



University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

Office of International Education
International Student and Scholar Services

CHANGE OF STATUS: B-1/B-2 TOURIST TO F-1 STUDENT

What is a Change of Status?

A change of status is a change in one's primary purpose for being in the U.S. There are two ways to change one's immigration status. One way is to travel back home or outside the U.S., apply for a new visa at a U.S. Consulate and re-enter the U.S. in the new visa status. The other way is to submit a change of status application to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS") while remaining in the U.S. The USCIS reviews applications for changes of status based on the applicant's ability to document and justify a change of intent since his/her arrival in the U.S.

How does the USCIS view changes of status from B-1/B-2 to F-1?

Applications for change of status from B-1/B-2 to F-1 made shortly after arrival arouse suspicion that the individual purposely misrepresented his/her intentions in order to obtain a U.S. visa and enter the U.S. The USCIS routinely denies applications for changes of status for tourists who have already applied to schools in the U.S., who carry school records with them or who enter into contact with American universities before, or shortly after, entry to the U.S.

However, if your B-1/B-2 visa or I-94 card is marked "prospective student" or you spent several months in the U.S. before entering into contact with an American university, the change of status application has a better chance of being approved. To obtain the "prospective student" notation, you must inform the Consular Officer in the U.S. Embassy or Consulate and the Immigration Officer at the U.S. Port-of-Entry of your intentions of becoming a student.

Am I eligible to apply for a change of status from B-1/B-2 to F-1?

To be eligible for a change of status to F-1, you must first have been admitted to a degree program at UB, and have received a "change of status" SEVIS I-20 from the Office of International Admissions.

How do I apply for a change of status from B-1/B-2 to F-1?

FIRST – you must pay the SEVIS fee.

Please see our handout "**The SEVIS Fee Requirement**" before submitting your change of status application. A copy of your **SEVIS fee receipt** verifying that you have paid the SEVIS fee must be included with your change of status application.

Next – submit the following to the USCIS:

- **Application fee of \$290.** This should be a check payable to the "USCIS". Write your 11-digit "admission number" from your I-94 card on the front of the check.
- A **cover letter** from you addressed to the USCIS, requesting a change of status from B-1/B-2 to F-1, and explaining your circumstances. Include why you entered the U.S. as a B-1/B-2 Tourist, why and how your intentions changed after arrival in the U.S. and any other information relevant to your reasons for wanting to study in the U.S.
- **Form I-539:** "Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status" (*please use the fillable form on our website: www.wings.buffalo.edu/intlservices/documents/i-539_expires2012.0229_001.pdf*)
- A copy of your **SEVIS fee receipt** verifying that you have paid the SEVIS fee.
- Your **original SEVIS I-20** from UB. (*Please sign Item #11 on page 1*)
- Photocopies of the **financial documentation** you submitted to UB for your I-20
- Photocopy of the **front and back of your I-94 card** with a legible date stamp
- Photocopy of your **passport** biographic data / picture page
- Photocopy of your **U.S. visa** stamp

We recommend that you schedule an appointment with an International Student Advisor to review your completed application before submitting it to the USCIS.

Where do I send my application?

Mail your completed application to the Dallas Lockbox. We recommend using a reliable, express mail/courier service.

For express courier deliveries (e.g. UPS, Fed Ex) use the following address:

USCIS
ATTN: I-539
2501 S. State Highway 121 Business
Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

For regular U.S. Mail use the following address:

USCIS
P.O. Box 660166
Dallas, TX 75266

Please make a photocopy of your entire application and supporting documents for your files before sending them to the USCIS.

How long will processing at the USCIS take?

Estimated processing time will be from 2 – 6 months. When you receive a response from the USCIS, please report the outcome to the International Student and Scholar Services office. Send or bring a photocopy of your I-20 and I-94 to ISSS, 210 Talbert Hall.

Can I begin attending classes after I've submitted my application to the USCIS and while I'm awaiting a response?

You may not begin attending classes as a B-1/B-2 Tourist. You must wait until you have received approval for the change of status to F-1 student from the USCIS before you register for and attend classes at UB.

11/10