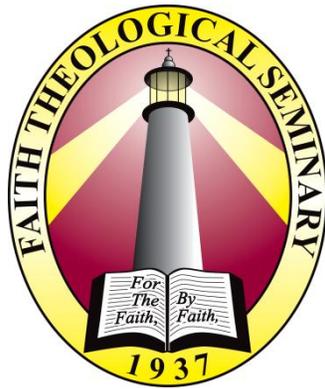


International Student Handbook



Faith Theological Seminary



Published by the Office of Admissions
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FAITH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

529 Walker Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21212 TEL: (410) 323-6211 FAX: 410-323-6331

Email: fts@FaithTheological.org

Website: www.faiththeological.org



2012 Commencement

Welcome to Faith Theological Seminary, Baltimore!

We are pleased to welcome you to Faith Theological Seminary (FTS). There are many services and programs available at the seminary, which will allow you to make the most of your educational experience. FTS encourages you to take advantage of these opportunities so that you and the seminary community can both benefit from your presence here.

This guide has been designed specifically to help international students adjust to their arrival at FTS. It is hoped that the information contained herein will provide a helpful introduction to the programs and services available at the seminary and help facilitate your transition to life in the United States.

As questions arise, please feel free to call or stop by the school office at 529 Walker Avenue. We will be more than glad to work with you should you need any help.

We hope you have a wonderful experience as an international student in the United States.

Sincerely,

Director of Admissions/DSO

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FIRST AND FOREMOST

International Admissions

International Students - Step by Step Admission Process

Step 1: Complete the International Student Admissions Application

Step 2: Pay the Application Fee and the I-20 Processing Fee

Step 3: Send the following documents to:

Director of Admissions
Faith Theological Seminary
529 Walker Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21212, USA

- Completed Application Form with Two Passport Photos
- Application Fee of \$50 paid online or enclosed (non-refundable)
- Personal Christian Testimony Statement
- Pastoral Recommendation Letter
- Academic Transcripts
- Completed Statement of Finances - Affidavit of Financial Support (I-134)
- Copy of your Passport Photo page
- I-20 Processing Fee of \$100 paid online or enclosed (non-refundable)
- Step 4: Application will be processed immediately after the receipt of all the above documents. FTS Director of Admissions will send you your Letter of Admission and I-20 form by mail.

Step 5: Pay the SEVP (I-901) Fee.

Step 6: Apply for a Student Visa at the American Consulate/Embassy near you.

Step 7: After obtaining the visa, notify the Director of Admissions of your U.S. arrival date.

Note: F-1 applicants currently residing in the US and not planning to depart the country before beginning a degree program at Faith Theological Seminary must complete the Transfer In Form for F-1 Students.

Post-Arrival Checklist

There are a number of things you must remember to do upon arrival. This period of time can be the most stressful. Below is a list of things you may want to remember to do once you have arrived in the United States in preparation for the start of the semester.

- Airport arrival and transportation. Be sure to have pre-arranged transportation from the airport to your destination in Baltimore (see directions, p. 9).
- Get settled into the housing that you have pre-arranged (p. 9).
- Get your phone/internet connected and connect with your home families and friends and sponsors to let them know of your arrival.
- Open a bank account, and ensure that your finances are secure and available (p. 8).
- Visit the seminary office at 529 Walker Avenue to complete transfer and/or check-in. Bring your passport, visa, I-94 card, I-20, dependents' I-94 card and I-20, if applicable.

- Register for classes and pay your fees and tuition fees.
- Take a tour of the seminary and identify your class locations.
- Obtain your social security card (if working on campus).
- Apply for a driver's license or state identification card through the Motor Vehicle Administration (if necessary) (see p. 8).

Emergencies

Immigration-Related Emergencies

If you face difficulties at your consulate or at the port-of-entry and need immediate assistance, please call the seminary at 410-323-6211.

Personal Emergencies

If you face a non-immigration-related emergency such as an accident or crime, call local police office (Baltimore Police Department 410-396-2525).

