

WELCOME TO UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY in the CITY OF NEW YORK



GETTING YOUR FORM I-20

Certificate of Eligibility for F-1 Student Status

IMPORTANT: The information on the following pages carefully explains how to get your Form I-20. Please read it and follow the directions in their entirety to avoid delays in getting your I-20. This packet is information and reference **ONLY**, **NOT** the application itself, so be sure to follow the links to the application pages.

NOW THAT YOU ARE PLANNING TO BE A UNION STUDENT, THERE ARE TWO THINGS THAT YOU CANNOT DO!

1. DO NOT ENTER THE U.S. with a B-1, B-2, or B-1/2 Visa

If you use a B visa to enter the U.S., you are saying, “I’m here as a visitor” *only*. Since you contacted our school about study, this could be viewed as misrepresenting your purpose for entering the U.S., and you might be refused permission to extend or change your status. Do not listen to people who say it is easy to enter the country as a visitor and change your status to F-1 Student. It is not true. U.S. federal regulations prohibit B visitors from pursuing a course of study before obtaining a change of status to F-1 Student.

If your study plans are not certain and you want to enter the U.S. to visit schools, you must explain this on your visa application and ask the visa officer for a B-2 visa with the words “Prospective Student” noted on it or have the words added to your B visa if you already have one.



2. DO NOT ENTER THE U.S. on the Visa Waiver Program (WT or WB)

If you are from a country where you can enter the U.S. as a visitor by showing a round-trip airline ticket, do not do this. You will be permitted to stay for only 90 days. You will not be given more time or allowed to change to F-1 Student status.

WHAT IS A FORM I-20, AND WHY DO YOU NEED ONE?

A Form I-20 is a government form that certifies that you are eligible for F-1 Student Status. That means that (1) you are or expect to be a full-time student; (2) you meet our admissions requirements; (3) you will pursue a full course of study; (4) you have proven that you have enough money to study and live in the U.S. without working illegally or suffering from poverty.

You need a Form I-20 to obtain an F-1 Student visa or status or to keep lawful F-1 status when transferring or changing schools within the U.S.

DOES EVERYBODY NEED A FORM I-20?

No. J-1 students need a Form DS-2019; contact us for that application. B Visitors and F-2 dependents must obtain an I-20 and apply for a change of status to F-1 Student to pursue a course of study that is not avocational or recreational in nature. If you are maintaining another nonimmigrant status in the U.S., you do not have to have an I-20 and may attend school full or part-time. Dependent children in E, H, I, J, L, M, N, O, P, R, or S status need to change status after their 21st birthday or if they marry. If you have no legal status, you may attend school but you are not eligible to change status and do not need an I-20.



RULES FOR GETTING A FORM I-20

- YOU MUST BE A “BONA FIDE” (REAL) STUDENT, ACCEPTED TO A FULL-TIME PROGRAM OF STUDY.**
- YOU MUST PROVE THAT YOU CAN SUPPORT THE COSTS OF LIVING AND STUDYING IN THE U.S. FOR EVERY YEAR OF YOUR PROGRAM OF STUDY AT UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY. THIS IS REQUIRED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO ISSUE THE FORM I-20.**
- DO NOT EXPECT THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO WORK IN THE U.S. TO HELP MEET YOUR ANNUAL COSTS.** On-campus employment is limited and competitive; the U.S. Department of Homeland Security strictly controls off-campus employment.
- CAREFULLY REVIEW OUR SCHOOL’S “*ESTIMATED ANNUAL COSTS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS*” ON **PAGE 5** AND **ENTER YOUR TOTAL ESTIMATED COSTS ON THE LINE PROVIDED.** THIS IS THE AMOUNT THAT YOU MUST PROVE THAT YOU CAN SUPPORT FOR EVERY YEAR IN YOUR PROGRAM OF STUDY. (Estimate that it will take 1 year for a Master of Sacred Theology; 2 years for a Master of Arts; 3 years for a Master of Divinity; 4 years for the combined Master of Divinity and Master of Social Work in conjunction with Columbia University; and 5 for a Doctor of Philosophy).**
- THESE REQUIREMENTS ARE NOT NEGOTIABLE.** They represent a modest average budget that does not include luxuries of any kind. We strongly recommend that you budget at least 10% more if possible. Students and their families should look closely at the costs of studying at Union and the costs of living in New York City. Make careful plans to be sure your needs will be met.
- EXPECT ANNUAL INCREASES in tuition and living costs of approximately 10%.**
- YOU MAY BE ASKED TO PROVIDE MORE PROOF OF YOUR FUNDING** - perhaps more than once. The U.S. government requires us to be certain, to the best of our ability, that you will have enough financial support during your stay.
- COMPLETE THE APPLICATION FOR A FORM I-20**
https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/app_form_i20.
- HAVE YOUR SPONSOR(S) COMPLETE THE SPONSOR’S AFFIDAVIT OF CASH SUPPORT AND/OR SPONSOR’S AFFIDAVIT OF FREE ROOM AND BOARD (available on pages 8 and 10 of this handbook) AND ATTACH THE REQUIRED EVIDENCE.**
- SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION FOR A FORM I-20, SPONSOR’S AFFIDAVIT AND EVIDENCE TO US ELECTRONICALLY WITH THE LINKS PROVIDED. PRINT A HARD COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS AND TO TAKE TO YOUR VISA INTERVIEW.**
- WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT YOU SUBMIT YOUR I-20 APPLICATION, SPONSOR’S AFFIDAVIT, AND EVIDENCE AT THE SAME TIME OF APPLICATION TO THE SEMINARY. ONCE YOU ARE ADMITTED, YOUR FORM I-20 CAN THEN BE ISSUED MORE PROMPTLY.**

