There are two immigration terms you will see often: “entry visa” and “immigration status”. Entry visa refers to the visa affixed to or stamped in your passport; it is obtained only at a U.S. Consulate. An entry visa is used only to enter the U.S. and it can expire while you are here with no repercussions. Your immigration status is usually the same as your entry visa classification (F-1, J-1, B-2, etc.).

The second term, “immigration status”, is the nonimmigrant classification on your I-94 Arrival/Departure Record (usually called the I-94 card). You fill out the I-94 card on your flight to the U.S. or at a border crossing and the immigration inspector processes it upon arrival. The inspector stamps and dates the Departure section of the I-94 card, writes the immigration status you will hold (F-1, J-1, B-2, WB etc.) and how long you may stay in the U.S. Finally, the inspector inserts or staples the I-94 Departure section into your passport and retains the Arrival section. The I-94 card is your most important immigration document. It is your only evidence of admission to the U.S. in a particular immigration status and for how long you may remain in the U.S. in that status.

**F-1 Student Classification**

Students in F-1 student status are required to study full-time during the academic year. GTS commonly defines full-time study as registration for 9 or more credits.

Students in F-1 status may work on campus part-time (up to 20 hours per week) with the permission of the GTS Office of Financial Aid. A student may apply for permission to work off campus only after 9 months in F-1 status. This requires the prior written approval of GTS and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Dependents holding F-2 status may not work under any circumstances.

**Canadian Nationals**

Canadians do not need entry visas to enter the United States. Those entering the United States to study must request F-1 status at the border and must show the I-20 to the immigration inspector who will issue an I-94 Card upon entry to the United States. Canadian students must have an I-94 Card to confirm current F-1 status; please check that the I-94 is annotated “F-1” and “D/S” before leaving immigration inspection.

**Transfer Students Currently or Recently in F-1 or J-1 Status**

If you already hold F-1 status or were in F-1 status within the last 60 days or if you already hold J-1 status or were in J-1 status within the last 30 days, you can transfer your SEVIS record from your current school to Columbia. In addition to submitting the online AVC and supporting documents, you must also submit photocopies of all pages of previous I-20 or DS-2019 forms, as well as photocopies of both sides of your I-94 card. You must also submit a completed TRANSFER FORM that is signed by the international office at your current school and returned to GTS.

**Nationals from Countries Requiring Currency Exchange Permits**

The I-20 is a U.S. government form that TGTG may issue solely for use by the U.S. Departments of State and Homeland Security in establishing eligibility for F-1 student classification; it cannot be issued to you for the purpose of obtaining a foreign exchange permit. Moreover, if your country sets a maximum figure on foreign exchange that is below the minimum requirement for I-20 eligibility, you must document the availability of supplemental funds from sources not affected by exchange control. GTS reserves the right to require advance deposit of funds sufficient to cover part or all of your tuition and living expenses.
APPLICATION FOR VISA CERTIFICATE

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

After you submit the online Application for Visa Certificate, you will need to submit supporting documents with official English translations. You can submit your documents by fax, by mail or by courier service; the fax number and addresses are listed below. If you fax your documents, we will send you an acknowledgement email 5 to 7 days later when your documents have been added to your record. If you send your documents by courier service, you can track delivery on the courier service website. We are not able to acknowledge deliveries by mail.

GTS will generally accept faxes of your documents although we reserve the right to request original documents. The U.S. Department of State does not accept faxed I-20 forms for purposes of visa issuance.

HOW TO SEND YOUR SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

By Fax to: 212-727-3907

By Courier to: General Theological Seminary, 440 W 21st Street, NY, NY 10011

By Mail to: General Theological Seminary, 440 W 21st Street, New York, NY 10011

EVERYONE MUST SUBMIT THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS

A photocopy of the identification page of your passport. If you do not have a passport, be sure to enter your name on the AVC form EXACTLY as it is on your passport application.

A signed and dated letter from you describing how you will pay for your tuition, fees and living expenses for the first year of your studies and how you plan to pay for the following year(s).

Documents that show that you have enough funds available now for your tuition, fees and living expenses for the first year of your studies.

INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR FUNDING DOCUMENTS

VISA APPLICATION GUIDE // THE GENERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
It is very important to remember that you must prove you can pay for your studies twice--first to GTS before we issue an I-20 and again to the Consular Officer who decides whether to issue your entry visa. Your funding documents must show that the estimated cost of tuition, fees and living expenses are readily available liquid assets. Readily available liquid assets include checking or savings accounts, money market accounts, or certificates of deposit (time deposits) with maturity dates of less than one year.

