



## International Student & Scholar Services

### Changing Your Status to J-1

All requests for change of status while in the United States by any alien or foreign national require an application to the United States Department of Homeland Security. The International Student & Scholar Services Office can help you with filling and preparing the application.

#### **Who is eligible to apply for a change of status to J-1 while in the US?**

Anyone may apply for a change of status to J-1 if he or she has maintained lawful nonimmigrant status with the following exceptions:

- M-1 Students
- C, D, K non-immigrants
- J-2 non-immigrants subject to the I.N.A. 212 (e) 2-year foreign residence requirement
- Aliens admitted as visitors under C.F.R. 212.1 (e) WT & WB visitors admitted under the Visa Waiver Program

#### **May I begin attending classes before my application has been approved?**

All applicants may be able to begin attending class after the change of status application has been submitted and while waiting for approval, except for individuals who have entered the United States on a B-1 or B-2 or F-2 visa or WT or WB visa waiver if from waiver country.

#### **May I begin campus employment such as assistantship while waiting for the change of status approval?**

No. You can only attend classes full-time while application is pending.

**Note:** If the application is denied, students may be required to leave the US on short notice, interrupting their program of study at an inconvenient or academically disadvantageous time.

When you change your status in the United States, your visa in your passport is not changed. Visas may only be obtained outside the United States at a U.S. embassy or consulate.

**Remember:** If your status is changed to J-1, and you depart the United States, you must obtain a J-1 visa from a U.S. embassy or consulate outside the United States before re-entering the United States.

**Important:** Leaving the US while an application for change of status is pending is considered an abandonment of petition. Contact your International Adviser for your options if you must travel out of the U.S. during this period.

## Steps to Follow

1. Make an appointment to see an International Student Adviser.
2. Compile and bring to your appointment the following documents:
  - Original and 3 copies of passport including picture, name and expiration date, visa and I-94 card (front and back). The original I-94 card will be submitted with the application.
  - Please bring your official letter of acceptance to SMU and ensure that the admissions officer from the school to which you have been accepted has sent a DS-2019 Request Form to the ISSS Office.
  - Original and 3 copies of every I-20 if you are currently an F-1 visa holder.
  - Write a letter of request addressed to the DHS, which explain why you want a change of status to J-1. Your letter should explain that you entered the United States without intending to study or work as a scholar, but have since changed your mind and plan on returning home following your program. You must also state that your stay is temporary. (original and 2 copies)
  - Financial support documents (original and 2 copies): Your proof of financial support needs to match the total for one year of expenses estimated by your program at SMU. This amount will be listed on a new DS-2019 with the understanding that the support will be available for each year you are a student until you complete your program.
    - RAs and TAs must obtain an official letter from their department detailing the annual amount of the RA/TA.
    - Scholarships should be verified with an official letter from your college or the supplying agency.
    - For scholars, the letter must clearly state the salary for research work or teaching as well as the length of time this salary will be paid.
    - Any funds from a United States bank account must be verified with an official letter from the bank (must be signed and stamped by the bank).
    - Funds from outside the United States must be verified with an official letter from the bank (must be signed and stamped by the bank). **Please note:** the majority of your financial support cannot be from your personal funds or your family. If most of your funding will come from your personal funds or your family you cannot change to J-1. Instead, you should apply for an F-1 visa.
    - If you have U.S. sponsors, an Affidavit of Support must be submitted by completing the form: I-134: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>  
*Any financial documentation that is older than six months will not be accepted.*
  - Completed USCIS Form I-539 (download from this Web site <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>)  
Part I (“Information About You”), Address-In care of, **must** be filled out as follows:  
SMU International Center, Blanton Building  
6185 Airline, Suite 216  
Dallas, TX 75205/Daytime Phone #: 214-768-4475
  - A money order or cashier’s check made payable to the United States Department of Homeland Security. Please check USCIS Web site for exact amount (<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>)

- Dependent family member documentation, if applicable:
  - Include information in form I-539
  - 3 copies of current visa or status.
  - Original and 3 copies of passport (including picture, name, and expiration date), visa, and I-94 (front and back)
- Any other immigration documentation necessary to demonstrate the validity of the applicant's status
- If you are on a **J-2** visa, you will need to provide your marriage certificate or birth certificate (an English translation is required for a certificate in a foreign language) and 3 copies of your spouse's DS-2019 or parent's DS-2019, passport (including picture, name, and expiration date), visa and I-94 card (front and back). Transcripts (original and 2 copies) from the J-1's academic program will be required to prove that the J-1 maintained full-time status, or in the case of a J-1 scholar a letter from the department supervisor verifying good standing. If the J-1 is on academic training, three copies of the J-1's academic training authorization letter is also needed.
- If you are on an **H-4** visa or **E-2** visa, you need to provide a birth certificate or marriage certificate with an English translation if it is in a foreign language to prove relation to the H-1 or E-1 visa holder. The E-2 or H-4 also needs to bring 3 copies of the E-1s or H-1s passport (including picture, name, and expiration date), visa, I-94 (front and back), and letter of employment.
- **H-1** or **E-1** visa holders need to also bring their H-1 or E-1 approval notice (plus 2 copies) and letter of employment (plus 2 copies). The H-1 or E-1 should keep their job during the application process.
- I-566 form is required if you are changing to J-1 from A or G status.
- 1 copy of your current health insurance card.
- If you are currently a student, please bring an official transcript.

You will also need to pay the SEVIS fee. The online form I-901 is available at:  
<https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/>

3. When the application is complete, the SMU International Student & Scholar Services Office will assist you in preparing the envelope to mail the application to the Vermont Service Center. All DHS mail to students will be sent to the SMU ISS address.