

Change of Status to J-1

Introduction

Acquiring J-1 status using the form DS-2019 issued by Yale can be accomplished in one of two ways:

1. By entering the United States with a DS-2019 and an J-1 visa obtained at a U.S. consulate abroad (Canadian citizens are exempt from the visa requirement); or
2. By applying to USCIS for a change of nonimmigrant status (if the individual is already in the United States and cannot travel.) In choosing this option, you will not receive a J-1 visa, only J-1 status if your application is approved. Persons in the U.S. in certain immigration categories may need to change status to J-1 in order to begin their educational or exchange program.

In any application for change of status, you will need to explain why you did not originally enter the U.S. in J-1 status. A change of circumstances or intention should be documented or explained to make the application acceptable.

[Learn more about Change of Status eligibility here](#) [1].

Work With Your OISS Adviser

If you are considering an application for a change of status you must consult with your [OISS adviser](#) [2] before submitting the application to [confirm eligibility \(see more information here\)](#) [1]. Change of Status is a complicated process which in some cases can result in requests for further evidence or a denial. In order to submit the best possible application, it is critical that you work with your OISS adviser.

Required Documentation

- A cover letter requesting the change of status and explaining your circumstances
 - [USCIS Form I-539 Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status](#) [3] and appropriate USCIS fees. (\$370 - 0 for online, or 0 for paper filing, as of 4/1 - plus an \$85 biometric services fee for you and any dependents who are filing with you.)
 - Scan of Form DS-2019 from Yale University (sign the form before scanning). Do NOT send your original DS-2019. USCIS does not require the original and will not return it.
 - Evidence of financial support (i.e., copy of offer letter, non-Yale funding letter, assistantship, bank statement, etc.)
 - Receipt indicating payment of the [SEVIS fee](#) [4]. (The SEVIS fee for J-1 status is \$220.)
 - Evidence that you have maintained your current immigration status. For example, if you are applying for a change of status from F-1 student to J-1 scholar, you will want evidence that you were a full time student; if also on OPT, evidence of your OPT authorizations and perhaps recent paystubs.
 - Evidence of all of your immigration documents (e.g. DS-2019, I-20, I-797, [Form I-94](#) [5], visa stamp, and EAD card (s) if applicable).
 - Scan of the biographical page of your passport, including the expiration date of your passport, and an explanation if the passport is expiring soon.
 - If changing status from an employment based visa, such as F-1 OPT or H-1B you should include three recent paystubs, or other evidence of employment.
 - If you have accompanying dependents applying with you, include their immigration documents as well as a proof of their legal relationship to you (e.g. marriage certificate for spouse, birth certificate for child(ren))
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How and Where to File

There are two ways to submit this application to USCIS, online or by mail, and the process is different depending on the option you choose. OISS recommends that you apply online using the specific [USCIS instructions on how to file electronically \(e-file\) found here](#). [6] E-filing will allow you to pay the fees with a credit card, change your address as needed, upload updated documents, respond to requests for additional evidence, and receive your approval more quickly than by mail. If you choose to file by mail instead, please request additional details from your OISS Adviser.

If your change of status is pending with USCIS and you later decide to leave the U.S., your change of status will be abandoned. You will need to get a new DS-2019 from OISS for your travels outside the U.S. so please let your OISS adviser know at least two weeks in advance of changing of your plans, if that is possible.

Important Information about Changing to J-1 Status

- The I-539 application is your personal application. While OISS advisers may give general guidance on how to prepare a successful application, we are not permitted to give detailed legal advice. In rare cases that are very complex in nature you may need to pay an immigration attorney for a consultation. Please coordinate use of any attorney before making payments or commitments.
- Your current status must be valid until at least 30 days prior to the program start date of the DS-2019, as there cannot be a gap of more than 30 days between the [Form I-94](#) [5] expiration or the end of grace period and the program start date of the DS-2019.
- If you are currently in B1/B2 status and you wish to become a J-1 student, you are prohibited from enrolling in a course of study unless you apply for **and** USCIS approves your change of status application. If you are currently in F-2 status and you wish to become a J-1 student, refer to the information in the Study section of [F-2 Dependents](#) [7].
- If your change of status is pending with USCIS and you later decide to leave the U.S., your change of status application is deemed to be abandoned.
- As noted above, the alternative, and generally preferable, method to acquire J-1 status is through traveling and re-entering the U.S. in your new visa status. In this case, [you must apply for a J-1 visa at a U.S. consulate abroad](#) [8]. However when travel is not possible, a change of status application may be the only option.

Source URL: <https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/j-1-scholars/applying-for-a-visa/change-of-status-to-j-1>

Links

[1] <https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/j-1-scholars/maintaining-legal-status/change-of-status-eligibility> [2] <https://oiss.yale.edu/about/connect-with-oiss> [3] <https://www.uscis.gov/i-539> [4] <https://oiss.yale.edu/.../paying-the-sevis-fee> [5] <https://oiss.yale.edu/travel-visas/for-students/traveling-to-the-us/i-94-record> [6] <https://www.uscis.gov/file-online/tips-filing-forms-online> [7] <https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/f-2-status-for-spouses-partners-children> [8] <https://oiss.yale.edu/.../applying-for-a-visa>