

How to Become an International Student and Obtain an I-20 from Grand Central Atelier

The following document contains information that carefully explains how you can study as an international student and obtain an M-1 Student Visa. Please read it carefully and follow the directions to avoid delays in obtaining an I-20 certificate.



We are delighted that Grand Central Atelier has been approved to accept non-immigrant international students in our full time program.

Students must be accepted into the Drawing Year before applying for a visa. Upon acceptance, GCA will provide the student with an I-20 application, necessary to the visa application.

A summary of the application process for an M-1, non-immigrant visa for vocational students

1. Must be 18 years of age at the time your first semester begins.
2. Applications to our full-time, Drawing Year 2026 starting in September will be accepted starting January 2 through February 15, 2026. All complete applications will be processed within 6-8 weeks. Applicants outside the US are encouraged to apply as early as possible to allow adequate time for mailing delays, obtaining a visa and making travel arrangements.
3. If you are accepted by GCA, we will send you an I-20 Application.
4. Provide completed I-20 Application with financial resources information to prove you can support your studies for the duration of the Drawing Year.
5. Once your I-20 Application is approved by GCA, you will be asked to cover the \$750 International Student Processing fee.
6. GCA will email you the I-20 Certificate, which you can use to apply for an M-1, non-immigrant visa. You will be required to pay an I-901 SEVIS Fee.
7. With the payment receipt of the I-901 SEVIS Fee and your I-20 Certificate, you will be able to schedule an interview at an US Consulate/Embassy. Visa processing times are different in each country.

Scholarships

We are pleased to offer partial scholarships to incoming international students. If you are accepted, you may submit a scholarship application at the same time you send us your I-20 application form. Scholarships are applied to tuition and students are responsible for the living expenses for the duration of the program.

Housing

GCA does not provide accommodation to students. Our office offers housing information and can suggest location, cost, and listings from students looking for others to share housing with.

GUIDELINES FOR RECEIVING I-20 APPLICATION FORM

1. First, you must be accepted into our Core Program by receiving a GCA Acceptance Letter.
2. You must prove that you can afford the cost of living in New York City and the tuition to study at GCA for the year-long program you are accepted in. Before we issue the I-20 certificate the US government requires we review your financial details.
3. As an M-1 student you are NOT allowed to work in the US. You may only apply for optional practical training with the USCIS after your program of study ends.
4. Please carefully review our school's estimated annual costs for international students on page 7. This is the amount that you must prove that you will have available for the duration of the program. A separate sheet with the tuition annual payment plan will be included with your acceptance letter.
5. The Estimated Annual Costs requirements are not negotiable. They reflect a modest average budget that does not include luxuries of any kind. We strongly recommend that you budget at least 10% more if possible. Not having enough funds might cause you distress. Students and their families should look closely at the costs of living in New York City and studying at our school and make careful plans to be sure your individual needs will be met.
6. Sometimes we might ask you to send us more proof of your funding. We might request more information a few times during the process. The US government requires the judgement from us, to the best of our ability, that a student will have enough financial support during his/her study and stay.
7. After receiving an acceptance letter into the program, it is important that you complete the I-20 Application form in a timely manner. With the I-20 Application form you will be asked to submit financial evidence documents that prove availability of funds for the duration of the program.
8. If you have sponsor(s), he or she must provide you with a sponsor's affidavit of support letter that you will submit with the required financial evidence.
9. Submit your I-20 Application form, sponsor(s) affidavit and evidence to us electronically (scan and email). It is best if you submit all documents in one email.

***Do not send us original documents**

***Keep the original documents to take to the your visa interview**

FUNDING SOURCES

Your funding may come from any combination of sources in the US 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 do not have to pay for your room or for food.

WARNING: It is highly recommended that at least part of your financial support comes from your home country. This helps when you apply for your student visa!

WARNING: 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 do not believe the sponsor can afford to give as much money as promised. A sponsor should promise only what he or she intends to give, and only as much as can be afforded.

2. Personal funds are the funds that come from your own resources, not those of anyone else. For example, if your parents put money in your bank account, we will ask you to submit the evidence required of sponsors. If you have enough cash to support yourself for the entire program of study or can prove other sources of personal income, you do not need a sponsor.

3. Funds from this school: If you receive a tuition scholarship from Grand Central Atelier, do not factor that amount in heavily to your proof of funding, as it will not cover the full cost of the program and the living expenses, and you may still need additional support to meet your minimum annual costs.

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS

Complete the I-20 Application and submit it with all the required evidence of funding directly to us electronically, by email.

Do not mail us the original documents. You will need them for your visa interview.

All documents you submit to us must be:

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

Evidence required :

1. Sponsors of cash support
 - a. Sponsor's affidavit and proof of annual cash support. Each sponsor must submit a separate affidavit of support form. Refer to pages 12 & 13 to learn more about the affidavit format. All questions must be answered. Leave nothing blank.
2. Proof of Income:
 - a. Individual sponsor : Any of the following with most recent bank statement :
 - i. Income tax returns or receipts for the most recent calendar year
 - ii. Pay stubs for the last 6 months
 - iii. Bank/Investment statements for the last 6 months (Savings or checking account funds are acceptable. Non readily available sources of cash such as real estate, personal property and common stocks holdings are not acceptable).
 - b. Company sponsor :
 - i. Business registration, licenses, and profit and loss statements.
3. Bank statement in the name of the sponsor only. A monthly statement of balances and deposits.