If the matter is extremely urgent or occurs off-campus, dial 911.

IMMIGRATION INFORMATION

How to Maintain Your Legal Status in the U.S.

The consequences for failing to maintain legal status in the U.S. are becoming increasingly more severe. It is relatively easy to stay in status if you observe the following rules:

- **Take a full course load each semester** (twelve credit hours - undergraduates & graduates). If you meet the criteria for a reduced course load, obtain a clearance from the Designated School Official (DSO) prior to the end of late registration.
- **Do not withdraw** from classes without consulting the DSO.
- **Do not let your I-20 expire.** If you need more time to complete your studies, apply for an extension at least 30 days before your form expires. The expiration date is printed on line five of the I-20 or line three on the DS-2019.
- Maintain a passport valid for **six months** into the future.
- If you need to leave FTS for a short-term or take a permanent **leave of absence** (except vacations), notify the DSO and submit a Program Departure Form. The Program Departure Form is available on the website and allows the DSO to update your information in SEVIS and in the school database. If you fail to complete this form, your SEVIS record will be terminated and you will not be allowed to return to the United States. Be sure to have the back page of your I-20 signed by the DSO.
- If you change your **visa status** or file for permanent residency, notify the DSO.
- If there are any changes in the information on your I-20/DS-2019, notify the DSO so that your I-20 can be updated.

Examples of situations when a new form is needed: change in sponsor or financial information,

change of major, change of name, change of citizenship, etc.

- Plan ahead and submit requests to the DSO in advance of when you will need them.
- Make certain that you maintain health insurance coverage for yourself and your dependents living in the U.S.
- Never work off-campus in the U.S. without prior approval from United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) You must not accept employment even if the employer or your academic advisor states that it is allowable.
- Never work on-campus more than twenty hours per week when classes are in session.
- Request a re-entry signature from the DSO prior to traveling abroad.
- Keep track of your visa expiration date and make certain to apply for a new one on your next trip home if necessary, so that you are able to return to the United States.
- Report any changes in address in the U.S. or in home country to the DSO within ten days. This can be done by submitting a Change of Address Form, available online.
- Notify the DSO of any dependents in F-2 or J-2 status who will accompany you in the U.S. The DSO must obtain biographical information as well receive notification as to the time they arrive and/or depart.
- Complete proper transfer procedures if you change schools. You must submit a Departure Form and Transfer Out Form to the DSO, obtain a new I-20 or DS-2019, and report to the new school within fifteen days of the program start date.
- Notify the DSO before enrolling in an online course. You may not apply more than three credit hours toward the full-time minimum.
- Notify the DSO before enrolling at another institution while attending FTS.

Re-entering the U.S. After a Temporary Absence (five months or less)

To re-enter the U.S., you must have the following documents:

- ✓ Valid passport
- ✓ Valid visa
- ✓ Current I-20 with a valid signature
- ✓ A copy of your transcript
- ✓ Verification of enrollment letter.

I-20 Endorsement

It is crucial that you have a valid signature from the international student advisor on your I-20 in order to reenter the United States. Students who do not have a valid signature on their I-20 are not able to reenter the country. The signature is valid for one academic year.

It Is Your Responsibility to

- Make travel arrangements early and anticipate delays at consulates or pods of entry.
- Understand the relevant immigration regulations and maintaining your legal status as an international student in the U.S.
- Be *probative* (that is, maintain good records, copies, and proof of all your paperwork).
- Plan your course schedules carefully so that you maintain full-time status.
- Keep all your documents up-to-date, and give time for processing new forms.
- Stay informed. Don't rely on your friends or the media for accurate information regarding immigration issues. As well meaning as they may be, they may not be aware of new developments and practices.
- Not hesitate to stop by the seminary, or call 410-323-6211, if you have any questions or concerns. Please note that the office can only assist you and cannot provide legal advice.

