



Cultural Center for Language Studies

Fluency in Languages

HOW TO CHANGE STATUS TO F-1

If you currently have valid legal status in the United States (i.e., your current I-94 and visa—or status—have not expired), you may be able to apply for a change of status to F-1 to study at CCLS New Jersey on a full-time program of study. Only certain visa classifications are eligible for a change of status.

If you are out of status, you can only request a change of status under very special circumstances, so you should consult an immigration attorney for further information.

If you are currently in the United States as an exchange visitor, a temporary worker, diplomat, or any other non-immigrant classification, except as a visitor on a waiver program (WT or WB status), and wish to change to F-1 status to become a full-time student, you must do the following:

1. Apply to CCLS New Jersey's Intensive English Program (IEP), pay the non-refundable application fee, and submit the following documentation for review:
 - a. A copy of the identification page of the passport
 - b. A copy of the unexpired visa
 - c. A copy of the current I-94 (or [electronic I-94 record](#))
 - d. A Financial Certificate Form and supporting documentation.
 - i. Evidence of financial resources (either the applicant's or their sponsor's) may include current bank statements, investments, and other sources of income.
 - ii. If the applicant is being sponsored, the sponsor must submit a notarized letter stating that he/she is willing to pay for all the applicant's expenses in the U.S. and why he/she is doing so. If the sponsor is a permanent US resident or an American citizen, they should fill out and sign the I-134 Affidavit of Support Form instead.

If the application is accepted, the prospective student must pay a 2-month tuition deposit. Once payment is confirmed, CCLS New Jersey will issue an **I-20 form** and a **letter of acceptance** to the prospective student.

The student should then pay the non-refundable I-901 (SEVIS) fee [online](#) in the amount of \$350 and save the receipt. CCLS New Jersey can make this payment on behalf of the student upon request—there is no extra charge for this service.

2. Gather the following documents:
 - a. The I-20 form issued by CCLS New Jersey and signed by the applicant or their legal guardian.
 - b. Letter of acceptance from CCLS New Jersey.
 - c. A receipt for the payment of the I-901 (SEVIS) fee.
 - d. All the documents listed in (1.).
3. Create an account with USCIS at <https://myaccount.uscis.gov/>
 - a. Fill out an I-539 form.

- b. Upload the documentation listed in (2.)
- c. Pay the non-refundable I-539 fee (\$370) and a biometrics fee (\$85), for a total of \$455 with, a US-issued credit card (using [Form G-1450](#)), a check (payable by a US bank), or a money order, made out to the US Department of Homeland Security.
 - i. If paying by check, you should write “I-539” and the applicant’s “SEVIS number” on the memo line of the check.

We recommend filing your application online. If you file online, you will get near-instant confirmation that your application has been received and receive future communications and status updates from USCIS.

If you choose to mail your application instead, we recommend that you keep a copy of each document for your own records. The mailing address is the following:

USCIS
Attn: I-539
P.O. Box 660166
Dallas, TX 75266-0166

You may be required to mail your application packet if you have co-applicants or if you require any kind of legal representation.

Important notes:

- USCIS recommends that the change of status application be submitted to them at least 45 days prior to the expiration date of the applicant’s current I-94 form.
- None of the payments above are refundable even if the change of status petition is denied.
 - If the change of status petition is denied, CCLS New Jersey will refund the tuition.
 - CCLS will not refund the tuition fee if the applicant has submitted another change/adjustment of status application, transfers out to another institution, or cancels or abandons the change of status application.
- Applicants cannot leave the USA while their change of status is being processed. If the applicant leaves the USA, their change of status request is automatically cancelled.
- **The F-1 status is not equivalent to an F-1 student visa.** The student status is automatically cancelled when the student leaves the USA; therefore, a student must apply for and obtain a student visa (F-1) if he/she wishes to reenter the USA to resume his/her studies.
- Applicants must maintain their status valid throughout the change of status process.
- As of 08/12/2021, USCIS does not require that applicants to F-1 status request an extension of their status while the application for change of status is pending. For the most recent information, please see [USCIS Change-of-status](#)
- Please be aware that USCIS does not allow B-1/B-2 visa holders to commence their studies at any school while their change of status is pending approval. Please see: [USCIS working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors](#)