Change of Status: H-1B or H-4 to F-1 Student

To change your status while in the United States from an H-1B temporary specialty worker or H-4 worker dependent to an F-1 student, you will need to be admitted to a full-time academic program at a school that can issue a Form I-20. You must also be in the United States and in valid H-1B/H-4 status at the time you request this change.

Valid Reason for Change
As an H-1B/H-4, you are able to attend school part-time or full-time, providing (for H-1Bs) it does not interfere with your primary purpose of working in the United States; therefore, you will need a valid reason for requesting the change to F-1, such as:

- An offer of a graduate student assistantship by the school you will attend
- A written request from your sponsor requesting your change to F-1
- Your H-1B/H-4 status is expiring and/or you still need to complete your current and/or a new degree, or
- You are turning 21 and can no longer remain an H-4 dependent of your H-1B parent

Application Procedure
Your request to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for a change of status should consist of the following:

- Completed Form I-539 with the processing fee. Checks and money orders should be made payable to the Department of Homeland Security. For the most current fee information visit uscis.gov and scroll down to “Forms and E-Filing” to find the appropriate fee.
- Receipt for paying SEVIS I-901 Fee. Go to FMJfee.com for full details.
- Copy of pages 1 and 2 of the Form I-20 signed and dated by you and the issuing school
- Copy of electronic I-94. Download a copy at i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home.
- Copy of financial verification
- If in H-1B status, copies of all I-797 approval notices. If in H-4 status, copies of all of your spouse’s/parent’s I-797 approval notices for H-1B status, copies of both sides of their I-94 card (or printed copy of electronic I-94) and copies of any I-797 approval notices for H-4 status
- A letter from the employer of the H-1B confirming that the H-1B is still employed under all terms and conditions of the original H-1B petition is highly recommended
- Copies of the pages in each individual’s passport that include biographical information, passport picture and passport expiration
- Statement of why you need to change from H-1B or H-4 to F-1 status

The Office of International Affairs recommends that this application be sent by certified mail with a return receipt. Please note that the Form I-539 can no longer be filed electronically through the USCIS Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) – it must be mailed. For the most current mailing information, please visit USCIS.gov/I-539-addresses.

Note: If you have been offered an assistantship, please include and highlight in your letter: “Please grant expedite: Assistantship pending.” Also, write on the bottom left corner of the envelope “Expedite: Assistantship pending.”