Department of Homeland Security U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement		I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status FORM NO. 100-0004	
SEVIS ID: N0004705512			
SURNAME/PRIMARY NAME		GIVEN NAME	CLASS
PREFERRED NAME		PASSPORT NUMBER	F-1 ACADEMIC AND LANGUAGE
COUNTRY OF BIRTH		COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP	
DATE OF BIRTH		ADMISSION NUMBER	
FORM ISSUE REASON		LEGACY NAME	
SCHOOL INFORMATION			
SCHOOL NAME		SCHOOL ADDRESS	
SCHOOL OFFICIAL TO CONTACT (ON ARRIVAL)		SCHOOL CODE AND APPROVAL DATE	
PROGRAM OF STUDY			
EDUCATION LEVEL		MAJOR 1	MAJOR 2
NORMAL PROGRAM LENGTH		PROGRAM ENGLISH PROFICIENCY	ESTABLISHED PROFICIENCY NOTES
PROGRAM START DATE		PROGRAM END DATE	
FINANCIALS			
ESTIMATED AVERAGE COSTS FOR 9 MONTHS		STUDENT'S FUNDING FOR 9 MONTHS	
TOTAL		TOTAL	
REMARKS			
SCHOOL ATTESTATION			
STUDENT ATTESTATION			
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT		DATE ISSUED	PLACE ISSUED
SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN		DATE	
NAME OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN		ADDRESS (city/state or province/country)	DATE

FUNDING SOURCES

YOUR FUNDING CAN COME FROM ANY COMBINATION OF SOURCES IN THE U.S. OR ABROAD:

1. **FUNDS FROM SPONSORS** (parents, relatives, friends, organizations). You may have as many sponsors as you need. Sponsors may provide you with support in the form of money and/or room and board. Free room and board is when you live with someone and don't have to pay for your room or food.

WARNING #1

It is highly recommended that **at least part of your financial support come from your country of residence**. This helps when you apply for your student visa.

WARNING #2

A sponsor should promise only as much money as he or she is capable of giving you. Some sponsors believe that the more money they promise the easier it will be to get your I-20. **THE MOST COMMON REASON WE REJECT FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS IS THAT WE CANNOT REASONABLY BELIEVE THE SPONSOR CAN AFFORD TO GIVE AS MUCH MONEY AS PROMISED.**

2. **PERSONAL FUNDS** come from your own resources, not those of anyone else. If your parents put money in your account, we will ask you to submit the evidence required of sponsors. Unless you have enough cash to support yourself for your entire program of study or can prove other sources of personal income, you will need a sponsor with sufficient income to support you.
3. **FUNDS FROM THIS SCHOOL** such as scholarship, assistantship, or fellowship. Not all Seminary support covers the entire program of study or all expenses, so you may need additional support to meet your minimum annual costs.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

COMPLETE THE APPLICATION FOR THE FORM I-20 https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/app_form_i20 AND SUBMIT IT WITH ALL THE REQUIRED EVIDENCE OF FUNDING DIRECTLY TO THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES OFFICE ELECTRONICALLY, USING THE LINKS PROVIDED. PRINT COPIES FOR YOUR RECORDS AND KEEP THEM FOR YOUR VISA INTERVIEW.

ALL DOCUMENTS YOU PROVIDE MUST BE:

1. Less than three months old
2. In English (We cannot review documents that are not in English!)

SPONSORS OF CASH SUPPORT:

1. SPONSOR'S AFFIDAVIT AND PROOF OF ANNUAL CASH SUPPORT (page 8 of this handbook)

2. PROOF OF INCOME

Individual Sponsor (any of the following), with most recent pay stub:

- Income tax returns or receipts, or
- Pay stubs for the last three months, or
- Bank/investment statements for the last six months

Company Sponsor

- Submit tax returns, AND
- Business registration and licenses

3. BANK STATEMENT in the name of the sponsor only. A monthly statement of balances and deposits. Letters are not accepted.

WARNING #3

If there is no proof of income provided with a bank statement, the statement balance will be totaled and divided by the number of years in your program of study to determine the amount available to you for each year.

WARNING #4

The income of a company *is not* the personal income of the owner of the business. It won't be accepted as proof of income. The sponsor must still provide proof of personal income as well as business registration and licenses.

WARNING #5

If a bank statement is in the name of more than one person, each individual must submit an affidavit of support.

WARNING #6

We cannot accept bank statements that do not specify monthly balances and deposits.

