Change of Visa Status to J-1 Scholar

If you are currently in the U.S. in one nonimmigrant visa classification and want to change to J-1 scholar status while residing in the U.S., you must apply to US Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) for the change of status. It is not necessary to obtain a new visa stamp until you need to re-enter the U.S. in your new status.

ELIGIBILITY: In order to change visa status, you must:
- Have been lawfully admitted to the U.S.
- Be maintaining a current valid non-immigrant status,
- File the change of status application in a timely fashion (before the current status expires).
- Individuals in J-2 status, who are subject to 212(e) 2-year home residency, are not eligible to apply for change of status to J-1 within the U.S. without first obtaining a waiver.
- Individuals attempting to change from one J-1 category to another (for example J-1 student to J-1 scholar) cannot use this process. See your exchange visitor sponsor for assistance.
- Individuals who entered the U.S. under the Visa Waiver Program (a green I-94 card issued at the port of entry) are NOT eligible for change of status within the U.S. under any circumstances.

PROCEDURES

Step 1 Obtain a SEVIS Form DS-2019 from WSU Global Services

Step 2 Pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee ($180) to U.S. Department of Homeland Security and obtain a payment receipt using information from your DS-2019. For SEVIS I-901 Fee information go to www.fmjfee.com.

Prepare other required documents. (Refer to Required Documents on page 2.)

Step 3 Complete form I-539, include processing fee payment, and attach supporting documents listed on page two of these instructions. Meet with the international scholar advisor at WSU Global Services to review your application materials if you need assistance.

Step 4 Mail your complete application to USCIS.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>For U.S. Postal:</th>
<th>For Express Mail or courier deliveries:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USCIS</td>
<td>USCIS</td>
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<tr>
<td>PO Box 660166</td>
<td>Attn: I-539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas, TX 75266</td>
<td>2501 S. State Hightway 121 Business Ste 400</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lewisville, TX 75067</td>
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If you have an out of state address, refer to the filing chart of Form I-539 to determine your Service Center.

Step 5 Once your application is received at the USCIS Service Center, a receipt notice is sent to the address you provided on Form I-539. With a receipt number found on the notice, you can check your application status at www.uscis.gov ▶ click on “Case Status Online.” USCIS may send you a “Request for Evidence” in case additional documentation is required prior to adjudication of your application. Contact Global Services advisor if you receive this and have any questions.
Step 6  When your J-1 status is approved, you will receive an approval notice letter/form I-797A. Keep this for your records.

Step 7  Notify Global Services immediately of your J-1 status approval by providing a copy of Notice of Action, Form I-797A to the IP-GS office. Your J-1 record must be validated within 30 days of the program start date to be validated and remain active in SEVIS.

WHILE YOUR APPLICATION IS PENDING

Q. Can I start my program?  
A. You must maintain the status you are currently holding until you are formally approved for J-1, including the rules regulating employment for your category.

To report change of address on your pending application, call USCIS National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283.

If you need assistance with a pending application, please report your case through Global Services Help Desk on-line at www.ip.wsu.edu/rd/help ▶ click on “Pending I-539 Change of Status Application.”

CAUTION

If you depart the country while your application is pending, your application will be nullified.

DOCUMENTS for applications

- Photocopy of Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status/form DS-2019 issued by WSU
- Photocopy of SEVIS I-901 Fee payment receipt.
- $290 application fee. Personal check or money order payable to: Department of Homeland Security. Do not send cash.
- Document showing financial sufficiency to support your exchange program at WSU. For example: fellowship confirmation letter, employer letter, or bank statement.
- Letter from you, addressed to USCIS, requesting change of status. (Be sure to explain why the change is needed and why you did not enter the U.S. under J-1 status.)
- Photocopy of valid passport with most recent visa stamp.
- Copy of any other document showing current status such as an I-20 (for F-1 or F-2) if applicable.
- If in dependent status (i.e. F-2, H-4), provide a copy of principal's passport, I-94, visa stamp, I-20/DS-2019, etc.
- Copy of immigration documents of any dependents who will be changing status with you.

NEED HELP?

Please contact WSU Global Services at ip.globalservices@wsu.edu or (509) 335-4508.