

OVERVIEW

This guide is for students enrolled at Florida Poly who hold a visa or other non-immigrant classification seeking to change their status to the F-1 visa. All students seeking to change their status are recommended to consult with an immigration law professional regarding processes and regulations. This guide is for informational purposes only and not intended as legal advice. Please select the blue underlined hyperlinks to access forms and other resources.

You must meet the requirements to change your status, maintain your current status, and have completed the required CANVAS course prior to being issued the I-20. You must consult an immigration attorney if you require assistance or have questions about this process.

IMPORTANT: If you are currently approved for Florida residency for tuition purposes, you will no longer be eligible for this classification once you are enrolled under the F-1 visa. This means you will be billed at the non-resident tuition rate, effective your first semester as a F1 student.

HOW TO APPLY TO CHANGE TO F-1

There are two ways of gaining a new nonimmigrant status:

Option 1: Travel and Re-entry

You leave the US to apply for a new visa at the US Embassy or Consulate nearest to your home country and re-enter the US with the new visa.

- You must depart the US to apply for your visa at the embassy or consulate.
- This process is usually faster than changing status in the US and requires less paperwork.
- You will also obtain the visa and the status but should keep in mind the possibility of a delay in your visa processing time and the expense of travel and ticket.

NOTE: [Canadian](#) and [Bermuda](#) Citizens are **not** required to apply for an F-1 visa. Once they are issued the I-20 they are registered in SEVIS database and assigned a SEVIS number, when crossing the border to enter the US, they must provide the following items to the officer at the port of entry: passport, I-20, proof SEVIS fee is paid, financial evidence of ability to pay estimated costs of attendance, and proof of ties to Canada.

Steps to Apply:

- Obtain your Initial I-20 from ISS.
- Pay the SEVIS Fee [online](#).
- Apply for the F-1 visa [online](#) (**Exception:** Canadian and Bermuda citizens)
- After obtaining your visa, re-enter the US no more than 30 days prior to the start date on your I-20.
- Notify ISS of your arrival and submit copies of your F-1 visa and [I-94 Arrival/Departure Record](#).

Option 2: Change Status in the US

You remain in the US and apply to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for a status change.

- You submit your application to change your status while remaining in the US; however, you will still need to return to your home country to obtain the visa due to visas only being issued outside of the US.
- This allows you to remain in the US; however, **this [process](#) can take up to 12 months or more**.
 - Premium Processing for expedited processing is available, please view [here](#) for information.
- You must stay in the US during processing; exiting the US before USCIS approval **cancels** the application.

Steps to Apply:

- Obtain your Initial I-20 from ISS.
- File the online application [I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status](#) with USCIS and be prepared to upload the following items online;
 - Fee payment for I-539 (\$370 USD)
 - Pay the SEVIS Fee [online](#) and submit copy of receipt
 - Signed copy of Form I-20 and your valid passport identification page
 - Copy of [I-94 Arrival and Departure Record](#) for your current status.
 - Copy of evidence of current status (e.g., color copy of visa) and approval notice (I-797)
 - If you are a dependent; send a copy of the primary visa holder's status (if operating under an employment visa, provide a copy of employment letter)
 - Copies of financial documents (same documents submitted with I-20 Request form)
 - If your sponsor is a US citizen, they will need to complete [Form I-134 Affidavit of Support](#)
 - Copy of admission letter from Florida Polytechnic University
 - A letter explaining why you are requesting a change of status.
 - **Important:** Your letter should clearly explain your current status, plans for study a, and your long-term plans. You will be expected to continue to maintain ties to your home country- whether in the form of a residence, an expected job offer, or continuing family ties. It is not unusual for the USCIS to request documentation regarding your ties to your home country, and you should be prepared to provide such documentation.

Sample Letter (provided solely as an example of what can be written)

Dear US Department of Homeland Security Official:

I am currently in the U.S. holding a visa and would like permission to change my visa to F-1 student. I entered the U.S. in a non-student status in order to _____ (describe your activity/intention at the time of entry.) I decided to apply for admission to Florida Polytechnic University in _____ (month/year) and was admitted for graduate/undergraduate study in _____ (month/year). I intend to enroll full-time and would like to complete my (BS/MS) degree in _____ I do not wish to leave the US at the present time to change my status because I would suffer the following hardship: _____ . Please find my I-539 application, I- 20, I-94, and supporting materials. I fully intend to abide by all regulations governing the F-1 status. After completing my program of study, I expect to return to my home country and apply the knowledge I gained. Your assistance and prompt attention to this matter are appreciated.

- You will receive a [Form I-797 Notice](#) from USCIS with your assigned case number.
 - You can track your application status at: [Check Case Status](#)
- If your application is not approved by your I-20 start date, you will need to request an updated I-20, which will defer your start date. You cannot enroll as an F-1 until you have evidence of approval.
- Once you receive notice from USCIS (I-797) that your status to change to F-1 has been approved, you are required to provide a copy to ISS@floridapoly.edu within 10 business days.
 - You may enroll as an F-1 the next available term after your approval.
- Once approved and you do travel outside of the US, you must visit your embassy or consulate to obtain your F-1 visa and re-enter under your F-1 status, then provide a color copy of it and your [I-94 Arrival Departure Record](#) to ISS@floridapoly.edu.