WARNING : The income of the company is not personal income of the owner of the business, and will not be accepted as proof of income. The owner/sponsor must still provide proof of personal income.

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



SPONSORS OF FREE ROOM AND BOARD

1. Sponsor's affidavit and proof of free room and board
2. Proof of income : Any of the following with most recent pay stub :
 - a. Income tax returns or receipts;
 - b. Pay stubs for the last 6 months;
 - c. Bank/investment statement for the last 6 months
3. Copy of property lease, deed, rent receipts, or utility bill

WARNING : If you are currently in the United States, you must be living with the sponsor at the time of filling this application for this to be considered towards your means of support.

Estimated Annual Costs for International Students

Core Program 2026-2027 Tuition	
International Student fee must be covered before an I-20 Certificate can be issued	\$750
Non-refundable deposit due upon acceptance or receipt of M-1 visa	\$4,500
Per semester:	
- Fall Tuition due two weeks prior to the start of the Fall semester	\$4,650
- Spring Tuition two weeks prior to the start of the Spring semester	\$4,650
Annual Tuition Total:	\$14,550

Estimated Living Expenses (9 months of full-time study)	
1. Housing	\$10,800
2. Utilities	\$1,800
3. Food	\$4,500
4. Health Insurance	\$3,150
5. Drawing & Painting Materials	\$700
6. Transportation	\$1,188
7. Other Necessities	\$4,000
Subtotal:	\$26,138

TOTAL ESTIMATED ANNUAL COSTS: \$40,688

1. Housing cost is based on modest accommodations.
2. Utilities include a cell phone, electricity, gas, and Internet services.
3. Based on a modest budget, with the student preparing most meals at home.
4. Health insurance is strongly encouraged. Students may purchase insurance in their own countries or they may purchase student insurance plan from companies in the United States. A proof of enrollment might be required.
5. Drawing and painting materials include drawing boards, drawing papers and pads, pencils, erasers, oil paints, brushes, palette, etc.
6. Based on public transportation; monthly-unlimited metro card.
7. Included are expenses for clothing for different seasons, laundry, personal grooming items, cultural and leisure events.

Please note: The student is responsible to make arrangements for housing and meals. Upon arrival, a student is expected to have funds to cover tuition and personal expenses. Grand Central Atelier does not provide financial assistance or emergency funds to students.

I-20 APPLICATION FORM

PART I: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please ensure your name is spelled correctly. Per guidelines issued by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the passport has been designated as the official name-giving document. Therefore, please write your name exactly as it is shown on your passport.

1. Surname/Primary Name:		
2. Given Name:		
3. Preferred Name (if different from above):		
4. Date of Birth:		
5. Gender: (please check one)	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
6. City and Country of Birth:		
7. Country of Citizenship:		
8. Country of Permanent Residence:		
9. Permanent Address in Home Country:	Number and Street: City: Postal Code: Country:	
Permanent Address in United States (if known):	Number and Street: City: Postal Code: Country:	
10. Dependents: Only the student's spouse or children under the age of 21 are eligible for dependent status. <input type="checkbox"/> I plan to come without dependents. <input type="checkbox"/> I plan to come with dependents. The following dependents will accompany me (list names and relationships):		
1. Name (Family, First, Middle)	Date of Birth (M/D/YYYY)	Country of Birth
Country of Citizenship	Gender	Relation to you (spouse, child)
2. Name (Family, First, Middle)	Date of Birth (M/D/YYYY)	Country of Birth
Country of Citizenship	Gender	Relation to you (spouse, child)

11. Phone: _____ Email: _____

12. Have you been notified of your admission to Grand Central Atelier?

** Please note that your Form I-20 cannot be issued until you are accepted.*

- Yes
 No

PART II: If you're currently in the United States, complete this section. If not, leave blank and continue to Part III.

<p>What Is your immigration Status? <i>You may not be able to attend schools if you're in the process of changing your nonimmigrant status.</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> M-1/What is your SEVIS ID Number? _____</p>
<p>What is the purpose of your requested Form I-20? <i>(check one)</i></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Transfer in <input type="checkbox"/> Continue studies in GCA's core program as an M-1 student</p>
<p>Another Status: Which one?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> _____ <i>Before we issue your Form I-20, we want to advise you. Please make an appointment to see the international student advisor.</i></p>
<p>Do you plan to travel outside the U.S. before school starts?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>(If you are M-1, you will receive "Transfer in" or other instructions. If you hold another status, we must meet with you before issuing your Form I-20.)</i></p>

PART III: Your Form I-20 will be emailed or sent by standard mail to the name and address you indicate in the address box below.

PRINT YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS IN ENGLISH, EXACTLY AS IT SHOULD APPEAR ON THE ENVELOPE.

