CHANGE OF STATUS:  
F-1 STUDENT TO F-2 DEPENDENT

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 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 status. The other way is to submit a change-of-status application to 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 primary purpose for being in the U.S. since having arrived in the U.S.

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

To be eligible for a change of status to F-2, you must have maintained and currently be in lawful status as a F-1, and have a spouse or parent currently in and maintaining F-1 status.

How do I obtain an F-2 I-20?

The International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) office will issue your F-2 I-20 after you submit the following documents:

- Copies of your current valid immigration documents, including the biographic page of your passport
- Financial documents indicating that you and your spouse/parent have sufficient funds to cover the F-1 student’s study expenses as well as your F-2 living expenses. For more information on acceptable financial documents, visit [www.buffalo.edu/intlservices/documents/FinancialDocumentation-LH.pdf](http://www.buffalo.edu/intlservices/documents/FinancialDocumentation-LH.pdf)
- Address in your home country. **Note**: F-2 is a non-immigrant visa category which means that you and your spouse/parent must intend to return to your home country after completing studies.
- Birth/Marriage certificate (translated into English) proving your relationship to the F-1 student.

**Note**: Your spouse/parent will also receive a new I-20, which will indicate the addition of a dependent.

How do I change my status by traveling?


1. Obtain an F-2 I-20 from ISSS.
2. Prepare additional supporting documentation to be used during the visa interview. For more information on these requirements, visit www.buffalo.edu/intlservices/visa2.html.
3. After receiving your F-2 visa stamp, re-enter the U.S. using the I-20 and F-2 visa stamp. Submit copies of these documents to ISSS upon your arrival.

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

1. Obtain an F-2 I-20 from ISSS.
2. Submit the following to the USCIS:
   - **Application fee of $290.** This should be a check or money order payable to “U.S. Department of Homeland Security”.
   - A **cover letter** from you addressed to the USCIS requesting the change of status and explaining your circumstances. Include the reasons why you entered the U.S. as an F-1 student, why and how your intentions changed after your arrival in the U.S. and any other relevant information.
   - **Form I-539:** “Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status” *(Please use the fillable form available at www.buffalo.edu/intlservices/documents/i-539_expires2012.0229_001.pdf)*
   - Photocopy of your new “Dependent” I-20 received from ISSS and all previous I-20’s. Your spouse must sign your I-20 on Page 1 before making the photocopy.
   - Photocopies of the **financial documentation** you submitted when you requested an I-20.
   - Photocopy of your **spouse’s current I-20** and all **previous I-20’s**
   - Photocopy of your **marriage certificate** (or official “family record”)
   - Photocopy of the **front and back of your I-94 card** with a legible date stamp OR your electronic I-94 printed from www.cbp.gov/i94. If you do not have either of these documents, then a photocopy of the admission stamp in your passport is acceptable. (Make sure the date stamp is legible.)
   - Photocopy of your **passport biographic / picture page** and visa stamp
   - Photocopies of your **spouse’s passport biographic / picture page, visa stamp, and front and back of his/her I-94 card** OR electronic I-94 printed from www.cbp.gov/i94.

We recommend that you schedule an appointment with an International Student Advisor to review your completed application before submitting it to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

If I am mailing my application, where do I send it?

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.

Is it possible to submit my application online?

Change of status applications may be submitted online using the USCIS Electronic Immigration System (ELIS). Generally, the same documents listed above are required when you submit the application electronically (with a few exceptions). First, you must create an account. Then, you will be asked to provide information about yourself and your immigration status, and upload copies of your immigration documents and supporting documentation. Last, you will pay the application fee online. You may save your work and return to it later. Processing times are approximately the same as for applications mailed to the USCIS. For more information on ELIS, please visit: www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=e18a386c21278310VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD&vgnextchannel=b1659e415d116310VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD

NOTE: If you plan to submit your application online using the USCIS ELIS system, an International Student Advisor can review your documents before you submit them, but you must follow the steps outlined above and submit the application on your own.

How long will processing at the USCIS take?

Estimated processing time is 3-6 months. After the USCIS receives your application, it will mail you a Form I-797 Notice of Receipt with your assigned case number. You can check the status of your application online by following the directions on the form.

When you receive a response from the USCIS, you must report the outcome to International Student and Scholar Services. If your application is approved, send or bring a photocopy of your I-797 Approval Notice to ISSS, 210 Talbert Hall.

If I mail my application to the USCIS, may I travel outside the U.S. while the application is pending?

No, you may not travel outside the U.S. while your application is pending. If you depart the U.S. while your change of status application is pending, your application will be denied.