

*This guide is provided by the UT Dallas International Student Services Office to prospective/current UT Dallas students considering applying for a Change of Status to F-1. The information is not intended as legal advice. For legal issues, please consult an immigration attorney.*

## OPTIONS FOR CHANGING YOUR STATUS TO F-1

### **Changing to F-1 outside the U.S. – Application to USCIS not needed**

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faster processing</li> <li>• Can make changes closer to semester start date</li> <li>• Provides F-1 visa stamp on the passport for future travel</li> <li>• No filing fee payment required by U.S. Department of Homeland Security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel costs</li> <li>• Security checks can cause delays and there is more emphasis on overcoming immigrant intent</li> <li>• Denial could prevent return to the U.S.</li> <li>• Cannot re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status more than 30 days prior to the program start date</li> </ul>

- If you are not a citizen of Canada or Mexico, changing status in these countries can be problematic. Some consulates do not process visas for Third Country Nationals (TCNs).
- Time for visa appointments vary from country to country. Check the U.S. Consulate website at <https://www.usembassy.gov>

### **Changing to F-1 inside the U.S. – Application to USCIS needed**

PROS	CONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No travel costs</li> <li>• File individually or through an immigration attorney</li> </ul> <p><i>While the application is pending, it allows you to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remain in the U.S.</li> <li>• Continue classes if your current status allows it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• USCIS processing times vary.</li> <li>• Filing fee payment required by U.S. Department of Homeland Security</li> <li>• Biometrics services fee and appointment required</li> <li>• International travel may cancel the application if it is still pending</li> <li>• An F-1 visa will not be stamped on the passport. You will have to apply for one the next time you depart the U.S., before returning in F-1 status</li> <li>• You need to have an underlying valid immigration status at the time your change of status to F-1 comes into effect</li> </ul>

## STEPS TO APPLY FOR CHANGE OF STATUS TO F-1

### **STEP 1. Verify your eligibility**

To be eligible for a change of status to F-1, you must:

- Be admitted to a degree-seeking program at UT Dallas that allows you to maintain full-time enrollment. See specific details on full-time enrollment at [www.utdallas.edu/isso/enroll-req](http://www.utdallas.edu/isso/enroll-req)
- Be in a valid non-immigrant status
- Hold a non-immigrant status other than C, D, K, M, WT/WB visitor, or 212(e) subject J-1.
- Be prepared to be full-time enrolled at UT Dallas for each fall and spring semester while you are in F-1 status. If summer will be your first semester in F-1 status, then you will be required to enroll full-time during summer.

**STEP 2. Decide.**

- **Whether you should apply for a Change of Status to F-1:**
  - Will you be able to meet the full-time enrollment requirement?
  - Will you be able to pay non-resident tuition rates if required?
  - Will you be able to maintain the F-1 status requirements?
  - Will this application conflict with your current immigration status or any pending applications with USCIS?
  
- **When you should apply for a Change of Status to F-1:**
  - Which semester do you want to be in F-1 status?
  - If approved, will you be eligible to apply for CPT or OPT?
  - How long is the current USCIS Processing Time for this application?
    - See <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/> for USCIS processing times.
  
- **Things to consider when you apply for a Change of Status to F-1:**
  - Do I want to stay in the U.S. while the application is pending?
  - How soon do I need my status to be changed to F-1?
  - Can I afford the cost of a change of status in the U.S. or by travel?
  - What are the implications if my change of status is denied in the U.S.?
  - What are the implications if my F-1 visa is denied abroad?

**STEP 3. Obtain the UT Dallas I-20 and apply for F-1 status:**

*Prior to the start date of the semester you intend to assume F-1 status, obtain a Form I-20. At least 3-5 months prior is recommended.*

