



Center for International Students and Scholars (CISS)

Changing to F-1 Status

F-1 status is for a nonimmigrant who is pursuing a full course of study to achieve a specific educational or professional objective at an academic institution in the U.S. If you are currently in the U.S. under a different non-immigrant visa category, you may change to F-1 status in one of two ways:

- 1) **Travel & Re-Entry:** The simplest way to change to F-1 status before starting or continuing your program at Bentley is to travel outside of the U.S., obtain an F-1 visa using your Bentley-issued Form I-20, and re-enter the country as soon as 30 days before your I-20 start date with your F-1 visa and Form I-20. At the Port of Entry, your electronic [I-94](#) will be updated to show your status as F-1. *Please note that Canadian citizens are exempt from the requirement of having an F-1 visa to re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status, but travel and re-entry are still required for Canadian citizens to obtain F-1 status.* For further information about travel and re-entry and/or visa applications, refer to the [U.S. Department of State](#) and the [CISS Website](#).
- 2) **Change of Status ([Form I-539](#)) from within the U.S.:** In certain situations, a student currently in the U.S. in a different visa category may wish to change his or her status from within the U.S. by mailing a list of documents and a Bentley-issued Form I-20 to USCIS. This option is for students who are *not* planning on traveling outside of the country prior to beginning their new program, and who will be eligible to continue in their current visa status until 30 days before their program start date. Please note that if you choose this option, you will not receive an F-1 visa, only F-1 status. This means that if you later travel outside of the U.S., you will have to apply for an F-1 visa at a U.S. consulate or embassy in order to be able to re-enter in F-1 status. **Please also note that this process can take over six months for USCIS to process. You can find current processing times using through the [USCIS Website](#).** To begin this process, request a list of Change of Status application documents from CISS. You will submit these documents (electronically or in person) to our office, at which point we will review the documents and provide you with a change of status I-20 to mail to USCIS with your application.

Important Considerations & Acknowledgements:

- I-20s are issued for specific purposes, so you must decide whether you will apply for change of status from within the U.S. or travel and re-enter before you request an I-20. If you request a “change of status” I-20 to apply from within the US, and later change your mind, you will be required to obtain a new Form I-20 with a different SEVIS ID from Bentley CISS in order to obtain your F-1 visa.
- I understand that if I apply for change of status from within the U.S., and leave the country while my application is pending, my change of status application will be cancelled by USCIS.
- I understand that if I am approved for Change of Status from within the U.S., and later decide to travel outside of the U.S., I will need to apply for an F-1 visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate abroad in order to be able to re-enter in F-1 status.

- I understand that I must be registered as a full-time student at the program start date listed on the I-20 in order to be eligible to obtain F-1 status. If my change of status (I-539) application is still pending at the program start date listed on my I-20, CISS will have to defer my F-1 start date to the next semester and I will be required to adhere to the regulations of my current visa status until approved (see below).
- **If you are currently in F-2 status:** Individuals in F-2 status are eligible for part time study. However, once your change of status to F-1 is approved, you are required to be enrolled full time. If your change of status has not been approved by the deadline for adding/dropping classes, your I-20 start date will be deferred until the start of the next semester and you must stay enrolled part time until the end of the current semester in order to maintain your F-2 status. *Source: 8 CFR (Code of Federal Register) § 214.2(f)(15)(ii)*
- **If you are currently in B1/B2 status:** *It is extremely difficult to apply for Change of Status from B1/B2 status from within the U.S.,* as you must prove that your original intent for your visit to the U.S. has changed. Re-entry is the best option for this visa category. Individuals in B1/B2 status are prohibited from “enrolling in a course of study” until after USCIS approves their change of status application. *Source: 8 CFR § 214.2(b)(7) and §248.1(c)*
- **If you are currently in any other status (e.g., H, J, L, E, etc.):** If your current status allows full-time studies in the U.S., you may start classes before your change of status application is approved. However, you are not allowed employment under F-1 status until after your application is approved. For example, if you have an assistantship, you won’t be able to start it until after you receive your F-1 status.
- **If you are currently in C, D, K, or M, and in some cases J status:** With the exception of those who entered the United States under the terms of the Visa Waiver Program, a prospective student can apply for a change to F-1 status if he/she has maintained lawful non-immigrant status up to the time of application. Those with J status who are subject to 212(e) two-year home country physical requirement may not change status in the U.S. unless a waiver has been granted. Non-immigrants in A, G, or NATO status must first complete Form I-566, and have it properly endorsed by the foreign mission to the U.S. and the Department of State.

Student Attestation

I have read and understand the above document and:

- ☐ I plan to change my status through travel & re-entry
- ☐ I plan to change my status through filing a change of status (I-539) application, and I do not plan to leave the U.S. before starting my program in F-1 status

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____ Bentley ID: _____

Contact Information: _____

Signature: _____