SEND FORM I-20 TO THIS ADDRESS:
Full Name:
Street 1:
Street 2 (Apartment, Floor, Suite, etc.):
City, State, Province:
Postal code, Country:

PART IV: STUDENT'S STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Please carefully read all instructions before completing this part!

What level of education will you be pursuing?	<input type="checkbox"/> Drawing Year Certificate (2026-2027) <input type="checkbox"/> Painting Year Certificate (2026-2027) <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Studies Certificate (2026-2027) <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture Program Certificate (2026-2027)
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How will you be funded for the year of your program of study?

Please check off your funding below, and indicate how much (in USD) will be provided or available to you.

	ANNUAL AMOUNT
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal funds <i>(The amount available to you from your own resources every year divided by the number of years in your program)</i>	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Funds from this school <i>Type:</i>	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Cash funds from a sponsor (1) <i>To be given to me for the year</i> <i>Sponsor's name:</i>	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Cash funds from a sponsor (2) <i>To be given to me for the year</i> <i>Sponsor's name:</i>	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Cash funds from a sponsor (3) <i>To be given to me for the year</i> <i>Sponsor's name:</i>	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Free room and board from sponsor <i>With whom I will live/Sponsor's name:</i>	\$ _____
TOTAL AMOUNT AVAILABLE TO ME FOR THE YEAR OF STUDY: <i>*This amount must be the same or more than your minimum annual costs.</i>	\$ _____

THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE ATTACHED TO PROVE MY FUNDING:

My personal documents

- Bank/Asset statement
- Proof of income/assets

Funds from this school

- Award letter

Cash Sponsor's documents

I understand that all three types of evidence MUST be attached.

- Affidavit of Support
- Proof of Income
- Bank Statement

Free Room and Board Sponsor's Documents

Attach all four

- Affidavit of Support
- Proof of Income
- Bank Statement
- Lease, deed, rent receipts, or utility bill (this is a proof of residence)

SPONSOR'S AFFIDAVIT AND EVIDENCE OF ANNUAL CASH SUPPORT

What is an Affidavit of Support Letter?

An Affidavit of Support letter is a document an individual signs to accept financial responsibility for another person, usually a relative, who is coming to the United States to study. The person who signs the Affidavit of support becomes the sponsor of the student coming to study in the United States. By signing the affidavit, the sponsor is also proving that he or she can afford to support the students with the documentary evidence provided with the affidavit letter.

Before signing the Affidavit, it is important for the sponsor to understand the financial commitment made to the student should not be broken. Sponsors who fail to provide that promised support force students to discontinue their study in the program. Students are not able to help support themselves through employment. Employment is strictly prohibited by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

How to complete the Affidavit of Support Letter? (Sample form is available upon request)

- The sponsor may fill out the form in English (or have it officially translated). He or she should promise only the amount of money you are able to give to the student. The most common reason we reject affidavits is that we do not believe a sponsor can afford to give as much as promised.
- The supporting evidence listed below should be attached with the form. The affidavit will not be accepted without the required supporting evidence.
- It is recommended the form is notarized by a public notary. The sponsor needs to sign and date the affidavit.
- The student needs to have the original documents and submit them electronically via email to us with the I-20 application. The student must keep the originals to present to the visa officer during the visa interview.

Supporting Evidence Required (All documents must be in English!):

1. Sponsor's bank statement. A monthly statement of showing available balances. If another person's name appears in the bank statement, that person must complete a separate affidavit. The criteria for accepted bank/financial statements are:

- Should be a single page document. Please do not submit long statements that include transaction history
- Showing bank/financial statements from multiple accounts is acceptable
- Indicate the financial institution's name
- Indicate the account holder's name
- Clearly show the account balance and the type of currency
- Be dated within the past 6 months (older statements will not be accepted)
- Be translated into English (especially names) unofficial translations are accepted
- Be from statements that show liquid assets that can be converted to cash

2. Sponsor's proof of Income:

- Income tax returns for the most recent year or receipts or
- Pay stubs for the last 6 months or
- Bank/Investment statements for the last 6 months

The following types of funding are not accepted:

- Documents older than 6 months
- Funds that are not immediately accessible
- Assets that are not in liquidated form (house, car, etc.)
- Life insurance policy statements
- Pension funds

Affidavit of Support
[SAMPLE LETTER*]

Today's Date

Student's Name:

Sponsor's Name:

Sponsor's Address:

Sponsor's Telephone:

Sponsor's Email:

To Whom it may concern:

This form is to certify that I, (**sponsor's full name**), am willing and able to support my (**student's relationship to you**) while studying at the Grand Central Atelier's Core Program 2025-2026.

I have attached personal documentation, which proves that I can support (**full name of the student**) with (**\$ amount in USD**) for the year of study in the United States.

I understand that these funds must be available every semester of the study for the entire length of the above student's course of study in the United States.

The attached financial documentation shows actual accounts with balances, deposits and withdrawals. The documentation is in English and is less than two months old.

I certify that the information given in this letter and the copies of financial proof are complete and true.

Sincerely,

(Sponsor's Name and Signature)

Letter must be notarized

*We can send you the Sample letter in Word document (.doc) upon request.