SPONSORS OF FREE ROOM AND BOARD:

1. SPONSOR'S AFFIDAVIT AND PROOF OF FREE ROOM AND BOARD (page 10 of this handbook)

2. PROOF OF INCOME (any of the following), with most recent pay stub:

- Income tax returns or receipts, or
- Pay stubs for the last three months, or
- Bank/investment statements for the last three months

3. COPY OF PROPERTY LEASE, DEED, RENT RECEIPTS, OR UTILITY BILL

WARNING #7

If you are presently in the U.S., you must be living with the sponsor at the time of filing this application for this to be counted towards your means of support.

PERSONAL FUNDS:

1. BANK/ASSET STATEMENT in your name

- monthly statement of balances and deposits

SCHOOL FUNDS:

1. COPY OF YOUR AWARD LETTER OR CONTRACT

It must give itemized details of what you will be receiving and for how long.

APPLICATION FOR A FORM I-20

The **online application** is found at https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/app_form_i20.

Sponsor Affidavit and Evidence of Annual Cash Support forms must be completed by your sponsor(s) and turned in as an attached file with your application for the Form I-20. There is a copy of this form below on pages 7-8 of this handbook.

Sponsor Affidavit and Proof of Free Room and Board forms must be completed by your sponsor and turned in as an attached file with your application if you will be receiving free room and board. There is a copy of this form below on pages 9-10 of this handbook.

NOTE: *This handbook is not the application. Please find it here: https://utsnyc.formstack.com/forms/app_form_i20 Additionally, the application is NOT your Form I-20. The Form will be mailed to you or can be picked up by a designated person as indicated in the application.*

SPONSOR'S AFFIDAVIT AND EVIDENCE OF ANNUAL CASH SUPPORT

WHAT DOES THIS AFFIDAVIT MEAN?

By completing this affidavit, you are swearing to the U.S. government that you will provide this student with a specific amount of money from your financial resources for every year the student is attending Union Theological Seminary in the U.S. You are also proving that you can afford the support you are promising with the documentary evidence you have attached.

Before signing it, it is important to understand that you are making a financial commitment to the student that should not be broken. Sponsors who fail to provide the promised support force students to drop out of school, be forced to leave the U.S., and cause pain and suffering. Do not expect that the student will be able to support the costs through employment. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security strictly controls employment and is very limited.

HOW TO COMPLETE THIS FORM

1. Fill this form out in English (or have it officially translated). **Promise only the amount of money you are able to give.** The most common reason we reject affidavits is that there is not enough proof that a sponsor can afford to give as much as promised.
2. Sign and date the affidavit.
3. Attach the supporting evidence listed below. The affidavit will NOT be accepted without the required supporting evidence.
4. Give the student the original printed documents and have him or her submit them electronically to us with the application for a Form I-20. The student will need to retain the originals to present to the consul at the visa interview.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE REQUIRED

1. **Proof of income** (any of the following) with most recent pay stub
 - Income tax returns or receipts or
 - Pay stubs for the last three months or
 - Bank/investment statements for the last three months
2. **Bank statement** -- a monthly statement of balances and deposits -- in your name **only**. If another person's name appears on your bank statement, that person must also complete a separate affidavit. A letter from a bank officer will NOT be accepted.

SPONSOR'S AFFIDAVIT AND PROOF OF FREE ROOM AND BOARD

WHAT DOES THIS AFFIDAVIT MEAN?

By completing this affidavit, you are swearing to the U.S. government that this student will live with you free of any charge for room and food for **every year** he or she is attending Union Theological Seminary in the U.S. The student cannot be required to provide you with any services, such as babysitting, cleaning, etc. in exchange for the room and board since that constitutes employment. You are also proving that you are the person who owns or rents the property and can afford the support you are promising with the documentary evidence you have attached.

Before signing the affidavit, it is important to understand that you are making a financial commitment to the student that should not be broken. Sponsors who fail to provide the promised support force students to drop out of school, be forced to leave the U.S., and cause pain and suffering. Do not expect that the student will be able to support the costs through employment. Employment is strictly controlled by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and is very limited.

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SUPPORTING EVIDENCE REQUIRED

1. **Proof of income** (any of the following) with most recent pay stub
 - Income tax returns or receipts or
 - Pay stubs for the last six months or
 - Bank/investment statements for the last six months
2. **Bank statement** -- a monthly statement of balances and deposits -- in your name **only**. If another person's name appears on your bank statement, that person must also complete a separate affidavit. A letter from a bank officer will NOT be accepted.
3. **Copy of your deed, lease, current rent receipts, or current utility bill** to prove that you are the person who owns or rents the property.

SWORN PROMISE OF FREE ROOM AND BOARD

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I, _____, promise that _____
full name student's full name
will live free of charge with me in my home at:

Street Address City, State, Zip Code
for EVERY YEAR of the student's program of study at Union Theological Seminary.

Please check one:

- I own this property I rent this property

If the student is presently in the U.S., does s/he currently live with you? Yes No

I will not require any type of service to be performed in exchange for this benefit.

My relationship to the student is: _____
(Parent, spouse, brother, sister, friend, etc.)

Proof of income, bank statements, and proof of residence must be attached.

I swear that the information I have provided is true and correct.

Signature of Sponsor

Date