CHECKLIST FOR CHANGE OF STATUS (COS) TO F-1 FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS (v. 12/11/14)

To be eligible to change status, you must be “in-status” with your current visa at the time that the application will be submitted to USCIS. If you hold the B-2 or F-2 visa, federal regulations require that you wait until your F-1 visa has been approved before starting degree-seeking courses. This process usually takes several months (currently 3-5 months).

Important Notes:
1. **YOU MUST BE IN A VALID IMMIGRATION STATUS AT THE TIME OF APPLICATION FOR A CHANGE OF STATUS.**
2. **IF YOU ARE IN J1 OR J2 STATUS AND ARE SUBJECT TO THE 2 YEAR HOME RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT, YOU SHOULD NOT APPLY FOR A COS IN THE US, UNLESS YOU FIRST RECEIVE A WAIVER.**
3. **YOU CANNOT TRAVEL OUT OF THE US WHILE YOUR APPLICATION IS PENDING (3-6 MONTHS) OR YOU WILL ABANDON THE APPLICATION.**
4. **CHANGING STATUS IN THE US DOES NOT GIVE YOU A VISA STAMP, ONLY A STATUS. IF YOU TRAVEL AFTER YOU ARE APPROVED FOR THE CHANGE OF STATUS, YOU MUST APPLY FOR A VISA STAMP TO RETURN TO THE US.**
5. **DURHAM TECH CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT A CHANGE OF STATUS APPLICATION WILL BE APPROVED. USCIS MAKES THE DECISION. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT YOUR CHANGE OF STATUS WILL BE DENIED AND THEN YOU WILL MOST LIKELY HAVE TO LEAVE THE US AS SOON AS YOU RECEIVE THEIR DECISION.**

Please note that admission to the college does not constitute admission to a specific program. Many programs have additional requirements and may have competitive admissions so you may have to apply to your program after meeting those requirements.

Please allow at least one week after you have completed all requirements below for your I-20 to be prepared.

**Classes for** Fall Spring Summer 2015 2016 2017 **start on** ___________. **Pre-registration begins** _____________.
Visit [http://www.durhamtech.edu/academics/importantdates.htm](http://www.durhamtech.edu/academics/importantdates.htm) for the most up to date information on registration.

**Recommended date for mailing off the COS application (COMPLETE SECTIONS A-C of CHECKLIST)**

A. **ITEMS BELOW ARE REQUIRED BEFORE AN I-20 WILL BE ISSUED**

☐ Complete the Durham Tech enrollment application for admission to a curriculum program of your choice. [durhamtech.edu/application](http://durhamtech.edu/application)

☐ Online for those with a US social security number (SSN)  **OR**  Paper (fill in and print and sign) if no US SSN.

☐ After you have an ID#, register for and attend a ConnectSession (orientation). All students starting classes at Durham Tech are encouraged (must attend if less than 12 transfer credits) to attend to learn about policies, procedures, campus resources, and the process of enrolling. In the session students set up their Webadvisor and ConnectMail accounts and make an appointment to meet with an advisor.

☐ Official high school transcript, or equivalent, showing graduation (must be officially translated into English). A transcript or diploma from a university showing receipt of a degree may be substituted. [durhamtech.edu/admissions/connectsession.htm](http://durhamtech.edu/admissions/connectsession.htm).

☐ Official transcripts from current/previous US schools. For foreign credit transfer, get a professional evaluation.

☐ Take the necessary placement tests. Most programs require reading, writing, and possibly math tests unless you have transfer credit for those courses or have other test scores that exempt you (Accuplacer, SAT, ACT, AP scores, etc). If you have a US degree Bachelor’s or higher you should be exempt from the Reading and Writing tests (unless you are applying to a health tech program). Visit [durhamtech.edu/testing](http://durhamtech.edu/testing) for the test schedule and test preparation information. Health Technologies program applicants also take COMPASS ESL listening test and have a speaking assessment (or take TOEFL iBT). Some programs may also require other testing. *Placement test scores taken at another institution, you can have official scores mailed or faxed directly from the school to 919-536-7274 (fax).*

