

International Student Admissions Letter of Detail for the Application & Visa Process at RES

Reformed Episcopal Seminary is authorized by the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement to host full-time international students in our Master of Divinity & Master of Arts programs. Students from other nations who wish to enroll with us must be granted an F-1 visa to travel to the United States for in-person studies.

Students planning to study online are not required to follow these steps. However, should you choose to study in-person at any time you must remain an online student until these steps are completed and your visa granted.

Thank you for your interest in studying at the Reformed Episcopal Seminary (RES). This letter will describe the necessary steps to be considered for admission to RES & the visa approval by the US government:

Initial Inquiry

A student's initial inquiry with RES should begin by contacting the Director of Admissions, at admissions@reseminary.edu. After contacting admission & should the student wish to pursue admission, they should complete an application form found on our web site at <https://www.res.edu/apply.html>.

Step 1: (1) Complete the application for Seminary Admission, (2) write a Personal Statement (at least 500 words) describing your life of Christian discipleship and sense of God's vocation for your life (as outlined on page 4 of the application form), (3) provide an academic writing sample of at least 3-5 thousand words (including citations), and (4) submit the non-refundable application fee.

Step 2: Submit three letters of reference, one of which must be from your pastor or bishop. *If pursuing holy orders, you must have direct, written endorsement from your bishop and sending diocese or similar authority and body.*

Step 3: Request official transcripts of your academic record be sent to the RES Department of Admissions. They must include a complete record of your undergraduate and graduate work. Your undergraduate records should include the degree which you earned, and your graduate records will be used to determine any credits that may be transferred towards pursuing a degree at RES. Our mailing address is: Reformed Episcopal Seminary, 800 Church Rd., Oreland, PA 19075 USA or official copies can be emailed to the Admissions Office. **AT THIS POINT YOUR ADMISSION PROCESS MUST INCLUDE THE SEMINARY SEVIS REPRESENTATIVE** who can be contacted at finaid@res.edu.

Step 4: Regardless of your language of origin, scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a minimum score of 80 must also be submitted to the Admissions Office. Students who have completed both their secondary school and university course work entirely in English do not need to submit TOEFL scores. In such a case, students must submit a copy of their high school transcript or diploma **in addition to** their university transcript(s). The seminary is always the final arbiter of whether a student can be admitted without a TOEFL score.

Step 5: Complete and return the (F-1) International Student Financial Support Statement (attached to this email.) You must show the ability to pay for your seminary education, living expenses, etc. You must not only document your ability to pay but provide proof that the funds are saved/secured and/or that your sending agencies have made documented commitments to cover the cost of your seminary education. Your visa will not allow you to work in the United States for at least the first year and will only thereafter allow for work in the United States if a hardship waiver is granted by the US Department of Immigration and Naturalization Services (SEVIS.) There is no guarantee that a waiver will be granted, and the seminary has no influence in the decision. Students must prepay all first semester seminary expenses

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before the beginning of the term for which they are enrolled, and all subsequent semesters will be paid in the same fashion to continue studying at the seminary. Therefore, when estimating the expected cost of seminary, your figures should include transportation to and from the seminary, tuition, textbooks, fees, room and board, insurance, and all other living expenses.

NOTE: Scholarships at RES are reserved for those clergy training for ordination and service in the Reformed Episcopal Church and are not available to students outside the denomination.

Step 6: For students with a current visa, send a photocopy of your current visa status. Students requesting visas must know that visas **WILL NOT BE ISSUED** until all seminary requirements including all US Government requirements for issuing a student visa have been satisfied and you have officially been accepted to the seminary.

NOTE: Please send all official documents via post (or have them sent by the institution), we cannot accept application materials (other than the application and reference letters) sent via email. We must also have your complete postal address so that we can complete your inquiry profile. Any omissions from your application may cause delays.

Step 7: Once the application is complete, you will schedule an admissions interview with the requisite faculty which may include our Admissions Director, Dean of Students, Seminary President/Dean, and/or other chosen representatives. The interview can be done either in person or over Zoom.

