

Change-of-Status to F-2 Guide – Exit & Reentry

Nonimmigrants who are in the U.S. and want to change their visa status to F-2 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 Student Services of your intent to change your visa status to F-2 and schedule an advising appointment. Additionally, please discuss your change-of-status options with a reputable U.S. immigration attorney.

Step 1: Submit required immigration documents and receive a dependent F-2 I-20.

- Submit your passport, financial documentation, foreign address, proof of current visa status, and I-94 to internationalstudents@tarleton.edu. If more than one dependent needs an F-2 I-20, please submit a copy of each dependent's passport, visa, and I-94. After receiving your documentation, Undergraduate Admissions – Immigration will issue your dependent F-2 I-20(s) and a new F-1 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 financial documents must show sufficient funding to cover the F-1's education and living expenses **AND** each F-2's living expenses. Once your I-20s are ready, they will be emailed to you.
- **Please note:** The F-1 must be a student here at Tarleton. If the F-1 is a student at another U.S. college or university, you must contact that school's International Office for assistance with changing your visa status to F-2.

Step 2: Travel to a U.S. embassy and apply for an F-2 visa.

- The visa application process consists of the following steps (for each dependent):
 - 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.

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- 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 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 the following documents with you to your visa interview:
 - Passport,
 - Dependent F-2 I-20,
 - F-1's financial documents,
 - Visa application fee payment receipt,
 - DS-160 confirmation page,
 - Marriage or birth certificate to establish your relationship to the F1,
 - Copies of the F-1's passport, visa, and I-20 (if he/she will not attend your visa interview with you), and
 - A photo that meets the requirements listed at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos.html> if you were unable to upload your photo when you submitted your DS-160.
- Pay [Reciprocity Fee](#) and Receive F-2 Visa - After your application is approved, you may have to pay a reciprocity fee before receiving your visa.

Step 3: Reenter the U.S. in F-2 status.

- Be sure to carry your dependent F-2 I-20, passport, and F-2 visa (if applicable) 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-2 status upon returning to the U.S. If you do not receive a new I-94 record indicating your F-2 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-2 status.

Step 4: Do not enroll part time unless your current status allows part-time enrollment.

- Examples:
 - Nonimmigrants may not enroll while in B-2 status. The applicant must wait to enroll part time until they reenter the U.S. in F-2 status.

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- Nonimmigrants in F-1 status must enroll full time or be in valid post-completion (or STEM) OPT until they gain F-2 status, at which time their full-time enrollment or employment must cease.
- Nonimmigrants in H-4 status may study part time.

- Nonimmigrants in F-2 status may enroll part time as a degree-seeking student at the postsecondary level in any certified program at an SEVP-certified school.
- F-2 dependents may also enroll full time in avocational or recreational programs.
- F-2 minor children must comply with Texas education laws requiring kindergarten through 12th grade enrollment. They may enroll full time in public schools, which need not be SEVP certified. If you would rather have your child attend a private school, please contact the school's DSO for enrollment information.
- 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>

Special Considerations

- *A dependent* is defined as a spouse or an unmarried child under the age of 21.
- Dependent children age 21 and older are not eligible to hold F-2 status. They must file an I-539 to change their status to F-1 **BEFORE** their 21st birthday if they want to remain in the U.S. and continue their studies. They may also apply for F-1 status through exit and reentry.
- F-2 dependents derive their status from the F-1. Once the F-1 completes his or her program, the F-2s have to leave the U.S. at the same time as the F-1. Additionally, if the F-1's SEVIS record is terminated, both the F-1 and the F-2s will have to leave the U.S. immediately.
- Please go to <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel> for information about traveling while in F-2 status.
- You will have to consider [visa processing times](#) in your travel plans, unless you are from Canada or Bermuda and do not need to apply for an F-2 visa.
- Nonimmigrants may not work in F-2 status.
- If your current status has expired, you must change your status through exit and reentry.
- 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.