include copy of visa waiver)

### **L-2**

- Proof of L-1's status (Copies of I-94, visa, passport, last two pay stubs, employment verification letter on company letterhead)

## **VISA SPECIFIC ISSUES**

### **B-1/B-2**

- It is a violation of your B-1/B-2 status to engage in any type of employment prior to F-1 approval
- It is a violation of your B-1/B-2 status to enroll in credit bearing, degree seeking courses prior to F-1 approval.
- There is a high risk of denial if you apply for a change of status less than 60 days after entering the U.S.

### **F-2**

- It is a violation of your F-2 status to engage in any type of employment prior to F-1 approval
- It is a violation of your F-2 status to enroll in credit bearing, degree seeking courses prior to F-1 approval.
- If your F-1 spouse or parent is your financial sponsor, it is recommended you show evidence of sufficient funds to support two F-1 statuses (your spouse's or parent's F-1 and your F-1) and that your name also appears on the bank statement.

### **H-4**

- It is a violation of your H-4 status to engage in any type of employment prior to F-1 approval.

### **H-1B and L-1s**

- Your H-1/L-1 status ends immediately upon termination of your employment. There is no grace period.

- To avoid a gap in status, it is safest to have the USCIS receipt before terminating employment.
- If you are already unemployed it will be up to the USCIS adjudicator to determine if you are eligible for a change of status. The longer the gap in employment, the higher the risk of denial..

## DEFERRALS

### Applications inside the U.S.

- F-2 and B-1/B-2 – Federal regulations allow you to register for classes after receiving F-1 approval. If late registration has ended prior to receiving approval, you will need to defer admission to the next semester.
- H-4, E-3, etc. - If you are currently in a study-allowed status you may enroll prior to approval but you cannot work. If your application is not approved by the first day of classes, your I-20 start date will be moved one month forward to keep your application active.

### Applications outside the U.S.

- If you attempt to enter the U.S. after the program start date listed on your I-20, port of entry officials may deny entry. If you experience a major delay while outside the U.S. you will need to defer UTD admission to a later semester.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Can I apply for a Change of Status to F-1 in the U.S. while I am Pending Permanent Residency?

Yes, if you are in a non-immigrant visa category that is allowed to change to F-1 you may apply for a change of status to F-1 while you are pending permanent residency. This may impact your permanent residency application. Consult an immigration attorney to make this determination.

### Can I apply for a change of status to F-1 in the U.S. while I am pending an extension of my current status?

Yes, you can apply for a change of status to F-1 while you are currently pending an extension of your current status. In this case, include a copy of your I-797 extension receipt along with your application. The USCIS adjudicator will decide how this affects your F-1 application.

### What happens if my Change of Status is Denied?

If you are changing status by travel, you will not be issued an F-1 visa. If the consulate officer does not cancel your current visa and it is unexpired you may return to the U.S. in your present status.

If you are changing status by submitting an application to USCIS, a denial notice will be sent. If you want to appeal the decision you can file a Motion to Reconsider with the help of an immigration attorney. Unless otherwise indicated by the adjudicator, your current status remains valid if it has not expired.

## ISSO CONTACT INFO

- Website: <http://www.utdallas.edu/student/international/>
- Advising
  - E-mail ([ISSOcurrent@utdallas.edu](mailto:ISSOcurrent@utdallas.edu))
  - Appointment (call 972-883-4189)
  - Walk-in basis (Mon-Thu 10:30-5:00, Fri 10:30-4:00)