

YOUR WORKING CHECKLIST

B-2 to F-1: approval, study start and school coordination

Can I begin a degree program while a B-2 to F-1 change is pending?

A school offer or pending change request does not authorize a B visitor to begin degree or certificate study. Department of State guidance says that study after entry as a visitor requires an eligible, approved change to student status, apart from the limited recreational-study exception. Coordinate the I-20 and program start with the DSO while the government decision remains separate.

Check the boxes on screen or by hand. Use the notes area for records to find and questions to ask.

Your preparation checklist

- ☐ Identify the current admission record and classification.
- ☐ Describe whether the program awards credit, a degree or a certificate.
- ☐ Confirm the SEVP-certified school and DSO contact.
- ☐ Keep the actual I-20 and proposed program start together.
- ☐ Discuss an unresolved start date with the DSO before attending.
- ☐ Obtain review of travel and pending-request effects for the actual history.

Notes and questions to follow up

Source links and current instructions

Sources checked October 25, 2026. Follow current instructions at the linked institution.

USCIS: Changing to F or M student status: school, I-20 and approval

<https://www.uscis.gov/working-in-the-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/changing-to-a-nonimmigrant-f-or-m-student-status>

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Source links (continued)

U.S. Department of State: Student visa: school and category distinctions

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html>

USCIS: I-539: Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status

<https://www.uscis.gov/i-539>

DHS Study in the States: Maintaining student status

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students/maintaining-status>

Immigrant Insider: Editorial policy and verification status

<https://immigrantinsider.com/editorial-policy/>

Return to the complete guide

<https://immigrantinsider.com/immigration-paths/student/b2-f1/>

General information

This free organizer is not a government form and does not submit an application, establish eligibility, preserve a deadline or replace individual legal advice. Government filing fees and professional services are separate.