

# Northwest University

## Application for Change of Status

*Students who have been admitted to a degree program or who are already enrolled in a degree program may apply for change to F-1 status, provided they currently hold a valid non-immigrant visa status in another category. **Note:** Students in F-2 or B status may not enroll in a course of study before their change of status is approved. M-1 students, C, D, and K visa holders are also not eligible to change to F-1 status without first leaving the United States and obtaining the F-1 visa.*

### Steps to completing a change of status application:

1. Change of status applications can be complicated. It is wise to contact the International Student Services (ISS) office prior to beginning an application to discuss your options.
2. Before we can begin a change of status application, you must be accepted into your program of choice at Northwest University.
3. After your acceptance, you need to make an hour-long appointment with the ISS to go through all of the following documents. These are the documents that you will need to submit to USCIS.
  - ✓ **Completed form I-539** - <https://www.uscis.gov/i-539>
  - ✓ **I-20** – this is generated by an international advisor at Northwest University
  - ✓ Receipt of the \$350 **I-901 SEVIS fee** - <https://www.fmjfee.com/> this is done after the I-20 is generated
  - ✓ **Check for \$370 USD** made payable to “Department of Homeland Security”
  - ✓ **Personal statement**, written to the USCIS adjudication officer, in which you explain why you are requesting a change to F-1 status
  - ✓ **Bank statement** that matches the funds reported on the I-20
  - ✓ Copies of all your **immigration documents**, passport biographical pages, visa stamp, etc.
  - ✓ **I-94** – can be found online here <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/> unless you have an original, paper I-94 stapled to your passport or a previous change of status approval notice
  - ✓ (if applicable) photocopies of all immigration documents of the person from whom your current status is derived (i.e. your spouse or parent), including the I-94 (front & back), passport biographical pages, visa stamp, I-20, funding and transcript or job letter and recent pay-stubs, etc.
  - ✓ (if applicable) a copy of your marriage license, birth certificate, or other proof of relation to this person
  - ✓ **Acceptance letter** from Northwest University

### Sending Documents:

1. ISS does not mail the documents for you to USCIS. You must mail them. Make sure you copy all of your documents and forms prior to mailing them.
2. Paper clip everything together and place items in a large envelope. Send it via express mail and make sure you get a tracking number. The sooner you get it to USCIS, the quicker they will begin to process your application.

**USCIS California Service Center**  
P.O. Box 10129  
Laguna Niguel, CA 92607-1053

## Timeline:

1. After mailing your documents, USCIS should send you an **I-797C receipt notice within 2-3 weeks in the mail**. This receipt lets you know that they have received your package and are processing it. If you do not get a notice, please contact ISS. On this document is a receipt number which you can use to track your application at [uscis.gov](https://uscis.gov).
2. **Approval takes approximately 4+ months** depending on what visa you are converting from. This is a long process. Remember that when you file for change of status, you cannot leave the country until it is approved.
3. While you are waiting, USCIS may send you a **request for evidence (RFE) document**. If you get an RFE, please contact the ISS department so we can help you. This RFE will ask you to submit additional documentation in order to approve your application. Do not worry if you get this document.
4. When your **change of status is approved**, you will receive an I-797A Notice of Action document in the mail. This document is important because it is now your current I-94 and is your official evidence that you have changed visas. After your application is approved, we will be able to register you as an active F-1 student in SEVIS. Remember that at this point if you leave the country, you will need to renew your visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate.

## Unique Change of Status Issues:

1. **B-1/2 visas** – you cannot begin studying until your change of status application is approved.
2. Your **current visa is expiring soon** – if your visa is expiring sooner than 30 days before your program start date, you will need to submit a second form I-539 and additional \$370 fee to extend your current visa. For example, your current visa is expiring on July 1<sup>st</sup>, but your program doesn't start until August 28<sup>th</sup>. This is a difference of 58 days, which is more than the maximum of 30 days.
3. If you have **other immigration applications** on file, please let us know. These could delay your change of status to an F-1 visa.
4. Please **understand the F-1 visa regulations**. While your change of status application is pending, you are required to maintain the regulations of your current valid visa. When your change is approved, you must take note of the differences in regulations pertaining to your visa, such as employment.

*The International Education Department is able to provide students with general guidance. However, any advice provided to students by our office, including the information above, should not be construed as legal advice. Additionally, due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, the USCIS may change its interpretation of these immigration laws/regulations and eligibility requirements for benefits at any time. We will do our best to provide you with the most current guidance. Each case is fact-specific and it is advised that you contact an experienced immigration attorney if you have questions regarding your situation.*



**Office of International Student Services**  
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[northwestu.edu/international](https://northwestu.edu/international)



**Northwest**  
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