

Change of Status Guide: F-1 Visa to F-2 Visa

DISCLAIMER: Since 2016, the change of status process has become increasingly difficult and lengthy. It is recommended that individuals seeking to conduct a change of status obtain information from the KGI OISS *and* consult a qualified immigration attorney. KGI OISS will provide interested parties with information concerning the pros and cons of doing a change of status vs consular processing – it is up to the interested party to determine if filing a change of status is in their best interest, and that individual assumes all liability associated with any decision made. KGI OISS staff will provide regulatory and practice information as it stands at the time of the consult. Due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, applicants must understand that US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reserves the right to change their interpretation of immigration regulations or eligibility requirements for benefits at any time.

Change of Status Process

Currently, change of status applications are seeing lengthy processing times; current processing times for the I-539 at the California Service and Vermont Service Centers may be viewed [here](#). A change of status from F-1 to F-2 is not recommended if you wish to study full-time again in the near future. A change of status from F-1 to F-2 is recommended only if you will be fulfilling your educational goals and wish to remain in the US with a spouse who is still studying. Your spouse must maintain his/her F1 status throughout the process.

To apply, you will need to gather the following documents:

- A completed [Form G-1145](http://www.uscis.gov/g-1145) found at <http://www.uscis.gov/g-1145>. This will allow you to receive electronic updates.
- A completed [Form I-539](http://www.uscis.gov/i-539) found at <http://www.uscis.gov/i-539>. Complete this to the best of your ability in **black ink**. If you are unsure of an answer, leave it blank, and you will complete it at your Change of Status appointment (please see below).
- Check or money order made payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security" for \$370
- A letter explaining why you decided to change visa status.
- Original I-94 or I-94 printout obtained at CBP.gov/I94
- Copies of all current I-20s.
- Copies of passport picture page and visa page
- Copy of spouse's F-1 I-20, showing you added as a dependent
- Your F-2 I-20 (after you have been added to your spouse's record)
- Copy of marriage certificate or license (must be officially translated into English)
- Proof of financial support from your spouse

After you have gathered these documents, it is recommended that you work with your spouse's school to review your packet, as this school will be the one to monitor your immigration record from here on out. However, you may choose to email international@kgi.edu to arrange an appointment with KGI OISS staff if you wish. We will help you assemble your packet and provide instructions on mailing your packet to USCIS. The appointment will last about 15 minutes.

Can I stop studying?

You should maintain your F-1 status by studying full time or engaging in optional practical training (OPT) while the change of status application is pending. If you decide to stop studying, it is recommended that you apply for a change of status no later than 5 months before the last day of your classes (or according to current timelines posted [here](#)).

If you decide to reduce to part time study or stop studying while the change of status is pending, you assume all liability in doing so, and must understand that this may result in denial of your application and a finding that you violated your F-1 status. If it is found that you violated your F-1 status, you may be subject to the accumulation of days of unlawful presence (ULP). If this is determined, ULP will be applied 61 days after your last day of study or the day after termination, depending on the timing of your withdrawal from your program and how your immigration record was handled by your school. Please consult with your current school to determine this possible date. If you accrue a total of 180 days of ULP you are subject to a 3 year ban on reentry to the US; if you accrue 1 year or more of ULP, you are subject to a 10 year ban on reentry to the US.

It is highly recommended that you consult with a qualified immigration attorney about the change of status process and discuss any plans to stop maintaining F-1 status while the change of status is in process.