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

In order to change status while in the U.S. from a temporary specialty worker (H-1B) or worker dependent (H-4) to a student (F-1) status 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 U.S. 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 U.S.; 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 US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for change of status should consist of the following:

1. Completed Form I-539 with the processing fee (check or money order made payable to 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.
2. Receipt for paying the SEVIS I-901 Fee. Go to FMJfee.com for full details.
3. Copy of pages 1 and 3 of the form I-20 signed and dated by you and issuing school
4. Copy of the front and back of the Form I-94 card
5. Copy of financial verification
6. If in H-1B status, copies of all I-797 approval notices. If in H-4 status, copies of all of 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.
7. 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
8. Copies of the pages in each individual’s passport that include biographical information, passport picture, and passport expiration.
9. 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. For most current mailing information please follow the instructions located on your Form I-539. Note that the Form I-539 may be filed electronically through the USCIS Electronic Immigration System (ELIS).

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