



# Change of Status to F-2 by Application

International Student Services – Texas A&M University

There are two ways through which a nonimmigrant can change their status to F-1:

- *Change of Status by Application* - Obtain an I-20 from ISS and submit an application to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) while you remain in the U.S. by accessing Form I-539 in the online Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) on the USCIS website: <http://www.uscis.gov/elis>.
- *Change of Status by Travel* – Obtain an I-20 from ISS, depart the U.S., apply for an F-2 visa, re-enter the U.S. in F-2 status, and check-in with ISS (submit copies of all immigration documents).

**This handout describes the procedures for doing a Change of Status by Application only.**

For Change of Status by Travel, consider the following:

- If your primary F-1 student’s SEVIS record is managed by Texas A&M University (i.e. their most recent I-20 was issued by Texas A&M University and they have not transferred to another school), then refer to the F-1/J-1 Invitation of Dependents handout: <http://iss.tamu.edu/ISS/media/ISS-Files/ISS-PDF/Current%20Students/F-1J-1-Invitation-of-Dependents-Handout2c-2-21-13.pdf>
- If your primary F-1 student’s SEVIS record is not managed by Texas A&M University, please contact the school that does manage their SEVIS record to discuss their Invitation of Dependent procedures.

If you request a Change of Status to F-2, then the person who is currently in F-1 status and wants to add you as their dependent is referred to as the “primary visa holder” or “primary F-1 visa holder.” If you are currently in a dependent visa status (i.e. F-2 or H-4) then the term “primary visa holder” refers to the person who has applied to have you as their dependent (i.e. the person in F-1 or H-1B status).

## Information about Change of Status to F-2 by Application

- All individuals interested in doing a Change of Status to F-2 by Application must schedule an appointment to meet with an International Student Services (ISS) advisor to determine your eligibility.
- Both the applicant for F-2 status and the primary F-1 student must be in legal status in order for the spouse/child to apply for a Change of Status to F-2.
- Individuals who have applied for Lawful Permanent Residence should speak with an Immigration Attorney before considering a Change of Status to F-1.
- If a Change of Status to F-2 is granted by DHS, the applicant obtains F-2 status, but not an F-2 visa. The next time they leave the country, they must apply for an F-2 visa at a U.S. Embassy/Consulate in order to re-enter the U.S.

## Information about F-2 Status

- F-2s are not eligible to work nor are they eligible to apply for work authorization.
- F-2s can enroll in a college-level, degree-seeking program, but may not take a full course load (they must be below 12 credit hours for undergraduate programs, and below 9 credit hours for graduate programs). If they wish to enroll in courses full-time, they must switch to another status that allows a full-time course load.
- F-2s can also take courses that are avocational or recreational in nature.

## Documents Required

(Please note that additional documentation may be requested as needed.)

1. **Proof of financial resources.** Current evidence of all sources of financial support for the applicant. For detailed information about acceptable proof of financial resources, please visit the ISS Proof of Financial Resources page at <http://iss.tamu.edu/Prospective-Students/You-are-admitted-Now-What#1-ProofofFinancialResourcesI-20%20FDS-2019>.
2. **Original I-94 card or electronic record for the applicant for F-2 status.**
3. **Photocopies of all immigration documents ever received by the applicant for F-2 status.** Immigration documents include the passport, visa, I-94, Approval Notices (if the applicant ever changed status within the U.S. in the past), Employment Authorization Documents, and any Certificates of Eligibility (i.e. I-20 or DS-2019).
4. **Photocopies of all immigration documents ever received by the individual currently in F-1 status.** Refer to the explanation above for details.
5. **Employer Letter.** If the applicant, their current primary visa holder, or their requested primary visa holder is currently in a status that is dependent upon employment in the U.S. (i.e. H-1B or F-1 OPT), ISS must also receive written proof of that employment from the employer.
6. **Academic department letter(s)**
  - If the primary F-1 is currently enrolled as a student, ISS must receive a letter from their department.
  - If the applicant for F-2 status is currently a student, ISS must receive a letter from their department.
  - The letter must be composed on department letterhead and addressed “To Whom It May Concern.” The letter must state the following: (a) when the student began the present program, (b) that the student is a full-time student in good academic standing, (c) the specific program requirements remaining, and (d) the student’s expected date of graduation (month/year). Titles and printed names should accompany all signatures.
    - For undergraduate students, this must be written and signed by the Academic Advisor.
    - For graduate students, the letter must be written and signed by the academic advisor and also signed by the graduate faculty member identified by the Office of Graduate Studies as authorized to sign as Department Head (Department Graduate Advisor).
8. **Personal Statement:** Addressed “To Whom It May Concern” stating (a) that the applicant (and primary F-1 student) is in legal status, (b) asking that the applicant’s status be changed to F-2, and (c) stating the reasons the change is desired or necessary.
9. **Transcripts:** Provide transcripts from all U.S. schools attended by both the primary F-1 as well as the F-2 applicant. Print unofficial transcripts for Texas A&M University at <https://howdy.tamu.edu>.
9. **Marriage / Birth Certificate:** If the F-2 applicant is the spouse of the primary F-1 student, submit a copy of the Marriage Certificate (in English or translated into English). If the F-2 applicant is the child of the primary F-1 student, submit a copy of the birth certificate or other legal document(s) verifying the relationship to the parent (in English or translated into English).
10. **Sponsored students** or dependents of sponsored students must obtain a letter from Sponsored Student Programs (SSP), stating that the sponsor has no objection to the Change of Status.

**After receiving your F-2 I-20 from ISS:** Access the USCIS ELIS application system to submit Form I-539, Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status at <http://www.uscis.gov/elis>. You will pay the application fee electronically through the ELIS system as well.