Visit the following web sites for more information:

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Enforcement (USCIE): www.ice.gov

National Association for Foreign Student Advisors (NAFSA): www.nafsa.org

EMPLOYMENT IN F-1 STATUS

On-campus Employment

F-1 students, unfortunately, do not qualify for federal financial aid. Many of the jobs on campus are “work study” jobs, which are positions paid by federal funds as part of a student's financial aid package. F-1 students are not eligible for “work-study.” F-1 students CAN apply for and obtain employment with departments contracted through the Seminary or non-work-study positions.

International students, in general, may work on campus only, and for no more than twenty hours per week during periods when class is in session. Students may work more than twenty hours per week during holidays and breaks. No formal authorization from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services is needed prior to beginning employment. If your employer has questions about your employment eligibility or about how to complete the Form I-9, ask him/her to please contact the Office of International Student and Scholar Services.

International students must obtain a Social Security Card from the Social Security Administration in order to receive compensation for their work. See the information on international students and social security numbers at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10181.pdf>

Off-campus Employment

As an F-1 visa student, you may not work off campus without authorization from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. There are only a few reasons the USCIS will grant a non-immigrant student permission to work outside campus including severe economic hardship based on an unforeseeable change in one's financial situation, and practical training. Please be mindful of the fact that F-1 students may not work more than twenty hours per week while school is in session. They may work more than twenty hours during breaks and holidays.

Curricular Practical Training

Off-campus work authorization may be granted by the DSO to an F-1 student in the form of "Curricular Practical Training" (CPT). The training must be an integral part of the established

curriculum (such as a co-op or internship), in the student's field of study. This means that the employment must meet one of these two criteria: practical experience is required for graduation, or practical training yields course credit.

CPT may be approved for part-time (20 hrs or less) or full-time (over twenty hours). The student must have an offer of employment from an employer offering work that qualifies as curricular practical training prior to applying for CPT. Use of twelve months or more of full-time CPT eliminates eligibility for Optional Practical Training (OPT).

Optional Practical Training

F-1 students are entitled to up to twelve months (cumulative) of "optional practical training" (in the official term), or "OPT", intended to give the student a chance to apply his/her education to the workplace and gain practical experience by allowing for a limited period of employment directly related to the student's curriculum.

Post-completion practical training is available after one has completed the formal course of study. The student must be enrolled full-time for a minimum of nine consecutive months prior to application. A student may apply for pre-completion practical training, as well, but it is generally limited to twenty hours per week while school is in session.

Pre- and post-completion practical training require specific authorization from the USCIS (Citizenship and Immigration Service, see <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>). Approximately three months before course completion, the student should file an application for an EAD (Employment Authorization Document). You may no longer apply after the completion of studies.

Please note the following on OPT:

- Any time spent in pre-completion optional practical training is deducted from the twelve month allowable period. Part-time pre-completion OPT is deducted from the twelve month limit at fifty percent. Mandatory curricular practical training is not deducted.
- Pre-completion OPT is limited to twenty hours per week when student has coursework to complete. Over twenty hours per week can be requested for pre-completion OPT done during official school breaks or after the student has completed all coursework required for the degree while the student is completing a thesis or dissertation.
- Employment must be related to field of study.
- Prior use of full-time Curricular Practical Training for one year or more eliminates eligibility for Optional Practical Training.
- Although no offer of employment is required prior to application, the student is expected to work or to be actively seeking employment after the EAD card is issued.
- Authorization for post-completion practical experience is granted for twelve months only and must be completed within fourteen months of the last day of classes or exams. Twelve months of post-completion practical training is allowable after each level of study (for example, twelve months after bachelor's degree and another twelve months after completion of master's degree).

