

## Changing Status to F-1/J-1 Student via USCIS

This checklist may assist students who wish to remain in the US and submit a Change of Status (COS) change of visa status to US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Students wishing to change from a different visa category to F-1 or J-1 student must consult with a BIO advisor before submitting the request.

NOTE: THESE INSTRUCTIONS DO NOT CONSTITUTE LEGAL ADVICE. ALL APPLICANTS SHOULD CAREFULLY REVIEW THE INSTRUCTIONS AVAILABLE ON THE USCIS WEBSITE <https://www.uscis.gov/i-539> AND CONSULT A QUALIFIED IMMIGRATION ATTORNEY WITH ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THE COS PROCESS.

### Applying for your change of status:

1. **Request, obtain and Sign Form(s) I-20 or DS-2019:** See here for how to request your F-1 I-20 or J-1 DS-2019 form: <https://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/students/nif>
2. **Pay the I-901 SEVIS Fee:** See instructions at [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com) Print the payment receipt.
3. **You can either E-FILE or MAIL your application to USCIS. E-Filing STRONGLY recommended! (Choose one option only.)**  
Keep copies of the entire packet for your records. <https://www.uscis.gov/file-online>

Form & Fee Updates	USCIS may update the I-539 form and fee. If mailing your application rather than e-filing, pay attention when you are mailing your application to make sure you are paying <i>exactly</i> the correct fee and use <i>exactly</i> the correct edition of the I-539 form. (E-filed applications automatically use the correct online form and fee.)
Fee Payment	<b>E-File:</b> E-filed applications automatically use the correct online form and fee. <b>Mail:</b> Please check the USCIS I-539 web site ( <a href="http://www.uscis.gov/i-539">www.uscis.gov/i-539</a> ) If you pay the wrong fee or use the wrong form, your application will be denied!
Cover Letter	Write a simple statement about the purpose of the application. Include a list of all documents that are included in the application packet.
Form I-539, Required Form I-539A, Required for co-applicants	<b>E-FILE:</b> E-filed applications automatically calculate the correct online form and fee <b>MAIL:</b> Be sure to check the I-539 website ON THE DATE OF MAILING to be sure you are using the <u>correct form edition</u> , as previous versions of the form will not be accepted. Review all instructions carefully. <a href="http://www.uscis.gov/i-539">www.uscis.gov/i-539</a> .  * Every co-applicant (F-2/J-2 dependent spouse or F-2/J-2 child) included on the primary applicant's Form I-539 must complete and sign (in black ink) a separate Form I-539A. Parents or guardians may sign on behalf of children under 14 or any co-applicant who is not mentally competent to sign.
Form G-1145 (Mail only)	If filing by Mail: Use this form to request a text message and/or email when USCIS accepts your application/petition. <a href="https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145">https://www.uscis.gov/g-1145</a>
I-901 SEVIS Fee Payment Receipt	Pay the I-901 SEVIS Fee and include a copy of the receipt: <a href="http://www.fmjfee.com">www.fmjfee.com</a>
Form I-20 or DS-2019 certificate of eligibility for F-1 or J-1 status (copy)	Sign and keep your original Form I-20 or DS-2019. Submit a copy of the signed Form I-20 or DS-2019 for yourself and any F/J dependents
I-94 Record	Print out your electronic I-94 record at <a href="https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94">https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94</a> . If you have a paper I-94 card, send copy of ( <b>both sides</b> ) of the Form I-94
Passport (copy)	Include a copy of the passport identity page
Visa stamp (copy)	If applicable.
Copy of current status verification documents	If your current status requires employment or study, include copies of current employment verification (employment verification letter, pay stubs for 4 months) or enrollment verification for students. <b>**If you are in a Dependent Status</b> (e.g., H-4, E-2, L-2., etc): Also include copies of the <b>"primary status holder"</b> (spouse or parent's) <b>passport biographical page, visa, I-94</b> , as well as any other documents that provide <b>proof of their current status</b> (employment verification letter, pay stubs for 4 months) or enrollment verification for students. Provide <b>proof of the dependent relationship</b> such as a marriage certificate or birth certificate.
F/J-2 documents	<b>** Every co-applicant</b> (dependent spouse or child) included on the primary applicant's Form I-539 must complete and sign a separate Form I-539A Also provide copies of the passport identity page and expiration date, copies of I-94 information (same as above), copies of current status verification documents, translated proof of marriage (if applicable), and translated birth certificate (if applicable). Include a copy of the signed F/J-2 Form I-20 or DS-2019.
Proof of admission or enrollment	For new students, include proof of admission. For currently-enrolled students, include proof of enrollment.
Proof of financial support	Use a current scholarship award letter, bank letter or balance statements from the last four months.
Additional Documents	There may be additional documents required, depending on the status from which you are changing, check with your current visa sponsor if you are unsure what documents verify your current status

