



# APPLYING TO CHANGE VISA STATUS WITHIN THE U.S.

To change from one visa status to another while remaining in the United States, you must currently hold a valid visa status and must remain in the U.S. until a decision on the change of visa status application has been made.

***The change of visa status application requires the following documentation to be submitted to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS):***

- A check or money order for \$370.00 payable to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- I-539 form (available at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) - U.S. Department of Homeland Security under “forms”)
- A letter (signed and dated) explaining your reasons for changing status
- A photocopy of the I-20 issued by Madison College for the purpose of changing visa status. This document has 3 pages. It must be signed and dated using blue ink on the bottom of the first page. This is referred to as the “Certificate of Eligibility” in the application instructions.
- *Original* I-94 card, if you were issued a paper I-94 card upon arrival to the U.S. or during a change of visa status. If you do not have a paper I-94 card, you may print it at [i94.cbp.dhs.gov](http://i94.cbp.dhs.gov)
- Photocopies of the passport pages that show your identity and the passport expiration date.
- Photocopies of your current visa status documents, such as the visa stamp and/or adjudication approval notices and/or previously issued documents, including I-20s or DS-2019s.
- Evidence of financial support, which must include bank statements from you or your sponsor showing sufficient funds to cover your expenses for at least one year. It is best to provide bank statements from the last 3 to 4 months to demonstrate financial stability.
  - If your sponsor is from overseas, the sponsor should also provide a letter indicating his/her plans to support you financially.
  - If your sponsor is from the U.S., he/she should complete Form I-134, which is available at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) - U.S. Department of Homeland Security under “forms.”
- Proof of SEVIS I-901 Fee payment is required when changing to a student visa status. Pay the fee and print the receipt online at [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com) - U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- If changing to or from a dependent visa status, such as H-4 or F-2, you must also include:
  - Photocopies of the primary visa holder’s (spouse or parent) current visa documentation, including I-94 card, visa stamp, and/or adjudication approval notice, etc.
  - A photocopy of the primary visa holder’s passport identity/expiry pages(s)
  - Proof of your familial relationship, such as:
    - A certified copy of your marriage license (for a spouse)
    - Birth certificate (for a child)
- If you have studied in the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 visa status previously, you must include transcripts from the U.S. educational institutions attended.
- Optional: The G-1145 form (available at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) - U.S. Department of Homeland Security under “forms”) can be included as the first page, if you wish to receive text and/or email updates from the USCIS during the process.

## Special Considerations:

Center for International Education (CIE) | Madison College  
1701 Wright Street, Room D1610, Madison WI 53704  
(608) 246-6201 | [IntlAdmission@madisoncollege.edu](mailto:IntlAdmission@madisoncollege.edu)



- B-1/B-2 visa holders changing to F-1 status should not begin a program of study until after the change of visa status is approved.
- F-2 visa holders changing to the F-1 status for a post-secondary program should only study part-time until the change of visa status is approved.
- A J-1 or J-2 visa holder with the **“Two Year Home Residency”** requirement [212(e)] is not eligible to change status within the U.S. However, you may apply for a new visa status at a U.S. Embassy/Consulate outside the U.S. with a letter of no objection. **Please note:** if you have been approved for a waiver of the 212(e) requirement, you may apply for a change of status in the U.S. by including proof of the 212(e) waiver approval with your application.

After making copies for your records, mail all items **with “return receipt” requested** to one of the following addresses:

- If using the U.S. Postal Service: USCIS, P.O. Box 660166, Dallas, TX 75266
- If using an express mail or courier service: USCIS, ATTN: I-539, 2501 S. State Highway 121 Business, Suite 400, Lewisville, TX 75067

### While Your Application Is Pending

Save your “return receipt” as proof of when you mailed you application to USCIS. In 2-3 weeks the USCIS should send an official Receipt Notice acknowledging your application. The Receipt Notice will include your case number, which can be used to check your case status online at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov) - U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

If your current visa status does not permit study, you should not begin studying until your status to F-1 has been approved. You are not eligible to receive any benefits of the F-1 status (such as working on-campus or being approved to study less than full-time) until after the F-1 status has been granted. If your change of status has not been approved by the term in which you had hoped to begin studying, please consult with CIE’s International Student Services staff about deferring your start date.

If you leave the U.S. while your application is pending, the USCIS will consider your application **abandoned** and will deny the application. If you depart the U.S. after the “date certain” expiration date given to certain visa types (such as B-2, B-1, H-1B, H-4, etc.), this **abandonment** could affect your eligibility for other U.S. visas, if you are seen to have previously overstayed.

### After Receiving Your Approval Notice\*

The USCIS will mail you notification. The approval (and its effective date) will be on an I-797 *Notice of Approval*; your new I-94 card will be printed on the bottom of the approval notice. You must submit a copy of this to CIE. Failure to do this may jeopardize your new visa status.

If you were previously in a dependent visa status, the principal visa holder will need to update his/her records. For example, if your spouse is an F-1 or J-1 student at another institution, your spouse must request your F-2 or J-2 record be canceled and removed from his/her I-20.

*\*If your change of status is denied, please contact CIE’s International Student Services to discuss available options*