PERSONAL BUSINESS

Maryland Driver's License

International students may have differing laws and policies that apply to them, depending upon their country of origin. Therefore, see <http://www.mva.maryland.gov/Driver-Services/Apply/international.htm>

To begin the processes for a driver's license or identification card, you will need to submit an electronic SAVE Verification Request Form online. Click [here](#) to access the S.A.V.E. Verification Request Form (at <http://www.mva.maryland.gov/save.htm>)

Upon completion of this form, a MVA representative will contact you within two (2) business days with the verification results and information to continue the process. If you experience any difficulties with the form, or do not receive a response within two (2) business days, please send an e-mail to the MVA to sdecal@marylandmva.com. Once the MVA contacts you, you may need to appear in person at a Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) office. Be prepared to provide the following documentation:

- Unexpired passport
- Visa
- Unexpired I-94 form
- Unexpired I-20
- Proof of Maryland residency in the form of a bank statement, official transcript, utility bill
- Social security number
- Letter from the Seminary verifying that you are studying there

For a list of other acceptable documents please visit the visit the MVA website at <http://www.mva.maryland.gov/>

For sample test and driver's handbook:

www.marylandmva.com/DriverServ/ROOKIEDRIVER/tutorial/Tutorial_intro.html

For Interpreters:

www.marylandmva.com/DriverServ/Apply/translator.htm

Students who are non-residents of the United States and who have a valid driver's license from their home country or have an international driver's license are not required to get a Maryland driver's license. They may have to take the written and driving test anyway.

Bank Accounts

To secure your money, FTS suggests that you open a bank account. Never store money or valuables in your room, and never carry more than \$100 cash on your person. It is not a difficult task to open either a savings or a checking account, and you should not need a social security number. If you encounter difficulty opening a bank account without a social security number, please visit the FTS Business Office for guidance. It is often helpful to take a letter from FTS to the bank to assist you and the teller with this task.

Upon opening a checking account, you will receive an ATM card. ATM stands for Automated Teller Machine. This card will allow you to withdraw out of or deposit money into your account twenty four hours a day at any ATM location. Almost all ATMs have bank names. If you use one that is affiliated with a bank that is different from your own, you will usually be charged a fee (usually \$2-\$3).

Housing Options

FTS does not have a dormitory but there are many apartments near the campus. Unfurnished, one bedroom apartments in Baltimore County generally cost \$650 to \$800 per month. Two bedroom, unfurnished apartments cost approximately \$800 - \$1000 per month. Most apartments come with a refrigerator, a stove, an oven, heating and air conditioning (A/C may be optional). Everything else you must provide. Furniture rental for a one bedroom apartment is around \$125 per month. Most properties require you to sign a lease agreement for a minimum of six months. The closest apartment complex is the Drumcastle, located across the street from the Seminary.

Moving Truck Rental

Rental vans and trucks can be rented on a day to day basis for about \$20 - \$100 a day depending on size and availability. Rates are constantly changing, and several different packages exist, so be sure to call ahead and request information. Trucks/vans go quickly at certain times of the year, especially in the beginning of September and mid-May, so plan ahead.

U HAUL Rental – www.Uhaul.com

Budget Rental – www.budgettruck.com

Apartments closest to FTS

See <http://www.apartmentguide.com/apartments/Maryland/Towson/>

DIRECTIONS TO FTS

Directions from Baltimore-Washington International Airport (BWI) and South

1. Start out going WEST on I-195 W. 2.0 miles
2. Merge onto MD-295 N via EXIT 2A toward I-695/BALTIMORE 8.0 miles
3. Turn RIGHT onto W PRATT ST. 1.0 mile
4. Turn LEFT onto S PRESIDENT ST. 0.3 mile
5. S PRESIDENT ST becomes I-83 N/JONES FALLS EXPY. 5.6 miles
6. Take the NORTHERN PARKWAY EAST exit, EXIT 10A. 0.3 mile
7. Merge onto W NORTHERN PKWY. 2.1 miles
8. Turn LEFT onto MD-45/YORK RD. 0.4 mile
9. Turn RIGHT onto WALKER AVE. 0.2 mile
10. End at 529 Walker Ave Baltimore, MD 21212-2624

