

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES  
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## CHANGING TO F-1 STUDENT STATUS

**Q: What is F-1 student status?**

**A:** F-1 student status is the nonimmigrant classification granted to individuals whose primary purpose for residing temporarily in the U.S. is to pursue FULL-TIME academic study. One of the most important obligations of maintaining F-1 status is enrolling in and completing a full-time course load (minimum 12 credits for Undergraduate students and 9 credits for Graduate students) each semester. F-1 students are also eligible employment opportunities on campus, CPT Employment and OPT Employment.

**Q: Do I have to change my status to F-1 student?**

**A:** It depends on what type of visa you are currently on. Most visa statuses allow you to study part-time or full-time in a degree program *except* F-2 (F1 dependent) or B-1/B2 (Business Visitor/Tourist) status. However, some people choose to change to F-1 status to take advantage of the employment benefits for F-1 students. For example, someone in H-4 status can study full-time for a degree but is not eligible to work on campus. If s/he changes to F-1 status, s/he will be eligible to work on-campus immediately once F1 status is approved.

Some individuals are required to change their status. If you are currently holding F-2 or B-1/B-2 status, you are **required** to obtain F-1 status to study at a U.S. institution. For both F-2 and B-1/B-2 visa holders, the change of status must be **approved prior to the first day of classes**.

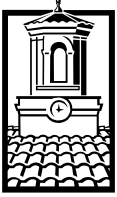
**Q: How can I obtain F-1 student status?**

**A:** There are two ways you can become an F-1 student. One way is to obtain an I-20 from Texas A&M University-Kingsville, exit the U.S., obtain an F-1 visa in a U.S. embassy/consulate and re-enter the U.S. 30 days before the program start date on the I-20. The second way is to apply for a change of status with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This involves sending an application for a change of status to the USCIS. The application generally takes 2-3 months to be processed.

**Q: Is a change to F-1 status the same as the F-1 visa?**

**A:** No. F-1 status only permits you to remain in the U.S. in order to study full-time and get the benefits of F-1 status. If you change to F-1 status and travel outside the U.S., you will be required to apply for an F-1 visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate before you travel back to the





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**Q: What happens to my status while I am waiting to receive an answer from the USCIS?**

**A:** You will still be in *pending* status. You must make sure you are maintaining your present nonimmigrant status when your application is approved, which will be at least three months after your filing date.

**Q: What documents are required for the change of status application?**

**A:** Please see our [Change of Status Checklist](#) for a complete list of documents to be submitted with the application.

**Q: How do I file my application?**

**A:** Make an appointment with the ISS Office, and bring your application, completed to the best of your ability to the appointment. We will answer any outstanding questions you have and help you to file your application to the USCIS. You will send the application to the USCIS Service Center. All correspondence after your filing will go through ISS so we will be kept updated and give you advices accordingly.

**Q: What do I do once I am granted F1 status?**

**A:** When USCIS approves your application the Form I-20 will be stamped and a new form I-94 will be issued to you. The documents will be mailed to the TAMUK International Student Services Office. ISS staff will update your student records and SEVIS, and will then contact you to collect your documents. You then must attend International Student Orientation and understand the basics of maintaining your F1 status.