The following funding documents ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE under any circumstances: investment portfolios of any kind (equities, bonds, mutual funds, etc.), retirement plan accounts, tax returns or other tax filing documents, deeds to any real estate, leases with rental income, etc. If you plan to use money from the sale of investments or the sale of real estate or personal items (such as your car), you must sell the investment or property or item and place the proceeds of the sale into a checking or savings account, a money market account or a certificate of deposit (time deposit) with a maturity date of less than one year.

GTS cannot issue your I-20 until you have clearly shown that you have available funds that equal or exceed your estimated expenses for the year on the chart of Estimated Expenses.

Students who will plan to remain in the U.S. during the summer will need to document additional funds for their summer living expenses.

If you are married and plan to bring your spouse or children, you must document additional funds for your dependents. The amounts for the 2010-2011 Academic Year are U.S. $800 monthly for your spouse and U.S. $400 monthly for each child. Your dependents may join you at any time during your studies.

No applicant for an I-20 is permitted to use any expected employment in the U.S. as a source of funds for tuition, fees, or living expenses.

Students pay for their educational expenses in many ways and many students have more than one source of funding. The documents you submit will depend on how you plan to pay for your studies at GTS; you do not have to submit a type of document if that is not how you are planning to pay your expenses. The amounts on your documents do not have to be in U.S. dollars; we will do a currency conversion. If your documents are not in English, you must include an official translation into English. Please do not send original documents as we cannot return them to you.

Additional requirement for F-1 or J-1 transfer students

If you already hold F-1 status or were in F-1 status within the last 60 days or if you already hold J-1 status or were in J-1 status within the last 30 days, you must transfer your SEVIS record from your current school to GTS. In addition to submitting the online AVC and supporting documents, you must also submit photocopies of all pages of previous I-20 or DS-2019 forms, as well as photocopies of both sides of your I-94 card. You must also submit a completed TRANSFER FORM that is signed by the international office at your current school and returned to GTS.
### Chart of Required Documents for How Your Tuition, Fees and Living Expenses Will Be Funded

Note: The name of the account holder on any bank documents must be in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Funds for Tuition, Fees and Living Expenses</th>
<th>Documents To Be Submitted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Personal Funds**                                   | Option 1: A letter from your bank in your own name with the exact amount of the balance(s) in your account(s) on the date it is written. The balance(s) must be sufficient to meet your expenses for the first year of your studies. The letter must be dated within the past 3 months.  
Option 2: If you are in the U.S., you may submit the monthly statement(s) from your U.S. bank. Statement(s) must be within the past 3 months. |
| **Parents and/or Family Funds**                      | 1. A letter from your parent or relative which guarantees your support and includes the following:  
a) Your relative’s name, address and relationship to you  
b) The program of study and degree objective for which they will provide funding  
c) The amount per year in U.S. dollars that will be provided and the number of years for which it is guaranteed  
2. A letter from your relative’s bank with the exact amount of the balance(s) in the account(s) on the date it is written. The balance(s) must be sufficient to meet your expenses for the first year of your studies. The letter must be dated within the past 3 months. (If your parent or relative is in the U.S., you may submit the monthly statement(s) from their U.S. bank instead of a letter from their bank. Statement(s) must be within the past 3 months.) |
| **An international organization, government agency, foundation, another university or your employer** | The official sponsorship letter stating the conditions of the award. The letter must specify the name and address of the sponsor, the total amount in U.S. dollars available to you for the Columbia school in which you will study, the major field of study and the degree objective and the period for which funding is guaranteed or a statement that funding is renewable annually for a specified number of years. |
| **Private Sponsor: Be aware that U.S. Consular officers review private sponsor guarantees very carefully. You should be prepared to submit additional documentation when applying for your entry visa.** | 1. A letter from your sponsor which guarantees your support and includes the following:  
a) Your sponsor’s name and address and relationship to you  
b) An explanation of your sponsor’s relationship to you and why he or she is committed to providing for your support  
c) The program of study and degree objective for which the sponsor will provide funding  
d) The amount per year in U.S. dollars that will be provided and the number of years for which it is guaranteed  
2. A letter from your sponsor’s bank with the exact amount of the balance(s) in the account(s) on the date it is written. The balance(s) must be sufficient to meet your expenses for the first year of your studies. The letter must be dated within the past 3 months. (If your sponsor is in the U.S., you may submit the monthly statement(s) from their U.S. bank instead of a letter from their bank. Statement(s) must be within the past 3 months.) |
| **Education Loans**                                  | Sallie Mae student loan: Approval notice only. Pre-approvals are not accepted.  
Citi-Assist student loan: Pre-approval notice is acceptable.  
Access Group student loan: Pre-approval notice is acceptable.  
Loans from banks outside the U.S.: Approval notice only. Pre-approvals are not accepted. |