Estimated Time: 37 minutes. Estimated Distance: 19.81 miles

Directions from I-95 and North

1. Take I-95 South from Delaware, merge onto I-695 W/BALTIMORE BELTWAY OUTER LOOP toward TOWSON. 4.5 miles
2. Merge onto MD-41 S/PERRING PKWY via EXIT 30A. 2.8 miles
3. Take the NORTHERN PKY ramp. 0.1 mile

4. Merge onto E NORTHERN PKWY. 1.0 mile
5. Turn RIGHT onto THE ALAMEDA. 0.3 mile
6. Turn SLIGHT LEFT onto WALKER AVE. 0.7 mile

Estimated Time: 15 minutes. Estimated Distance: 9.4 miles

Culture Shock: Occupational Hazards of Overseas Living

By L. Robert Kohls

In preparing for your move to the United States, you probably attempted to mentally prepare yourself for all possible crises. There is one dilemma that you may encounter that has no simple solution: Culture Shock.

“Culture Shock” is the term used to describe the more pronounced reactions to the psychological disorientation most people experience when they move for an extended period of time into a culture different from their own. It can cause intense discomfort, often accompanied by hyper-irritability, bitterness, homesickness, resentment, and depression. For some people, the bout with culture shock is brief and hardly noticeable. These are usually people whose personalities provide them with a natural immunity. For most of us, however, culture shock is something we'll have to deal with over a period of at least several months, possibly a year or more.

In a sense, culture shock is the occupational hazard of overseas living through which one has to be willing to go in order to have the pleasure of experiencing other countries and cultures in depth. All of us have known frustration at one time or another. Although related and similar in emotional content, culture shock is different from frustration. Frustration is always traceable to a specific action of cause and goes away when the situation is remedied or the cause is removed.

Some of the causes of frustration are:

- the ambiguity of a particular situation
- the actual situation not matching original expectations
- unrealistic goals
- not being able to see results
- because of the nature of the work
- because of the shortness of time of one's involvement

Frustration may be uncomfortable, but it is generally short-lived as compared to culture shock, which has two quite distinctive features:

1. It does not result from a specific event or series of events. It comes instead from the experience of encountering two ways of doing, organizing, perceiving, or valuing things which are different from yours and which threaten your basic unconscious belief that your customs, assumptions, values and behaviors are “right”.

2. It does not strike suddenly or have a single principal cause. Instead it is cumulative. It builds up slowly, from a series of small events that are difficult to identify.

Culture Shock comes from:

- Being cut-off from the cultural cues and known patterns with which you are familiar - especially the subtle, indirect ways you have of expressing feelings. All the basic cultural norms that you understand instinctively and use to make your life comprehensible are suddenly changed
- Living and/or working over an extended period of time in a situation that is ambiguous
- Having your own values (which you have always considered as absolutes) brought into question which yanks your moral rug from under you
- Being continually put into positions in which you are expected to function with maximum skill and speed but where the rules have not been thoroughly explained

Regarding being cut-off from your own cultural cues, Kalver Oberg, the man who first diagnosed culture shock, says: "These signs and clues include the thousand and one ways in which we orient ourselves to the situations of daily life: when to shake hands and what to say when we meet people, when and how to give tips, and how to give orders to servants, how to make purchases, when to accept and refuse invitations, when to take statements seriously and when not...." These are just a few examples, but they show how pervasive is the disorientation out of which culture shock emerges.

The Progressive Stages of Culture Shock:

As indicated above, culture shock progresses slowly. One's first reaction to different ways of doing things may be "How quaint!" When it becomes clear the differences are not simply quaint, an effort is frequently made to dismiss them by pointing out the fundamental sameness of human nature. After all, people are really basically the same under the skin, aren't they?

Eventually, the focus shifts to the differences themselves, sometimes to such an extent that they seem to be overwhelming. The final stage comes when the differences are narrowed down to a few of the most troubling and then are blown up out of all proportion.

By now the sojourner is in an acute state of distress. The host culture has become the scapegoat for the natural difficulties inherent in the cross-cultural encounter. Culture shock has set in.