- Determine if you will apply for change of status to F-1 in the U.S. or outside the U.S. at a U.S. consulate.
- Obtain the UT Dallas I-20. See the ISSO webpage for current processing times - <https://www.utdallas.edu/isso/processing-times/>.
  - Required Documents
    - Passport ID page for you (and your dependents, if you will sponsor a spouse or children for an F-2 visa).
    - Most recent I-94 or I-797A approval notice, confirming your current status.
    - Financial Affidavit for F-1 Students. Download at <http://www.utdallas.edu/isso/forms>.
    - Supplemental funding documents. See details at <http://www.utdallas.edu/isso/i20-docs>.
  - Submit through iComet Portal
    - Log into <https://icomet.utdallas.edu> using your NetID and password
    - Click on “F-1 Current Students” on the left hand side.
    - Click on “Change of Status”
    - Complete all three eForms. Make sure to click “submit” at the bottom of the screen for each form.
- If applying in the U.S., assemble your application to USCIS. A list of necessary documents for your application will be attached to the I-20. **Submit your request for Change of Status to USCIS prior to the start date of the semester you intend to assume F-1 status.**
- If applying at a U.S. consulate abroad, visit the ISSO website for visa application information: <https://www.utdallas.edu/isso/f1-apply/>.
- Attend International Orientation, if you have not already. An International Orientation registration hold will be placed on your record when your change of status I-20 is issued, if you have not attended previously. You must attend International Orientation before this hold will be removed. Register online for orientation at: <http://www.utdallas.edu/isso/orientation>.

**STEP 4: Activate your SEVIS record after your F-1 status is approved:**

- Enroll full-time to meet enrollment requirements: <http://www.utdallas.edu/isso/enroll-req>.
- Submit copies of your F-1 immigration documents through the iComet Portal.
  - Log into <https://icomet.utdallas.edu> with your NetID and password.
  - Click on “Prospective students.”
  - Click on “Post-Arrival: Immigration Document Verification (IDV) Upload.”
  - Complete the eForm and upload your documents.

## VISA SPECIFIC ISSUES

## B-1/B-2

- This visa type does not allow employment or enrollment in credit bearing, degree-seeking courses. It is a violation to do so, and can negatively impact your application change status to F-1.
- There is a high risk of denial if you apply for a change of status less than 60 days after entering the U.S.
- A separate application is required if your current status will expire more than 30 days before the initial F-1 program start date or if your F-1 program start date is deferred to the following academic term because your application is still pending with USCIS.

## F-2

- This visa type does not allow employment or full-time enrollment in credit bearing, degree-seeking courses. However, it allows less than full-time enrollment in credit bearing, degree-seeking courses. It is a violation to enroll full-time and can negatively impact your application to change status to F-1.
- 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). It is also recommended that your name appear on the bank statement.

## H-4, E-3, etc.

- This visa type does not allow employment. It is a violation to engage in any type of employment, and can negatively impact your application for change of status to F-1. This visa type does allow enrollment in credit bearing, degree-seeking courses.

## H-1B and L-1

- 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.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**I am pending permanent residency. Can I apply for a change of status to f-1 in the U.S.?**

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.

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

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 outside the U.S. and your change of status is denied, you will not be issued an F-1 visa. If the consulate officer does not cancel your current visa and it is unexpired then 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

**I applied inside the U.S. and it was approved after the program start date. Do I need a new i-20?**

Verify the date on which your F-1 status starts. It will be noted in the approval receipt notice in the VALID FROM field. If your F-1 status started after the program start date on your I-20, request an updated UT Dallas I-20 to the ISSO at [ISSOCurrent@utdallas.edu](mailto:ISSOCurrent@utdallas.edu).

**I applied outside the U.S. and it was approved, when can I enter the U.S.?**

You cannot enter earlier than 30 days prior to the program start date. You cannot enter after the program start date.

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

**My application was approved, when can I enroll in classes?**

Federal regulations allow you to enroll for classes and work on-campus after receiving F-1 approval.

- B-1/B-2 – If late registration has ended prior to receiving approval, you will need to defer admission to the next semester.
- F-2 – If your application is approved prior to the program start date, you should register full-time for that semester. If it is not approved by the program start date, you should register less than full-time for that semester and register full-time in the semester following your change of status approval.
- H-4, E-3, etc. – If you are currently in a study-allowed status you may enroll prior to approval.
- If approved, you may work on campus up to 30 days prior to your program start date. You may begin CPT on your program start date.

**My application was approved, when can I work?**

F-1 students have the following employment and practical training benefits. Remember, you are not eligible for these benefits until your F-1 status is approved.

- On-Campus employment eligibility: <http://www.utdallas.edu/isso/on-campus>
- Practical training eligibility: <http://www.utdallas.edu/isso/off-campus>

**ISSO CONTACT INFORMATION**

The ISSO provides advising services in-person, over the phone, and by email. For current advising times and services officer, please see the ISSO webpage: <https://www.utdallas.edu/ic/issoadvising/>