The results of these 7 steps will be used to evaluate your suitability for study at RES, and from which a determination will be made to offer acceptance to RES. Should you be accepted to the seminary, sign the acceptance letter, and pay the acceptance fee, the next step is securing a visa for entry and study in the United States. The acceptance fee covers the cost of international couriers for the transmission of immigration documents and related administrative fees. It also secures the student's admission to RES, should there be no significant changes, for a period of 5 years. This allows students to work through the visa process as it can take several attempts to complete.

Step 8: Upon receipt of the acceptance fee and signed letter of acceptance, and completing the visa process as determined by the seminary's SEVIS representative, RES will issue the student an I-20 form which allows the student to apply for their visa. During this process the student will be required to demonstrate to us and to the immigration authorities that he/she has the funds or pledges of support to cover costs of tuition and living expenses while in the United States. This will be done via the (F-1) International Student Financial Support Statement & other requested documentation.

Step 9: The student pays the I-901 SEVIS fee to the US government. This can be done from most countries at <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html>. However, for students from Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Kenya, and Cameroon, there are special instructions for paying it. Students from these countries must pay from Western Union's QuickPay Service. Other countries may have different requirements so please check with your country of citizenship.

Step 10: The student then schedules a visa interview with their country's US embassy or consulate and pays all corresponding fees.

Step 11: Once you have successfully completed the interview, they have approved your application for a student visa, AND issued the visa, you must contact the seminary to register for classes. Once this is completed, you may make plans to come to the United States. Please do not just show up at the seminary.

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Please note that you are not allowed to enter the United States more than 30 days before the beginning of class.

Summary of costs related to application and visa process (8/12/2023):

1. **\$95** international student application fee, paid to Reformed Episcopal Seminary.
2. **\$550** acceptance fee, paid to Reformed Episcopal Seminary.
3. **\$350** I-901 SEVIS fee, paid to the US government.
4. There may be additional costs incurred in conjunction with scheduling your visa interview at the embassy - fees vary by country.

Students should allot at least 1 calendar year for this process, with the understanding that application to the seminary or issuance of a visa is not guaranteed, nor are any fees refundable.

Reformed Episcopal Seminary welcomes students from all denominations around the world. Upon consultation with our administrating officer from Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, and realizing the difficulty that some students have had in receiving the F-1 student visas, the Seminary has established the following policy for international students who wish to improve their chances of visa approval:

International students who have been admitted to the seminary, have accepted our offer of admission, and paid their nonrefundable acceptance fee may, but are not required to, prepay their first year's tuition. Upon prepayment, the student will be issued a letter from the admissions office certifying that they have prepaid their first year's tuition. If, after prepayment, the student's visa is still rejected, the student may request a refund of the prepaid tuition. If the request is made within six months of the interview, the seminary will refund 95% of the prepaid tuition amount back to the student.

Prepayment amount will be calculated based on (1.) the current tuition rate, (2.) estimated at 15 credits per term for first-year enrollment, (3.) after having factored any scholarship the student may have been awarded. If the student's visa application is successful, the tuition prepayment will be used as a downpayment toward first-term tuition. Upon arrival on campus, the student will still be responsible for paying tuition for classes enrolled in excess of 15 credits in each term, and all fees, books, housing and other related costs.

Regardless of whether the student wishes to prepay the tuition prior to their visa interview, international students **must** register and prepay for their first term's courses at least 30 days before the start of that term's classes.

Sincerely,

Rev. Shawn Riley, M.Div., CADC 2

Dean of Students & Director of Financial Aid Responsible for SEVIS, Field Education, Compliance, & Facility Operations
Lecturer of Pastoral Theology

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(610) 292-9852 – Seminary

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φιλοτιμούμεθα ... εὐάρεστοι αὐτῷ εἶναι.

We are ambitious to be well-pleasing unto Him. - II Corinthians 5:9