Math ____ Reading ____ Writing ____ Listening (recommended) ____  If applicable: Speaking ____ Computer ____
- Current valid passport
- I-94 or passport stamp and other docs indicating current status (Expiration date______________)
- VISA stamp (current status______________)

For applicants in a dependent visa status: Evidence that the primary visa holder is currently in status (F-1, J-1, L-1, H-1B). A letter from the F-1 holder’s school International Office or H-1B employer is recommended. Note: If you want to file for F-2 status for any dependents, show current immigration docs (pp. I-94, visa) for all dependents.

- Evidence of financial support: $23,000 for the first year, plus a funding plan for the length of your program. Additional funding of $5,000 per person plus passport documents are required for any F-2 dependents. The Affidavit of Financial Support form (or a letter from the sponsor) and supporting financial documents must be submitted. All funds should be shown in US dollars or a currency equivalency printout.

- Current foreign address (street address, not a post office address) AND US address, if different than application.
- Read and return signed portion of "Responsibilities of F-1 Students Under SEVIS."

- Review health insurance options. Durham Tech strongly recommends health insurance for all F-1s and F-2s.

Special Note: The next three items may be completed BEFORE OR AFTER your I-20 is issued depending on the timing.

- Meet with an advisor. Visit durhamtech.edu/advising for information.
- Register for your classes for the upcoming term (even if you are uncertain your approval will come in time). After you have attended a Connect Session and met with an advisor, register as early as possible because classes can fill up. (SEE DATE WRITTEN IN ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE FOR THE DATE THAT PRE-REGISTRATION BEGINS). All F-1 students must register for a minimum of 12 credits for their visa status (and only one class may be an online class). If you have any questions on the 12 credits, see the Director of International Student Services. Permission to register for less than 12 credits is rare, but may be granted in special circumstances by ONLY the Director of International Student Services.
- Pay for the classes in which you registered. It is best to pay the same day you register for the classes. Credit card payments are accepted online. To pay by cash or check you must pay at the Business Office during their regular hours (Mon-Fri, 8 am-5 pm. SUMMER HOURS: MAY CLOSE NOON ON FRIDAYS). If you are being sponsored by a non-profit, you must submit your sponsorship letter to the Director of International Student Services and give enough time for her to approve and take it to the business office BEFORE THE PAYMENT DEADLINE or your classes will be dropped and you will have to try and re-register for your classes that may no longer be available.

**NOTE: YOU MUST GO THROUGH ALL THE STEPS INCLUDING REGISTRATION WHILE YOU ARE WAITING ON THE DECISION OF YOUR CHANGE OF STATUS. IF IT IS NOT APPROVED IN TIME (OR DENIED), YOU CAN REQUEST A REFUND FOR THE TUITION YOU PAID WHEN YOU DROP YOUR CLASSES (YOU SHOULD DROP THEM RIGHT BEFORE THEY BEGIN), HOWEVER IF YOU DO NOT REGISTER EARLY, YOU MAY NOT BE ABLE TO REGISTER AND MAY BE OUT OF STATUS AFTER APPROVED.**

- Attend your classes (if you are transferring from an F2 or B2 visa, you must wait until the visa is approved). Pay attention to the attendance policy on the syllabus for all of your classes. The policies may differ slightly in each class. According to Durham Tech policy, teachers can withdraw students for lack of attendance. If you are dropped from a class which makes you enrolled for less than 12 credits, then you may immediately become out of F-1 visa status and you may have to depart the US. THIS HAS HAPPENED TO STUDENTS IN THE PAST! More information about student withdrawals, faculty withdrawals and class absences durhamtech.edu/html/prospective/advisinggeneral.htm

B. TO BE COMPLETED AFTER AN I-20 IS ISSUED

- Pay the SEVIS fee. Receipt is needed for F-1 visa application. Go to http://www.FMJfee.com to pay this fee by credit or debit card. (The current fee is $200, but review the website for the most up-to-date fee.) Western Union is an option, but takes longer. Students from Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia and Cameroon must use Western Union.