**You can either E-FILE or MAIL your application to USCIS or. Choose ONE option only! E-FILING IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED!** Keep photocopies of the entire packet for your records.

**E-File:** See here for more information regarding how to file your I-539 electronically: <https://www.uscis.gov/file-online>

**Mail: Check current mailing address at** <https://www.uscis.gov/i-539>

Note that there are different mailing address for Courier (FedEx, UPS, etc) and for U.S. Postal Service. Make sure that you choose a mailing option that has tracking and guaranteed delivery.

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### **While USCIS Processes your Application:**

1. **You will receive the USCIS I-797c Receipt Notice:** You will receive a receipt notice called the "I-797 Notice of Action" from USCIS. This is an important document; please keep it in a safe place. The notice has a receipt number (beginning with 3 letters) that can be used to track the status of your application online at <http://uscis.gov> NOTE: If you e-file, you will receive your receipt immediately through your online USCIS account.
2. **Email the I-797c Receipt Notice to** [SEVISCoordinator@berkeley.edu](mailto:SEVISCoordinator@berkeley.edu).
3. **Biometrics appointment:** In most cases, after Oct. 1 2023 applicants *will not be scheduled* to attend a biometric services appointment. However, if USCIS determines that biometrics are required, you will receive a notice with information about appearing for their biometric services appointment.
4. **Review iStart101 Modules.** Review the [iStart101 Modules](#) to learn about the rules and responsibilities of your new status. You should have received an email with an invitation to access. You are required to complete the modules within 2-4 weeks.

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### **Maintaining Status during the Change of Status Process:**

- **You are not in your intended F-1/J-1 status until you receive the approval notice from USCIS and note the effective date.** Until your application is approved by USCIS, there may be limitations or requirements regarding employment, enrollment, etc. Please consult a BIO adviser.
- **Respond immediately to BIO requests or inquiries.** BIO may contact you regarding the status of your case, and it is important that you respond in a timely manner and provide all information or documentation needed. We may also provide you with important advice or information about changes to your F-1/J-1 record, so be sure to review any emails carefully.
- **If you decide to travel internationally** during the application process, you **MUST** contact BIO at least two weeks prior to departure. *You will need a new I-20 or DS-2019 for travel.*
- **You and any dependents must actively maintain your current status** and follow all rules and regulations of your current status while waiting for your change to F/J. Talk to a BIO adviser with any questions.
- **You may not be employed/paid** until the change of status is approved unless you have a valid unexpired authorization to work associated with your current status.
  - After the approval effective date, F-1 students may not begin on-campus work until 30 days prior to the I-20 start date. Off-campus authorizations can only be added after the I-20 start date.
  - After the approval effective date, J-1 students may only be authorized for any employment after the DS-2019 start date.
- **For any problems** with your change of status case, please contact BIO. This may include unreceived mail, change of address, Request for Evidence or a Denial Notice.

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### **Approval:**

1. **You will receive the USCIS I-797 Approval Notice, with new I-94.** The normal processing time for change of status cases can be found at the [USCIS Processing Times](#) website . This processing period can change at any time and is not guaranteed.
2. **Complete [Required Arrival Confirmation and U.S. Address Reporting](#):**
  - **Upload the I-797 Approval notice.** We will need it to activate your F/J status.
  - **Update your LOCAL U.S. address and LOCAL phone in Cal Central.** *Temporary or short-term addresses are accepted.* It is important to add/edit the "Local" address and "Local" phone information (BIO does not receive data from other types such as permanent, home, etc).
3. **Contact BIO during drop-in advising hours if you have any questions about your new visa status.**