Here is a list of some of the symptoms that may be observed in relatively severe cases of culture shock:

- Homesickness
- Boredom
- Withdrawal (e.g. spending excessive amounts of time reading; only seeing others of one's own culture, avoiding contact with host nationals)
- Need for excessive amounts of sleep
- Compulsive eating
- Compulsive drinking
- Irritability
- Exaggerated cleanliness
- Marital stress

- Family tension and conflict
- Chauvinistic tendencies
- Stereotyping of host nationals
- Hostility toward host nationals
- Loss of ability to work effectively
- Unexplainable fits of weeping
- Physical ailments (psychosomatic illnesses)

Not everyone will experience this severe a case of culture shock nor will the symptoms be observed. Many people ride through culture shock with some ease, only now and again experiencing the more serious reactions. But many others don't. For them it is important to know: 1) that the above responses can occur, 2) that culture shock is in some degree inevitable, and 3) that their reactions are emotional and not easily subject to rational management. This knowledge should give you a better understanding of what is happening to you and buttress your resolve to work at hastening your recovery.

Before we examine what you can do to counteract culture shock, let's spend a few minutes finding where it fits into the whole overseas experience.

Some time ago, people began to recognize that there were distinct stages of personal adjustment which virtually everyone who lived abroad went through (no matter where they came from or what country they were living in).

These stages are:

1. Initial Euphoria
2. Irritability and hostility
3. Gradual adjustment
4. Adaptation and bi-culturalism

1. Initial Euphoria:

Most people begin their stay with great expectations and positive mind-set. If anything, they come with expectations that are too high and attitudes that are too positive toward the host country and toward their own prospective experiences in it. At this point, anything new is intriguing and exciting. But, for the most part, it is the similarities that stand out. The recent arrivee is usually impressed with how people everywhere are really very much alike. This period of euphoria may last from a week or two to a month, but the letdown is inevitable. You've reached the end of the first stage.

2. Irritation and Hostility:

Gradually, your focus turns from the similarities to the differences. And these differences, which suddenly seem to be everywhere, are troubling. You blow up little, seemingly insignificant difficulties into major catastrophes. This is the stage generally defined as "culture shock" and you may experience any of the symptoms listed on the previous page.

3. Gradual Adjustment:

The crisis is over and you are on your way to recovery. This step may come so gradually that, at first, you will be unaware it's even happening. Once you begin to orient yourself and begin to be able to interpret some of the subtle cultural clues and cues that passed by unnoticed earlier,

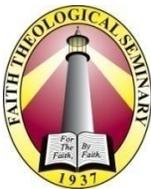
the culture seems more familiar. You become more comfortable in it and feel less isolated from it. Gradually, too, your sense of humor returns and you realize the situation is not hopeless after all.

4. Adaptation and Biculturalism:

Full recovery will result in an ability to function in two cultures with confidence. You will even find a great many customs, ways of doing and saying things, and personal attitudes that you enjoy—indeed, to which you have in some degree acculturated—and which you will definitely miss when you pack up and return home. In fact, you can expect to experience "reverse culture shock" upon your return to your home country. In some cases, particularly where a person has adjusted exceptionally well to the host country, reverse culture shock may cause greater distress than the original culture shock. The interesting thing about culture shock is that there is routinely not one but two low points and even more interestingly, they will accommodate themselves to the amount of time you intend to spend in the host country! That is, they will spread themselves out if you're going to stay for a longer period or contract if your stay is briefer. You can't say that's not accommodating!

How long will culture shock last? As we have suggested, that varies with the length of your stay. But it also depends to some extent on you and your resiliency. You can expect a let-up after the first dip, but be prepared for the second downturn that will probably be somewhat more severe. Stop a moment and consider what you can do on your own to combat the onset and alleviate the effects of culture shock. Once you recognize the problem and make an effort to find solutions, your stay in the host country will be that much more pleasant.

This excerpt was taken from chapter 18 of *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, written by L. Roberts Kohls. It was edited by the Office of International Students and Scholars for the international students and scholars of Boston College.



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