

Change of Status to J-1

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Overview

Persons in the U.S. in certain immigration categories may wish to or need to change status to F-1 or J-1 in order to begin an educational or exchange program at the University of Michigan. This page includes information on how to apply for a change of status while remaining inside the U.S.

Individuals holding nonimmigrant status C, D, K, WB or WT are not eligible to change to any other status within the U.S., including J-1. In addition, individuals currently in J status (including J-2) who are subject to the [Two-Year Foreign Residency Requirement INA 212\(e\)](#) [1] may not change status in the U.S. unless a waiver has been granted.

In any application for change of status, you will need to explain why you did not originally enter the U.S. in the status now being requested. A change of circumstances or intention should be documented or explained to make the application acceptable. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) office may deny a request by an F-1 student to change to J-1 status if the USCIS officer believes that the reason for the change is primarily to enable the dependents to apply for permission to accept employment.

Documentation Needed

- [G-1145, E-Notification of Application/Petition Acceptance](#) [2]
- A cover letter requesting the change of status and explaining your circumstances.
- Copy of Form DS-2019 from U-M (sign the form before making a copy). Do NOT send your original DS-2019. USCIS does not require the original and will not return it.
- Receipt indicating payment of the [SEVIS fee](#) [3].
- Evidence of financial support (i.e., copy of bank statement, assistantship, offer letter, etc.). If you are applying to become a J-1 student and you have been offered an assistantship from a department, you may request that USCIS expedite your change of status application and include a copy of the assistantship offer letter. There is no guarantee that your application will be expedited.
- Complete [USCIS Form I-539 Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status](#) [4] and submit the appropriate [USCIS fee](#) [5].

- Copies of all of your immigration documents (e.g. DS-2019, I-20, I-797, paper or print-out of electronic [Form I-94](#) [6], valid passport, visa stamp, if applicable).
- Copy of the waiver (if you were subject to the Two-Year Foreign Residency Requirement while in J status), if applicable.

Where to File

You should mail your application to the USCIS Service Center having jurisdiction over where you live in the U.S. If you live in Michigan, you should mail your application to one of the following:

For U.S. Postal Service (including U.S. Postal Service Express mail):

USCIS
P.O. Box 660166
Dallas, TX 75266

For express mail and courier deliveries (e.g., UPS, FedEx, DHL, etc):

USCIS
ATTN: I-539
2501 S. State Highway 121 Business
Suite 400
Lewisville, TX 75067

If you live elsewhere in the U.S., please refer to the USCIS Form I-539 Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status instructions for the correct USCIS address.

The U.S. Postal Service is the only service that delivers to a P.O. Box address. You may want to use the USPS “delivery confirmation” service. Please note: if you move, USCIS mail will NOT be forwarded to your new address. We recommend that you make a copy of this application for your own record.

Important Information about Changing to J-1 Status

- If your change of status is pending with USCIS and you later decide to leave the U.S., your change of status application is deemed to be abandoned.
- Your current status must be valid until at least 30 days prior to the program start date of the DS-2019, so there cannot be a gap of more than 30 days between the [Form I-94](#) [6] expiration or the end of grace period and the program start date of the DS-2019.
- If you are currently in B1/B2 status and you wish to become a J-1 student, you are prohibited from enrolling in a course of study unless you apply for **and** USCIS approves your change of status application. If you are currently in F-2 status and you wish to become a J-1 student, refer to the information in the Study section of [F-2 Dependents](#) [7].
- The alternative method to become a J-1 is through traveling and re-entering the U.S. in your new visa status. In this case, you must apply for a J-1 visa at a U.S. consulate abroad. Applying at the local consulate in your home country is recommended. Though you are encouraged to apply for a J-1 visa as early as possible, the consulate cannot actually issue the visa until 90 days before the program start

date. J-1 status may be granted upon re-entry to the U.S. with a valid J-1 visa and DS-2019 (Exception: Canadians are exempt from the visa requirement). A J-1 can enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before the DS-2019 program start date. Depending on your situation, you may prefer to leave the U.S. to obtain a visa instead of submitting a Form I-539 Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status request.

Related Resources

- [U.S. Department of State](#) [8]
- [U-M International Center travel advisory](#) [9]
- Call the U-M International Center to schedule an appointment with an advisor

Source URL: <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/change-status-to-j1>

Links

- [1] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/j-two-year-requirement>
- [2] <https://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/files/form/g-1145.pdf>
- [3] <http://www.fmjfee.com/>
- [4] <https://www.uscis.gov/i-539>
- [5] <https://www.uscis.gov/>
- [6] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/i-94>
- [7] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/f2-dependents>
- [8] <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas.html>
- [9] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/travel-advisory>