Request for Dependent I-20: Frequently Asked Questions

Students in F-1 Status

Why do I need to submit this request?

- For your spouse (husband or wife) join you in the U.S.
- For your unmarried child or children under the age of 21 join you in the U.S.

When do I submit this request?

- At any point during your degree program or your optional practical training

What must I submit for this request?

- Request for Dependent I-20: Student Request form
- Documentation of relationship to dependent
  - Marriage certificate for your spouse, both original and English translation
  - Birth Certificate for your child or children, both original and English translation
- Documentation verifying name of each dependent
  - Passport(s)
- Proof of financial support for next two semesters
  - Financial support must cover tuition and living expenses for you plus living expenses and health insurance for all dependents
  - If you only have one semester to complete your degree or six months left on your OPT, you may provide proof of financial support for just one semester or six months.

What do I need to know about the financial documentation?

- Please refer to the Estimated Expenses information found on the ISSO web site (www.isso.iastate.edu):
  - F-1 Immigration Information » Estimated Expenses

How do I submit this request?

- This is an electronic process completed by logging in to Cystart using your ISU NetID and password
- Start this processing by going to the ISSO web site (www.isso.iastate.edu):
  - F-1 Immigration Information » Dependent I-20 (F-2 Spouse or Child)

What is the timeline for processing this request?

- 10 calendar days after there is a check mark in all boxes on the Cystart request page for a dependent I-20.

How will I know if this request has been approved?

- ISSO will send an e-mail to your ISU e-mail address when processing is complete.
  - If you do not receive this e-mail within 10 calendar days as noted above, please send an e-mail to isso@iastate.edu to check on your request.
Can an F-2 spouse enroll in a U.S. school?
- An F-2 spouse is never eligible to enroll full-time
- An F-2 spouse may enroll part-time if the purpose of the enrollment is recreational
  - Classes cannot be taken that are related to previous degrees earned by the spouse
  - Classes cannot be taken that will count toward a future degree program in the U.S.
- ISSO recommends the F-2 spouse meet with an ISSO advisor before any enrollment

What would happen if an F-2 spouse enrolls in a U.S. school and it is not just recreational?
- The spouse would be considered in violation of his or her F-2 status if enrolled full-time
- The spouse would not be eligible to change from F-2 to F-1 status within the U.S.
- The spouse might face difficulties with future visa or immigration applications

Can an F-2 child enroll in a U.S. school?
- An F-2 child may enroll full-time in an elementary or secondary school (kindergarten through 12th grade)
- Beyond twelfth grade, an F-2 child may enroll part-time if the purpose of the study is recreational

What would happen if an F-2 child enrolls in a U.S. post-secondary school (university or college) and it is not just recreational?
- The child would be considered in violation of his or her F-2 status if enrolled full-time
- The child would not be eligible to change from F-2 to F-1 status within the U.S.
- The child might face difficulties with future visa or immigration applications

What must an F-2 dependent do in order to take courses toward a degree program?
- The F-2 dependent must become an F-1 student
  - As an F-1 student, the spouse or child would be required to enroll full-time
- There are two options for becoming an F-1 student:
  - Change of status without leaving the U.S. (see Change of Status page on ISSO web site for more detail)
    - Submit an application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
    - Processing time is difficult to predict and could take anywhere from 2-4 months, or longer
    - Change of status application cannot be expedited
    - Cannot enroll until the change of status has been approved by USCIS
  - Travel outside the U.S.
    - Obtain new I-20, apply for F-1 visa at a U.S. consulate, and re-enter U.S. in F-1 status
    - More control over when F-1 status begins

Can an F-2 dependent work?
- No, an F-2 dependent is never eligible to accept employment

What budget changes should I consider before bringing my family as F-2 dependents?
- Plan a budget to see if you have sufficient funds to support you and your family
- Your housing and food budgets will increase
- Your phone bill may increase as your wife or children call family or friends back home
- Required health insurance for families can be up to five times your current insurance cost:
  - ISU Student & Scholar Health Insurance Plan: [http://www.hrs.iastate.edu/hrs/node/456](http://www.hrs.iastate.edu/hrs/node/456)
What else should I consider before bringing my family as F-2 dependents?

- Consider how much time you spend on campus at your office, in your lab as you do at your home
- Consider how well your wife or child speaks English

What options exist to help my spouse adjust to life in Ames?

See the “Programs” section of the ISSO Website for information on these options.

- Friends of International Women
- Engaging International Spouses
- Conversational English courses
- Story County Volunteer Center (and any other volunteer opportunities)
- Community resources such as the Ames Public Library and Ames Parks and Recreation

What happens if my child will turn age 21 during the time we will be in the U.S.?

- An F-2 child must take action to continue to stay in the U.S., if desired. There are two options:
  - The child may apply for a change of status without having to leave the U.S.
    - This application must be received by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services before the child’s 21st birthday
    - Most children would likely apply for a change to F-1 status
  - Travel outside the U.S.
    - The child may leave the U.S. with a new immigration document, such as an I-20 for an F-1 student
    - The child would then apply for the new visa and return to the U.S. to obtain the new status