

Change-of-Status to F-1 Guide – Exit & Reentry

Students who are in the U.S. and want to change their visa status to F-1 have two options for doing so:

- Change of Status through travel (also known as exit and reentry)
- Change of Status through petition by submitting a Form I-539 to USCIS

This guide explains the exit and reentry option.

STOP: Before continuing, you must notify International Programs – Immigration of your intent to change your visa status to F-1 and schedule an advising appointment. Additionally, please discuss your change-of-status options with a reputable U.S. immigration attorney.

Step 1: Be admitted to or currently enrolled* at Tarleton.

- If you have not yet applied to Tarleton, please go to our [International Admissions](#) (graduate students) or [International Applicants](#) (undergraduate students) page for details on the international student application process.
- If you are currently enrolled, you need to meet full-time enrollment requirements, as defined below, to qualify for an I-20. If summer will be your first semester in F-1 status, then you must meet summer full-time enrollment requirements.

Fall and Spring Semester Credit Hour Requirements

	Undergraduate	Graduate	Doctorate
Full Course of Study	12	9	6
Face-to-Face	9	6	3

Summer Semester Credit Hour Requirements

	Undergraduate	Graduate	Doctorate
Full Course of Study	12	6	6
Face-to-Face	9	3	3

***Do not enroll full time unless your current status allows full-time enrollment.**

- Examples:
 - Nonimmigrants may not enroll while in B-2 status. The applicant must wait to enroll full time until they reenter the U.S. in F-1 status.
 - Nonimmigrants in F-2 status may only enroll part time. The applicant must wait to enroll full time until they reenter the U.S. in F-1 status.
 - Nonimmigrants in H-1B or H-4 status may study full time.

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- For more information on which nonimmigrants may and may not study and what restrictions may apply, go to <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/Nonimmigrant%20Class%20Who%20Can%20Study.pdf>.

Step 2: Submit required immigration documents and receive an I-20.

- Submit your passport, financial documentation, foreign address, proof of current visa status, and I-94 to internationalstudents@tarleton.edu. After receiving your documentation, International Student Services will issue your I-20. Please go to our [International Admissions](#) (graduate students) or [International Applicants](#) (undergraduate students) page for details on the estimated cost of attendance at Tarleton and to access our financial affidavit. Your I-20 will be emailed to you. ****Please let International Student Services know if you have any dependents who will be applying for F-2 status so we can issue him or her a dependent F-2 I-20.**

Step 3: Pay SEVIS I-901 fee.

- Pay your I-901 SEVIS fee online at <https://www.fmiffee.com/i901fee/index.html>. Be sure to print your receipt to take with you to your visa interview.
For Canadian and Bermudian citizens only: You do not have to attend a visa interview. However, you still must pay the SEVIS fee and present your receipt at your port of entry. After paying your SEVIS fee, you can skip to step 5.

Step 4: Travel to a U.S. embassy and apply for an F-1 visa.

- The visa application process consists of the following steps:
 - Complete [DS-160 nonimmigrant visa application](#) – For more information about the DS-160, please visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/forms/ds-160-online-nonimmigrant-visa-application.html>. Be sure to print your application form confirmation page to take with you to your visa interview.
 - Schedule Visa Interview - Contact your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate and follow their procedures for scheduling an interview. Please visit <https://www.usembassy.gov/> for a list of U.S. Embassy and Consulate locations in your country.
 - Pay Visa Application Fee - All students must pay a visa application fee before going to their interview. Please follow the instructions provided on your chosen

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- Embassy or Consulate’s website for paying your visa application fee. Be sure to print your receipt to take with you to your visa interview.
- Attend Visa Interview - You need to take your passport, I-20, I-901 SEVIS fee payment receipt, visa application fee payment receipt, and DS-160 confirmation page with you to your interview. If you were unable to upload your photo when you submitted your DS-160, you must also bring a photo that meets the requirements listed at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos.html>.
 - Newly admitted students: You may also want to take your financial documents, transcripts, diplomas, and standardized test scores (e.g., GRE, IELTS, TOEFL) in case you need to prove financial solvency or academic readiness.
 - Currently enrolled students: You may also want to take your financial documents and current Tarleton transcript in case you need to prove financial solvency or fulltime enrollment.
 - Pay [Reciprocity Fee](#) and Receive F-1 Visa - After your application is approved, you may have to pay a reciprocity fee before receiving your visa.

Step 5: Reenter the U.S. in F-1 status.

- Carry your I-20, passport, F-1 visa (if applicable), I-901 SEVIS fee payment receipt, admission letter or current transcript, and financial documents with you. DO NOT put them in your checked bags. Instead, present your documents to a U.S. Customs & Border Protection agent at your port of entry to request permission to enter the U.S. You may have to undergo additional security screening, receive a Form I-515A, or be denied entry if you are missing one or more of these documents.
- Be sure that the U.S. Customs & Border Protection inspection officer gives you a new I-94 record to indicate your new F-1 status upon returning to the U.S. If you do not receive a new I-94 record indicating your F-1 status, you will either need to exit the U.S. and reenter or contact a [U.S. Customs & Border Protection Deferred Inspection Site](#) to correct the error and obtain F-1 status.

Step 6: Enroll full time.

- If your previous visa status did not allow full-time enrollment, you may now enroll in classes. Please see page 1 for full-time enrollment requirements.

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Step 7: Complete check-in process and online new international student orientation.

- Upon arriving in the U.S., you need to complete your two-step check-in with International Programs – Immigration. If you are a newly admitted student, you will receive an email at your Tarleton email address approximately 30 days before the first day of class detailing the check-in process. If you are currently enrolled at Tarleton, you will receive an email at your Tarleton email address at the same time that you receive your I-20.
- The check-in email also contains information about the online new international student orientation that is required of all new F-1 students.

Special Considerations

- You will have to consider [visa processing times](#) in your travel plans, unless you are from Canada or Bermuda and do not need to have an F-1 visa.
- Visa issuance is not guaranteed. The U.S. State Department generally can deny a visa for any reason. If you do not receive a visa, you cannot reenter the U.S.
- You must be enrolled full time for one academic year before you become eligible for OPT and CPT. Time spent enrolled full time in another status before your departure counts towards the one academic year requirement for OPT and CPT.