



## 2021-2022 Thomas Jefferson Scholarship Program (TJSP)

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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**Question: Why is the U.S. government interested in funding programs for citizens of Tunisia to study in the United States?**

*Answer:* The U.S. government believes that the Thomas Jefferson Scholarship Program will provide students a deeper understanding of the United States, as well as new skills, knowledge, and leadership development to help them contribute to Tunisia's economic and democratic growth. The U.S. government believes that leadership exchange programs are one of the most effective methods of fostering mutual understanding and good relations between the United States and other countries.

**Question: What expenses are covered by the program?**

*Answer:* TJSP provides for the following: J-1 visa support; round-trip travel from the participant's home city to their host institution in the United States; tuition and mandatory university fees; health benefits plans; a monthly allowance for living expenses; and a limited allowance for textbooks.

**Question: Do I need to be an undergraduate student to apply?**

*Answer:* Yes. In order to meet the technical eligibility requirements, you must be a full-time undergraduate university/institute student in your first or second year of undergraduate study at an undergraduate university/institute in Tunisia. Architecture and Engineering students are also eligible to apply in their third or fourth year of study.

**Question: Is there an age limit for participation?**

*Answer:* Yes. Applicants must be at least 18 years old by July 1, 2021.

**Question: I am currently studying at an ISET, ISSAT, or IHET. Am I eligible to apply?**

*Answer:* Yes. TJSP is open to current students of all undergraduate universities and institutes in Tunisia, including ISET, ISSAT, and IHET students.

**Question: Can I apply for TJSP if I have already been in the United States as a participant on a U.S. government-sponsored program like YES or the MEPI Student Leaders Program?**

*Answer:* Yes. However, strong preference will be given to candidates with little or no experience in the United States. Applicants with a prior J-1 visa must complete any applicable home stay regulations before becoming eligible for another J-1 visa.

**Question: I'm currently taking a year off from my studies. Am I still eligible to apply?**

Apply online at: <https://www.irex.org/project/tjsp>  
Application Deadline: Tuesday, December 8, 2020 at 5:00pm Tunis time

This program is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Department of State and implemented by IREX.

*Answer:* No. The program is open to current undergraduate university/institute students only.

**Question: I want to study Political Science in the United States. Can I apply for this program?**

*Answer:* Yes. TJSP is open to a broad variety of specializations. Students should identify their fields of study on their application and these fields should be drawn from the standard university/college curriculum within the United States. Please note that students may not enroll in clinical coursework while on the TJSP Program.

**Question: Do I need to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to apply for this program?**

*Answer:* No. Only semifinalists are required to take the TOEFL, and testing will be provided for them free of charge. For further consideration, semifinalists must be able to achieve a TOEFL score of at least 500, either at the time of application or after short-term pre-academic English language study in the United States.

**Question: Do I need to have a passport if I want to apply?**

*Answer:* No. You do not need to have a passport to apply for the 2021-2022 Thomas Jefferson Scholarship Program.

**Question: I have a passport, but it shows that I am still a high school student. Do I have to renew my passport to apply?**

*Answer:* No. You do not need to renew your passport to apply for the Thomas Jefferson Scholarship Program.

**Question: I want to apply for the Thomas Jefferson Scholarship Program but could not find the name of my institute in the eligible institutions list. What should I do?**

*Answer:* Please email [thomasjeffersonscholars@irex.org](mailto:thomasjeffersonscholars@irex.org) with the name of your institute and documents proving that your institute is accredited by the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. IREX will then inform you whether your institute is or is not eligible.

**Question: If I am selected, which U.S. host institution will I attend? Can I choose?**

*Answer:* No. Participants cannot choose their host institution placement. Finalists are placed at institutions that have officially applied to host TJSP participants. Each participant is assigned a placement at an accredited institution in the United States based on academic fit.

**Question: What is the selection process and what are the main selection criteria?**

*Answer:* TJSP is conducted as a merit-based, open competition. After the application deadline, all eligible applications will be reviewed by a panel of academic specialists. Chosen semi-finalists will be interviewed in Tunisia by a bi-national committee of U.S. specialists, alumni of U.S. government programs, and U.S. Embassy representatives, and must take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) in Feb. – Mar. 2021. IREX aims to notify all applicants of their status in spring of 2021.

Selection panels will use the following criteria to evaluate applications (not in order of importance):

- Academic excellence;
- Expressed commitment to contribute to Tunisia's development;
- Demonstrated leadership potential and commitment to community engagement;
- Proficiency in written and spoken English;
- Flexibility and adaptability as an exchange student;

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- Ability to achieve a TOEFL score of at least 500, either at the time of application or after short-term pre-academic English language study in the United States; and Preference will be given to students that represent underserved and underrepresented communities.

**Question: When are the results of the competition announced, and when does the program begin?**

*Answer:* IREX aims to notify all applicants of their final status in spring 2021. Due to the anticipated volume of applications received, IREX does not forward explanations to applicants not selected as finalists. Finalists should expect to depart for their U.S. host institutions in summer 2021.

**Question: If I am selected for the program and travel to the United States, how can I protect my health during the program?**

Participants will be provided with thorough briefings about personal health and safety and personal protective equipment. They will also have health insurance during their program in the United States and will be assisted in a timely manner with facilitating access to needed health treatment due to health concerns. Participants will be expected to follow the health and safety guidance of their campus and community while participating in the program. IREX and the US Department of State continue to monitor the global health situation.

**Question: I have a physical disability or other special need and I need another person's assistance to complete my application. Is this considered plagiarism?**

*Answer:* Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to apply for the TJSP Program. Applicants with physical disabilities or special needs who require another person's assistance to complete an application may do so. However, the thoughts, ideas and content of your application must be your own; you cannot collaborate with the person assisting you on the content of your application.

**Question: May applicants with disabilities apply? Why does the application ask if I have a disability?**

*Answer:* Yes, applicants with disabilities may apply and are encouraged to do so. The TJSP Program does not discriminate against applicants on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability, or any other protected characteristic as established by U.S. law. The application includes a question about disability so that we are aware of what kinds of reasonable accommodations might be needed if you are interviewed or selected. **Your answer to the question regarding disabilities is voluntary and will *not* impact your chances of acceptance.** All candidates must receive a medical clearance as part of the acceptance process.

**Q: How are scholars with disabilities supported during the program?**

*Answer:* Each scholar's needs are evaluated individually so that the host university partner and IREX can determine the reasonable accommodations needed to ensure full participation in program activities.

**Question: Can I stay in the United States after the school year ends?**

*Answer:* No. All participants are required to return to Tunisia to attend a mandatory re-entry workshop in Tunis in order to successfully complete the program. No visa extensions will be granted. All participants are subject to the two-year home residency rule, which prohibits returning to the United States under certain visa categories until the participant spends at least two years in Tunisia after completion of the program.

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**Question: Will my credits transfer back to my home institution in Tunisia?**

*Answer:* Participants may submit U.S. transcripts to their home institution for review upon completion of the program to determine if the credits are transferrable.

**Question: May I submit my application by email or to the IREX office in Tunisia?**

*Answer:* No. Applicants must complete the application online. The online application can be found on the IREX website at: <https://www.irex.org/project/tjsp>.

**Question: Where can I obtain an application or more information about TJSP?**

*Answer:* Visit <https://www.irex.org/project/tjsp>, write to [thomasjeffersonscholars@irex.org](mailto:thomasjeffersonscholars@irex.org), or call (+216) 28 984 150.

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