Information for Students Applying for an F-1 Visa

International students who have been accepted into Houston Graduate School of Theology must complete an I-20 application and pay an I-20 processing fee. After HGST has received a completed application along with the required documentation, the Designated School Official (DSO) will enter the student into the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and mail the student (and any dependents) an I-20 form.

After receiving an I-20 form from the school, students will need to pay the SEVIS I-901 fee. For more information about this fee, please visit www.fmjfee.com. Students should retain proof that they have paid this fee as a payment receipt will be required when applying for an F-1 visa.

After paying the I-901 fee, students need to complete a visa application, pay a visa application fee, and schedule an interview at a nearby US embassy. Many embassies are now requiring that students complete the DS-160 visa application form online. Information about the DS-160 and other application procedures can be found on the State Department’s website at http://travel.state.gov. Students are responsible for ensuring that they complete all the necessary steps in order to apply for a visa; therefore, all international applicants should carefully review the above website to ensure that they are complying with current US procedures and regulations.

A list of documentation required for a visa application is given on page two of this document. During an interview with US embassy officials, students must prove that they have strong ties to their home country. If a student is initially denied a student visa, he or she should ask how to apply again.

Students who have been issued a visa must enter the United States either on or before the start date shown on their I-20 form; however, students may not enter the country more than 30 days prior to their program start date. Having a visa does not guarantee entry into the United States. An officer at the student’s point of entry will decide if the student can enter the country. When entering the country, students should be prepared to show their passport, visa, evidence of financial support, proof of I-901 payment, and I-20 documents upon request. Students should also carry copies of all of these documents to give to immigration officers if asked.

Once a student’s entry into the country is approved, the student will receive an I-94 form. This form must be kept in the student’s passport for the duration of his or her stay in the United States.

If you have any questions about the visa application process, please contact:

Linda Long, DSO
llong@hgst.edu
Phone: 713-942-9505
Fax: 713-942-9506
Documents Required for Visa Applications at an US Embassy

Each applicant for a student visa **must** submit forms and documentation as explained below:

- **Form I-20A-B, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status-For Academic and Language Students.** You will need to submit a SEVIS-generated Form, I-20, which was provided to you by your school. You and your school official must sign the I-20 form.
- **Online Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application, Form DS-160.**
- **A passport valid for travel to the United States and with a validity date at least six months beyond the applicant’s intended period of stay in the United States.** If more than one person is included in the passport, each person desiring a visa must complete an application.
- **One (1) 2x2 photograph.**
- **An MRV fee receipt to show payment of the visa application fee.**
- **The SEVIS I-901 fee receipt.**

All applicants **should be prepared** to provide:

- Transcripts and diplomas from previous institutions attended;
- Scores from standardized tests required by the educational institution such as the TOEFL, SAT, GRE, GMAT, etc.;
- Financial evidence that shows you or your parents who are sponsoring you have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period of your intended study. For example, if you or your sponsor is a salaried employee, please bring income tax documents and original bank books and/or statements. If either you or your sponsor owns a business, please bring business registration, licenses, etc., and tax documents, as well as original bank books and/or statements.

Applicants with dependents **must** also provide:

- Proof of the student’s relationship to his/her spouse and/or children (e.g., marriage and birth certificates);
- It is preferred that families apply for F-1 and F-2 visas at the same time, but if the spouse and children must apply separately at a later time, they should bring a copy of the student visa holder’s passport and visa, along with all other required documents.

Additional documents and information may be required by a student’s local US embassy. Students should check the website of their closest US embassy for a full list of requirements and procedures. This information is current as of July 27, 2010, and can also be found at: [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html).