

Watson Fellowship Application Directions

Fellowships Advising and Study Abroad
Center for Student Services, rm. 319

lstolper@caltech.edu * mkuroda@caltech.edu * sskinner@caltech.edu

The campus deadline is **April 19, 2021 by 5pm PST.**

Email all materials together in one email to Fellowships Advising and Study Abroad:
SAapplications@caltech.edu

And have references email their recommendation forms and letters to:
SReferences@caltech.edu

You must turn in:

1. **Completed Application**
2. **Personal Statement**, 1500 words, double spaced, single sided, no staples
3. **Project Proposal**, 1500 words, double spaced, single sided, no staples
4. **Two letters of reference on Watson Reference Form**
5. **Current official transcript**
6. **Supplemental Information:** approximate budget breakdown and list of contacts

*** You need to meet with Meghan Kuroda, Watson Liaison, to discuss your proposal ideas by April 9th. Contact her at mkuroda@caltech.edu to schedule a Zoom meeting.**

* Example proposals can be requested by emailing Meghan Kuroda at mkuroda@caltech.edu. You can also look at project abstracts from the last 10 years online:
<https://watson.foundation/fellowships/tj>

* FASA will review your essays prior to the deadline for content issues (not proofreading).

* Check in with your references at least 7 days in advance as the reference letters are also due by the April 19th deadline.

* Applicants will be interviewed by the campus Watson Selection Committee in mid May. Caltech can nominate up to three applicants for the national deadline in early November. If nominated, they will continue to polish their proposal and personal statement over the summer, expand both essays to 1500 words each, and submit online for the national deadline in November. Nominees are then interviewed usually in January by the Watson Foundation. **The odds of winning a Watson are quite good if that you get one of the three Caltech nominations.** About forty colleges nationwide are able to submit nominees to the Watson Foundation. All nominees are interviewed by a Watson representative, i.e., the fellowship director or a guest interviewer. All interviewers are former fellows. From those nominated, up to forty will be granted Watson Fellowships.

Watson Guidelines:

- * There is no citizenship or GPA requirement.
- * Fellows must leave by Aug. 1 after graduation. This date allows for at least a full year in the field before the required Returning Fellows Conference, scheduled in early August.
- * Note that Watson Fellows cannot return to North America during the year of their Watson. Those who are not U.S. citizens are also restricted from visiting their home country during their Watson year. Do not include countries in the proposal in which you have previously lived, worked or studied, or in which you have extensive travel experience.
- * Watson fellows cannot travel to countries with travel warnings as listed on the U.S. Department of State website: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>
Travel advisory levels of 3 and 4 are not allowed on Watson fellowships. Only countries with levels of 1 and 2 will be permitted. **(Currently this requirement is being waived with Covid, but be mindful of the countries you are proposing regarding safety and accessibility.)**
- * Fellows may not work for money during their year abroad, nor can they use personal funds during the fellowship. They must live solely off the \$30,000 award. Money not used during the fellowship year must be returned to the Watson. Fellows may use up to \$1000 for start-up equipment. Fellows receive a stipend up to \$500 for health care. The Watson will reimburse the equivalent of 12-months of payments on outstanding institutional and federally guaranteed (Perkins, Stafford) loans. The Fellow is responsible for making the payments.
- * The Watson is a solo project – fellows are expected to undertake the year abroad independently, and not live with or travel with friends or family. Short visits are allowed.
- * Fellows may bring their spouses, or if in special cases they need assistance due to a disability, accommodations can be arranged. In such cases, the stipend is increased by \$10,000. Spouses or aids may not participate in the project.
- * Fellows should be careful to clarify their relationship with any institution (university, non-profit organization, company, etc.) that hosts them. Although unpaid internships or other volunteer work may be permissible during a Watson year, you must always feel free to step away from the organization with no strings attached in order to pursue your Watson project. It is suggested that Fellows work *alongside* an organization, in an observer capacity. It is possible to work in exchange for room and board.
- * A plausible strategy for coping with language barriers is required. If you do not speak the language, you should have a plan on how you will communicate in the destination country.

Additional tips on preparing your Watson:

Start NOW: Students should bite the bullet and begin to work on a Watson draft as soon as possible, and allow several months for preparation of the proposal. **If you don't know how to begin, start talking to people about it and explore the internet to get ideas. Put pen to paper to develop those ideas.** Those who put it off often never begin. The Watson is a unique opportunity to travel and live abroad for a year, and there is no other fellowship like it. It is an opportunity open only to graduating seniors. I urge you to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity now.

Show Passion: Although the project does not have to stem from a long-standing interest on your part, it should be a natural extension of you and your interests.

Prove it is feasible: Watson projects must be well thought out and researched. You must be able to demonstrate in your proposal that it is doable, and you have the skills necessary to execute it. This is done best by making contact with individuals or organizations who might act as project sponsors or project work sites for you. Work out the feasibility of the project and its scope, then you will find it much easier to write a competitive draft proposal having done this type of groundwork.

Go where you need to go: You don't have to develop a project that requires worldwide or constant travel. Your project could involve local travel in one country or involve travel and work in just two or three countries, for example. You can also construct a proposal where you have a project in which you will have some research or internship opportunities and can stay in place for several months at a time. While your project must be independent, you do not have to engage in itinerant travel over an extended period unless that suits your project. You can have a home base or bases for your year-long experience. You can be quite creative in the way you break up your time as long as you can explain why this is feasible.

Read our Do's and Don'ts handout for insight into common issues with Watson proposals.

Make an appointment to see Meghan Kuroda, Caltech's Watson Liaison, to discuss your project idea, and to request previous nominated and winners' proposals as examples to review. Our website's "Additional Resources" page has many ideas and suggestions that are great for trip planning: <https://fasa.caltech.edu/additional-resources>

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