C. ADDITIONAL ITEMS REQUIRED FOR THE CHANGE OF STATUS APPLICATION BEFORE YOU MAIL IT

- Ask for the checklist of “How to Apply for a Change of Status- Documents to Include”
- Form I-539 (the USCIS change of status application form). Ask for a paper version with the correct address.
- Payment of application fee by check or money order made payable to Department of Homeland Security. (The current fee is $290, review the website http://www.uscis.gov for the most up-to-date fee).
D. AFTER YOU MAIL OFF YOUR COS APPLICATION

☐ USCIS will send a receipt for your application processing. This receipt notice is very important as it is proof that you are awaiting a decision from USCIS. The number on the receipt can be used to check your application status via https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/Dashboard.do. USCIS may also send a request for additional information on your application. Application processing generally takes 3-5 months. If your application is not approved by the start date on your I-20 and you are in B-2 or F-2 status, your I-20 start date may need to be deferred to a later term.

☐ USCIS makes a decision on your application. If the decision is a denial, you will need to leave the US. If the decision is an approval, you will need to check in with the Director of International Student Services with all of your immigration paperwork to change your status with Durham Tech and finalize any other steps.

Note: Notifications from USCIS will be mailed to Durham Tech and you will be contacted by email.

Reminder: The next three items may be completed before or after your I-20 is issued depending on the timing.

☐ Meet with an advisor. Visit durhamtech.edu/advising for information.

☐ Register for your classes for the upcoming term (even if you are uncertain your approval will come in time). After you have attended a Connect Session and met with an advisor, register as early as possible because classes can fill up. [See date written in on the previous page for the date that pre-registration begins]. All F-1 students must register for a minimum of 12 credits for their visa status (and only one class may be an online class). If you have any questions on the 12 credits, see the Director of International Student Services. Permission to register for less than 12 credits is rare, but may be granted in special circumstances by ONLY the Director of International Student Services.

☐ Pay for the classes in which you registered. It is best to pay the same day you register for the classes. Credit card payments are accepted online. To pay by cash or check you must pay at the Business Office during their regular hours (Mon-Fri, 8 am-5 pm. SUMMER HOURS: MAY CLOSE NOON ON FRIDAYS). If you are being sponsored by a non-profit, you must submit your sponsorship letter to the Director of International Student Services and give enough time for her to approve and take it to the business office BEFORE THE PAYMENT DEADLINE or your classes will be dropped and you will have to try and re-register for your classes that may no longer be available.

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☐ Attend your classes (if you are transferring from an F2 or B2 visa, you must wait until the visa is approved). Pay attention to the attendance policy on the syllabus for all of your classes. The policies may differ slightly in each class. According to Durham Tech policy, teachers can withdraw students for lack of attendance. If you are dropped from a class which makes you enrolled for less than 12 credits, then you may immediately become out of F-1 visa status and you may have to depart the US. THIS HAS HAPPENED TO STUDENTS IN THE PAST! More information about student withdrawals, faculty withdrawals and class absences durhamtech.edu/html/prospective/advisinggeneral.htm

☐ Contact the Director of International Student Services with any questions you have during your time at Durham Tech. Remember you must report to the director (not just to the Student Records office) any changes in your address, name, or major/program of study. Please visit the director with any questions or problems whether they are personal or academic. Usually problems can be resolved if they are addressed early! There are also many resources available on campus to help you that you may not know about.

☐ Thinking of travelling out of the US? You must visit the Director of International Student Services to get a travel signature any time you plan on travelling abroad in order to be able to return to the US.

☐ Planning on transferring to another school or graduating and leaving Durham Tech? Visit the Director of International Student Services to learn about options after graduation.

Questions? Contact Heidi White, Director of International Student Services, Center for the Global Learner (CGL), Main Campus of Durham Technical Community College, 1637 Lawson St, Durham, NC 27703
Office: White Building, 58
Phone: 919-536-7200, ext. 3228
Email: whiteh@durhamtech.edu
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