

Change of Graduate Classification (CGC) (Graduate Students Only)

What is a Change of Graduate Classification?

A Change of Graduate Classification (CGC) form is a Registrar's form that allows a graduate student with departmental authorization to make changes in their degree level, degree track, or degree type *within their program of study*. For example:

- Master's of Mechanical Engineering to PhD in Mechanical Engineering
- PhD in Mechanical Engineering to Master's in Mechanical Engineering

The change can also be lateral (master's to master's or doctorate to doctorate) which can happen when a student does a "track" or major change within their program. For example:

- Master's in Computing to Master's in Computer Science
- PhD in Molecular Biology to PhD in Oncological Sciences

It is also possible to have a track change and degree level change at the same time. For more detailed information on types of CGC changes, please see "General Rules" #1 on page 2 of this guide.

NOTE: Students who are finishing OPT or their program of study and are *beginning a new program to which they were admitted by the Office of Admissions* will not request a CGC. For more information, please visit International Admissions at Window 6 in the Student Services Building.

Who can apply?

Any graduate student who has *authorization from their department* for the change. Although it must be signed off by the department and ISSS, final approval is only given through the Office of the Registrar. *If you are an undergraduate student needing to report a change of major, you will not use this form. Instead, please submit an "I-20 Change of Major Request" e-form via UAtlas on our website.*

How to Apply for a CGC:

All Changes of Graduate Classification must be approved by the student's department and International Student & Scholar Services prior to being processed by the Office of the Registrar. Please note that the form must first be filled out by your department before ISSS can sign it (we cannot sign a blank form).

After the change has been processed by the Registrar's, the student must then request International Student & Scholar Services to update their I-20 via UAtlas and the "Change of Graduate Classification I-20 Update" e-form.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure all necessary steps are taken:

1. Meet with the appropriate personnel in your department to obtain the Registrar's CGC form and to get the departmental portion filled out and signed.
2. **Meet with an International Student Advisor in ISSS to get our approval signature and to learn how the change may affect OPT possibilities.**
3. Take the completed CGC form to the Office of the Registrar who will then process the form.
4. After your program has been changed in CIS, go to: <https://iss.utah.edu/> and log into UAtlas. Go to F-1 Student Services and submit the e-form "Change of Graduate Classification I-20 Update". **You must take this step in order to get your I-20 updated to your new program of study.** Once all e-form requirements have been met and your request has been approved, a **new I-20 will be issued for you reflecting the change.**

General Rules

1. Students and departments should refer to the university policy on CGCs provided by the Office of the Registrar at: <http://registrar.utah.edu/handbook/graduateclassification.php>
Note: The page reached via this link also has a link called "Information concerning CGC and Optional Practical Training (OPT)." *Please instead refer to an advisor at International Student & Scholar Services for any information about CGCs and OPT.*
2. Be aware that you MUST be in the appropriate plan and degree level in CIS and on your I-20 *before applying for OPT*. Please see an ISSS advisor to discuss deadlines on applying for OPT.
3. The Change of Graduate Classification (CGC) form must be turned in to Registrar's by the deadline indicated on the form (**no later** than one week before the first day of the term the change is to be effective). However, if you are in your last semester of enrollment and so need to make the change as you will be finished, please meet with an advisor from ISSS immediately so that we can assist in dealing with the situation.

Rules specific to program completion

1. If you are changing from one degree level/type to another and you have completed all coursework (for the previous degree) and defended (if thesis student), you are considered as having completed that program of study from an immigration standpoint (regardless of when the degree actually posts) and ISSS will issue you an I-20 with a *new program start date for the new program of study*. **NOTE: Beginning a new program of study after having completed (per the definition above) a previous one closes the window of opportunity for doing OPT for that particular program.** An exception for this may be a student seeking to use a prior STEM degree in order to apply for a 24-month extension to their current OPT. For additional information please set an advising appointment with International Student & Scholar Services.

2. If you are changing from one degree level/type to another but have not completed all coursework for the prior degree (and have not defended if thesis-based), you are simply switching programs and will be issued an updated I-20 for the new program but your original program of study start date remains the same; however, your program end date may be extended if needed.
3. Any CGC requiring an extension to the program of study will require the student to upload proof of funding for the required extension. If an extension of study is not required, no proof of funding is necessary.
4. Milestone Master's: A student admitted to a PhD program may be awarded a master's in that program along the way to completing the PhD. Although a CGC is required by the Office of the Registrar to post this master's degree, no change in the student's SEVIS record is required. This is because the student is not a master's student but rather a continuing PhD student.
NOTE: *If the student does not intend to continue with the PhD* the student's CGC form will need to indicate that they are being discontinued in the PhD program and are being switched to the master's program. After the program has been changed in CIS, the student will need to report the change to ISSS by going to: <https://iss.utah.edu/> and log into UAtlas. From the F-1 Student Services menu, submit the e-form "Change of Graduate Classification I-20 Update". **You must take this step in order to get your I-20 updated to the master's program.** Once all e-form requirements have been met and your request has been approved, **a new I-20 will be issued for you reflecting the change.**

Seek advising assistance early

Since CGC situations vary and can be complex, you should seek advising early from International Student & Scholar Services so that you can avoid problems, including possibly losing your OPT opportunity.

***Disclaimer:** International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) provides support and information related to U.S. immigration laws and regulations related to F and J status at the University of Utah. ISSS staff are not attorneys and any information provided by ISSS should not be construed as legal advice. Individuals are welcome to consult a qualified immigration attorney for specific legal advice, particularly in complicated cases. For a list of local Utah attorneys please visit our website [here](#).*

***Maintaining Status:** USCIS states that it is the student's responsibility to understand the rules and regulations governing their visa.*