

OVERVIEW

This guide is for students enrolled at Florida Poly holding a non-F-1 visa or other non-immigrant classification seeking to change to the F-1 visa. There are two options to apply to change, they are 1) travel and re-entry and 2) changing status while in the United States (US); this guide is for changing status in the US. If you seek to change your status by departing and re-entering the US, please view the **Change of Status to F-1 Visa – Travel & Re-entry Guide**.

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 and not intended as legal advice. You must consult an immigration attorney if you require assistance or have questions about this process.

Students must meet the requirements to change their status, while maintaining their current status, and complete the required **CANVAS course** prior to being issued the I-20.

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 File for Change to F-1 Status in the US

All students are strongly recommended to e-file the [I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status](#) online with USCIS ([current processing time](#) is 4 months). Mailing in the application has a higher fee payment and processing time is longer than e-filing.

- If you choose to file by mail, visit the [USCIS website](#) regarding mailing instructions (mailing fee is \$470).

I-539 Application Steps:

- Individuals applying for F-1 status must pay the \$350 USD [SEVIS Fee](#); upon paying fee online ensure to obtain a copy of your receipt.
- Create online account to [e-file the I-539](#) (filing fee is \$420 USD) then have the following items prepared for upload:
 - Copy of signed Form I-20.
 - Copy of SEVIS Fee Payment Receipt.
 - Color Copy of Passport Identification Page (passport must have valid expiration date).
 - Copy of [I-94, Arrival and Departure Record](#) for your current status.
 - Copy of Evidence of Current Status (e.g., color copy of current visa and I-797 approval notice).
 - If you are a dependent, send a copy of the primary visa holder's status.
 - Copies of Financial Evidence to Cover Estimated Costs of Attendance.
 - If your sponsor is an United States (US) Citizen, they will need to complete [Form I-134 Affidavit of Support](#).
 - Copy of Admission Letter to Florida Polytechnic University.
 - A Statement Explaining Why You are Requesting a Change of Status:
 - **Important:** Your letter should clearly explain your current status, plans for study, 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.

I-539 Application Process

- You will receive [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 change to F-1 status 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.
- After approval, the first time you travel outside of the US, you must visit your embassy or consulate to obtain your actual F-1 visa before you may re-enter the US.
 - Once obtained and you return to the US, you must provide a color copy of your F-1 visa and I-94 to ISS@floridapoly.edu.

Additional Application Assistance

- The I-539 application is your personal application. While ISS may give general guidance on how to prepare a successful application, **we are not permitted to give detailed legal advice.**
- In rare cases that are very complex in nature you may need to consult with an immigration attorney or professional immigration service.
 - Please coordinate the use of any attorney before making payments or commitments.

For further information about travel and re-entry and visa applications, refer to the [US Department of State website](#).

Please let us know if we may assist you with anything additional.