

Applicants for Change of Status to F-1 Student No Longer Need to Submit Subsequent Applications to ‘Bridge the Gap’

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U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services today announced new policy guidance that eliminates the need for individuals who have applied for a change of status (COS) to F-1 student to apply to change or extend their nonimmigrant status while their initial F-1 COS application is pending.

Under the previous policy, applicants needed to maintain status up to 30 days before the program start date listed on their Form I-20, Certificate for Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status, which required them to file extensions, or an initial COS and subsequent extensions ensuring that they would not have a “gap” in status.

To prevent a “gap” in status, USCIS will grant the change of status to F-1 effective the day we approve an applicant’s [Form I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status](#). If we approve an application more than 30 days before the student’s program start date, the student must ensure they do not violate their F-1 status during that time. An example of a violation would be engaging in employment, including on-campus employment, more than 30 days before the program start date as listed on their Form I-20.

The new policy will reduce workloads and costs for both the applicants and USCIS. USCIS is in the process of revising the Form I-539 instructions to reflect these changes.

For more information, see the [policy alert \(PDF, 318.8 KB\)](#) and the [Changing to a Nonimmigrant F or M Student Status](#) page.

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