



Change of Status from L-2 to F-1

There are two ways of gaining a new nonimmigrant status:

Option 1: Travel and Reentry

Leave the U.S., apply for a new visa at a U.S. consulate, and reenter the U.S. with the new visa. You will gain your new status when you are admitted into the U.S. This process is usually faster than changing status in the U.S. and requires less paper work. Also, you will obtain the visa *and* the status. However, it has two **drawbacks** which are the possibility of delay of visa processing time and the expense of travel and ticket.

Option 2: Change Status in the U.S.

Submit an application to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for a change of status. This option allows you to change your nonimmigrant status while remaining in the U.S. With this option you may gain the new status but you will not receive a new visa; visas are only issued outside the U.S. when you travel back to your home country. This will allow you to stay in the U.S. during processing. However, this process can be very slow (three to six months). Also, you must stay in the U.S. during processing; exiting the U.S. cancels the application. In addition, you must still obtain a visa stamp to match your status the next time you travel outside the U.S. (except for trips under 30 days to Canada or Mexico). The major disadvantage is the fact that application may be denied, which could require you to quickly depart the U.S.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- This change of status application is to change your immigration status: IT DOES NOT GRANT YOU A VISA. The next time you travel outside the U.S. you will be required to go to a U.S. consulate or embassy abroad to apply for an F-1 visa.
- If your change of status is not approved by the program start date printed on the I-20 form, you **MUST** contact your international student adviser immediately to discuss deferral of the program start date.
- F-1 on-campus employment is not authorized until the change of status has been approved by the USCIS.
- F-1 status cannot begin earlier than 30 days before the start date on your I-20. You should submit your application several months in advance, and you must be able to maintain your current L-2 status until 30 days before the I-20 start date. If your L-2 status will expire prior to 30 days before your I-20 start date, your application will most likely be denied. Even though you are allowed to stay in the U.S. while the application is pending, if your application is likely to be denied, it will be better for you to travel, obtain an F-1 visa abroad, and reenter the U.S. in F-1 status
- Processing times vary, so be prepared to wait three to six months to learn the outcome of your application. To review current processing times and your pending case status, visit the
- USCIS will notify you of their decision with Form I-797 Notice of Action. The I-797 is an important document and should be kept with your passport and I-94 card. The denial letter or approval notice will be mailed to the address listed on Form I-539 in your application. Note that if you change your address, the postal service will not forward mail sent to you by USCIS. Please provide the International Center with a copy of your I-797/Notice of Action and approval notice.
- You may remain in the U.S. while your application is pending, even if your original status expires during the application processing.
- Do not travel outside of the U.S. while your change of status case is pending. If you leave the country, USCIS will consider your application abandoned.

Required Steps after getting accepted at Rowan:

- A. Contact the Center to set up an initial appointment with the advisor to discuss the procedure.
- B. Fill Rowan I-20 Form and provide the advisor with the list of required financial documents. If you qualify for an I-20, the advisor will issue a new I-20 requesting a change of status in SEVIS.

After receiving the new I-20, gather the below required documents:

1. Form G-1145 : This is an E-Notification that your application has been received. The E-Notification is NOT the official USCIS receipt notice
2. Please review Instructions to fill Form I-539
3. Photocopies of both sides of your current I-94 card. You can also [print your I-94 online](#).
4. Evidence of your relationship to the L-1 visa holder (e.g. a marriage or birth certificate)
5. At least one of the following:
 - a. Form I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker, filed on behalf of the L-1 visa holder
 - b. A copy of the I-797 Receipt Notice related to a pending Form I-129 petition
 - c. A copy of both sides of the L-1 holder's current I-94 card or
 - d. A copy of the I-797 Approval Notice
6. The new Form I-20 from Rowan signed on the bottom of page 1.
7. Copies of financial documents. If your sponsor is a U.S. citizen, he/she will need to complete a Form I-134, Affidavit of Support: www.uscis.gov/i-134
8. Photocopy of your valid passport identification page and visa. Include photocopy of passport and visa of the L-1 visa-holder.
9. Copy of official admission letter from Rowan
10. A bank check, money order, or personal check payable to Department of Homeland Security with "USCIS I-539" noted in the memo line for the required \$370 fee. The USCIS does not accept cash. Note: If the check is from someone other than the person applying for change of status, on the bottom left corner of the check include the name and SEVIS ID number of the person who is applying for the change of status. More information about the filing fee can be found on the USCIS website at: www.uscis.gov/i-539
11. Proof of SEVIS fee payment. This fee is paid online by completing Form I-901. Retain the receipt to mail with your change of status application
12. A letter explaining why you are requesting the change of status. This is extremely important: your letter should clearly explain your current status, your plans for study at Rowan, and your longer-term plans as well. Keep in mind that F-1 status is a NON-IMMIGRANT classification. This means that you must indicate, and in certain cases may be required to document, that you continue to maintain ties to your home country--whether in the form of a residence, an expected job offer, or continuing family ties. It is not unusual for the USCIS to request documentation regarding your ties to your home country, and you should be prepared to provide such documentation. Please find below a sample letter :

Dear U.S. Department of Homeland Security Official:

I am currently in the U.S. holding a _____ visa and would like permission to change my visa to F-1 student. I entered the U.S. in a non-student status in order to _____ (describe your activity/intention at the time of entry.) I decided to apply for admission to Rowan University in _____ (month/year) and was admitted for graduate/undergraduate study in _____ (month/year). I intend to enroll full-time and would like to complete my (BA/MS/PhD) degree in _____ I do not wish to leave the US at the present time to change my status because I would suffer the following hardship: _____ . Please find my I-539 application, I-20, I-94, and supporting materials. I fully intend to abide by all regulations governing the F-1 status. After the completion of my program of study I expect to return to my home country and apply the knowledge gained towards _____ (your field of study). Your assistance and prompt attention to this matter is appreciated.

