

CHANGE OF NONIMMIGRANT STATUS TO F-1

Most international students enrolled in Claremont Graduate University (CGU) have F-1 student status. It is NOT possible to enroll at any institution if you are in B (visitor's) nonimmigrant status or F-2 dependent visa status. For both of these visa statuses, you must get your change of status approved (or return home to get your F-1 Student visa) before you can attend class. If you do not get your change of status by the time your program begins, you will have to defer your admission to a later semester.

Examples of nonimmigrant classifications, which do NOT require a change of status, are A-1, E-1, H1-B, H-4, or L-1 (if your studies at CGU will be **secondary** to the principal activity for which you were issued a visa. If you decide to pursue full-time study *exclusively*, then you may need to change your status to F-1). Please consult with the Assistant Director of International Services if you are uncertain about whether you need to change your status.

There are two ways to change to F-1 status from another nonimmigrant category. 1) You can request an I-20 from Claremont Graduate University, leave the United States, apply for an F-1 visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate, and return to the United States as an F-1 student. 2) You can remain in the U.S. and apply to the Department of Homeland Security for a change of status to F-1. **Note:** if you entered the U.S. under the Visa Waiver Program (*WT* or *WB* status), you may not apply to the USCIS for a change of status. B (tourist) visa holders may also have more limitations; please contact the International Student Coordinator for more information.

Changing from Another Nonimmigrant Status to F-1

A complete application for change of status includes the following:

- Form I-539 (available on-line at <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> under Immigration Forms)
- Pay your \$100.00 USD SEVIS fee (for information about how to do this go to www.fmjfee.com)
- I-20 Form issued by Claremont Graduate University (keep a copy for yourself)
- \$290 USD check or money order (no cash) payable to the Department of Homeland Security.
- Your original I-94 card, and those of your dependents, if applicable.
- A copy of your current visa and passport issuing page.
- Evidence of your financial support. They also suggest completing an I-539 Affidavit of Support (available on-line at <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> under Immigration Forms) along with CGU's Affidavit of Support. You might also be required to show several months of financial proof; be prepared to obtain as much financial documentation as necessary showing that you can support your studies. We recommend 4 consecutive months of bank statements
- Letter addressed to the Department of Homeland Security indicating the reason why you are requesting a change of status.

You will mail the application directly to the Dallas Lockbox: USCIS | PO Box 660166 | Dallas, TX 75266. We recommend using certified mail from the United States Post Office. (Please check the directions on the I-539 form for the latest mailing address.) Upon receipt of the application, the USCIS will mail **you** a receipt with a file number and date by which you can expect to receive a decision. USCIS will notify you of its decision by issuing you a Form I-797 with either a notice of approval or denial. You should notify the Assistant Director of International Services as soon as you receive a decision.

A Note of Caution. Admission to Claremont Graduate University does not guarantee that the USCIS will approve a change of status to F-1. The Assistant Director of International Services can assist you in the application process but does not have a role in endorsing your application.

More handouts can be printed at www.cgu.edu/intlforms