

Information for F-2s Who Want to Study at Washington University

There are restrictions on an F-2 studying at an institution of higher education—restrictions that do not apply to study at elementary or secondary schools. F-2s who are planning to study at Washington University should be aware of these restrictions, and are encouraged to consult with a qualified immigration attorney for advice about their particular situation. This information sheet should be provided to the attorney.

The regulations at 8 CFR section 214.2(f) (15) prohibit full-time study by an F-2 spouse or F-2 child in an institution of higher education. These regulations state the following:

- “(ii) The F-2 spouse of an F-1 student may not engage in full time study, and the F-2 child may only engage in full time study if the study is in an elementary or secondary school ...The F-2 spouse and child may engage in study that is avocational or recreational in nature.
- (B) an F-2 spouse or F-2 child desiring to engage in full time study, other than that allowed ..., must apply for and obtain a change of nonimmigrant classification to F-1...
- (C) An F-2 spouse or F-2 child violates his or her nonimmigrant status by engaging in full time study except as provided in paragraph (f)(15)(ii)(A) or (B) of this section.”

So, F-2 spouses may not engage in full-time study at any level, and F-2 children may only engage in full-time study at the elementary and secondary level. Most F-2s become F-1 students to study at the university level. **The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has denied applications for F-2s who began study before the change of status to F-1 was approved.** Thus, students are cautioned to not begin their study until they have F-1 status.

The USCIS has indicated that part-time study is only allowed if it is “avocational or recreational.” They have stated publicly that taking courses that are later counted toward the degree constitutes working toward a course of study.

While it is possible to change status within the US by filing an application for a change of status with the USCIS and remain in the United States while this application is pending, those applications are generally taking several months to be processed and are not likely to be approved before the beginning of the fall semester. Thus, it is recommended that an F-2 plan to travel outside the US during the summer before beginning study at Washington University, obtain an F-1 visa at a US consulate, and enter the United States in an F-1 status. This will allow a student to begin full-time studies at Washington University without disruption in the fall semester.

For further questions about study as an F-1 at Washington University, and to notify us of your plan to change to an F-1, please contact:

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