

Comparison Chart

	Change by Travel-Consular Processing	Change of Status (COS) w/USCIS
Cost	- Plane ticket to return to home country. - I-901 SEVIS fee. - Visa application fee.	- Form I-539 application fee. - I-901 SEVIS fee. - I-907 fee if filing for Premium Processing.
Processing Time	- Length of time to obtain a visa varies depending on the U.S. embassy/consulate post. If flagged for security or background check, the review process may be delayed further. - You are allowed to enter the U.S. up to 30 days prior to the program start date listed on the I-20, in F-1 status. - Overall faster process to obtain F-1 status compared to the change of status application process with USCIS.	- USCIS processing time for a change of status case can vary from 7-9 months or more. Go to USCIS Check Processing Times. - This process does not lead to a new visa stamp in your passport. A visa can only be granted by a U.S. consulate or embassy abroad. - While the COS application is pending you cannot leave the U.S. If you leave the U.S., then USCIS considers you to have abandoned the application and consequently deny your COS. - If your application is not approved within 30 days of the program start date listed on your original COS I-20, ISSS will defer the program start date to the following semester (fall or spring). A new financial document may be required.
Other Concerns	It is required that you apply for the F-1 visa in your home country. Unless you are a citizen or a legal resident of another country, you will need to apply for the F-1 visa in your home country.	- Due to the long processing times, a COS application is not recommended for students needing F-1 status to study full-time. <u>Unless you plan to file for Premium Processing.</u> - F-1 employment (CPT or OPT) cannot be granted until the COS to F-1 is approved and you have been enrolled full-time for one academic year. (Time spent in another visa status may count towards this academic year requirement as long as it was full-time and continuous). Study or Employment in F-2 status. F-2 dependents <i>cannot enroll full-time</i> until COS to F-1 is approved. <i>Enrolling full-time in F-2 status is a violation of your status.</i> F-2 dependents may not engage in on-campus employment until COS to F-1 is approved and valid. Study or Employment in B-1/B-2 status. Visitors in B-1/B-2 <i>cannot begin studying</i> until a change of F-1 is approved and valid. <i>Enrolling in a degree program in B-1/B-2 status is a violation of your status.</i>

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Disclaimer: Any advice provided to you by ISSS staff and any information on our website, forms, etc. should not be construed as legal advice. Due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, immigration laws, regulations, and eligibility requirements for benefits may change at any time. It is your responsibility to seek professional legal advice if you have case specific concerns.