

Fulbright Scholar Programs

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Introduction

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program expands perspectives through academic and professional advancement and cross-cultural dialogue. Fulbright finds solutions to complex global issues and creates connections in a changing world. In partnership with more than 140 countries worldwide, the Fulbright U.S.

Student Program offers unparalleled opportunities to advance knowledge and innovation across all academic disciplines. Awards are available to passionate and accomplished graduating college seniors, graduate students, and young professionals from all backgrounds. Program participants pursue graduate study, conduct research, or teach English abroad.

Overview

The Fulbright Program was established in 1946 to promote international goodwill and mutual understanding through educational exchange. It has since evolved to provide grants for U.S. citizens and foreign nationals to study, teach, and conduct research in various countries, significantly impacting global education and cultural relations.

Nearly 450,000 alumni

Funds US citizens to study, conduct research, or teach English abroad; funds non-US citizens for research or language education in the United States

160+ countries, 1,800+ awards granted annually

Open to all academic disciplines

Overview: application paths

Via a university nomination or “at large”; applying through your university requires a nomination. There are pros to either path.

At-large:

“...Choosing to forego this step means that you are applying as an “at-large” candidate. You must indicate whether you are an “at-large” bid or applying through your institution when you submit your application.

Depending on your personal situation, applying at-large could be helpful in securing your Fulbright Award...”

[Review this article for more details and analysis.](#)

Overview: award types

Which type of Fulbright is for you?

STUDENT

If you are a graduating university student, recent graduate, graduate student, early-career artist, language teacher, or other early-career professional, you can apply to pursue graduate study, conduct research, or teach your native language abroad.

SCHOLAR

If you are a college or university faculty member or administrator, or a researcher, artist, or experienced professional, you can apply to lecture, conduct research, or pursue short- or long-term professional projects abroad.

EDUCATOR

If you are a primary or secondary school teacher, you can apply to go abroad to pursue individual projects, conduct research, take professional development courses, and share expertise.

PROFESSIONAL

If you are an experienced professional, you can apply to lecture, conduct research, or pursue short- or long-term professional projects abroad; early-career professionals can apply through the student programs. You do not need to be affiliated with a higher education institution to apply.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

If you represent a higher education institution, you can connect with Fulbright to host visiting students and scholars, including individual placements as well as Scholars-in-Residence (for U.S. institutions) or Specialists (for non-U.S. institutions).

Explore opportunities [here](#).

US-Citizen Most Common Applications

ETA

- Assist English teachers abroad
- 60-hr TESOL course
- A hybrid ETA + STEM variant

Study / Research

- enrollment at a host institution
- Most common for STEM applicants
- join lab, NGO, join institute/university

More info here:

<https://us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/types-of-awards>

Specialty Awards

- Fulbright-National Geographic Award
- Fulbright-Fogarty Fellowships

Non-US Citizen Applications

Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program

The Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program places early career educators as FLTAs at U.S. colleges and universities. U.S. schools can apply to host FLTAs in over 30 languages.

More info here:

<https://fulbrightscholars.org/non-us-scholars>

Fulbright Foreign Student Program

Enables graduate students, young professionals, and artists from abroad to research and study in the United States for one year or longer at U.S. universities or other appropriate institutions. Application details and grant terms for the Fulbright Program vary by country of citizenship and program. Potential applicants should consult individual country pages for program availability and contact information or to see a list of current programs.

Funding

All grants include:

- **Monthly living stipend (cost-of-living based)**
- **Accident and sickness health coverage**
- **24/7 urgent support line during the grant**
- **12-month federal non-competitive eligibility (NCE) hiring status**

May also include:

- **Round-trip airfare**
- **Full or partial tuition**
- **Book and research allowances**
- **Pre-departure and in-country orientations**

Eligibility

You ARE eligible if you:

- Hold a bachelor's degree before grant start date
- Do not hold a Ph.D. at the time of the national application deadline (US Citizens)
- Meet language reqs of chosen award & country
- Have **not** resided abroad 5+ yrs in the past 6 yrs

You are NOT eligible if you:

- Hold or will hold a Ph.D. by the application deadline
- Are seeking a medical degree program abroad
- Are currently employed by the U.S. Department of State or IIE

more info here:

<https://us.fulbrightonline.org/about/eligibility>

Competitiveness: Applicants who have not previously held a Fulbright grant and who have spent fewer than 6 months in the proposed host country (outside of undergraduate study abroad) are preferred. Research awards are more competitive for master's or Ph.D.-level applicants.

Application Components

US citizen example

1. Statement of Grant Purpose (6,000 characters)

- The project plan — the core of your application
- Must answer: What are you studying? Why does it matter? Why this country? Why you?
- Must be specific, feasible within 9–12 months, and only achievable in the host country
- For ETA applicants: focus on teaching approach and community engagement
- Avoid jargon — explain your project to a non-expert audience

2. Personal Statement (separate from Grant Purpose)

- Offers insight into who you are, your values, and what motivates you
- Tell a story that connects your past to your future goals
- Reflect on personal growth, not just achievements
- Do not duplicate your CV
- Tone: sincere, globally minded, community-oriented

Application Components

US citizen example

3. Three Short Answer Essays

- Flexibility & Adaptability (2,000 characters): concrete examples of resilience and growth
- Community Engagement (2,000 characters): how you will integrate into the host community
- Impact of Fulbright Award (1,000 characters): post-grant plans and how you'll share the experience

4. Three Letters of Recommendation

- Should address: project capacity, cross-cultural adaptability, and potential as a cultural ambassador
- Provide recommenders with your Statement of Grant Purpose and at least 4–5 weeks lead time
- Letters must be submitted by the national deadline

Application Components

US citizen example

5. Affiliation Letter

- Required for Study/Research applicants
- Must come from a proposed host institution or adviser in the host country
- Must be on official letterhead, signed, and translated to English if needed
- Can take months to secure — begin outreach in junior year

6. Transcripts

- From all post-secondary institutions attended
- Unofficial copies are accepted
- Must show institution name, course titles, credits, and grades

7. Foreign Language Forms (if required)

- Self-evaluation completed in the application
- Professional Foreign Language Evaluation form completed by a language instructor

Application Components

non-US citizens

Non-U.S. citizens interested in applying for a Fulbright Award to the United States must apply through the Fulbright Commission or U.S. Embassy in their home country.

The application components typically include a completed application form, project proposal, letters of recommendation, and proof of language proficiency, among other requirements.

Competitive Application Notes

What Makes a Competitive Application:

- A specific, feasible, well-timed project with clear methodology
- Strong host affiliation (especially critical for STEM applicants)
- Demonstrated academic preparation and relevant experience
- Evidence of leadership, flexibility, and community engagement
- Emphasis on cultural exchange and mutual understanding — not just academic merit
- Ability to communicate your project clearly to non-experts

Competitive Application Notes cont'd

Common mistakes to avoid:

- Proposal too broad, too ambitious, or too jargon-heavy for a general audience
- No clear host affiliation secured
- Project scope unrealistic for a 9–12 month grant
- Weak or generic explanation of why this specific country
- Neglecting the cultural exchange component of the mission

Selecting A Country

US citizen example

Strong reasons to choose a country:

- Unique research facilities, datasets, or expertise in your field
- Environmental or geographic relevance (e.g., glaciers, biodiversity, urban infrastructure)
- Existing academic or professional connections
- Language or cultural ties that enhance your project

Weak reasoning:

- "I've always wanted to go there"
- "It has good universities"

Key rule: Your project must be only feasible in your chosen country — make that case explicitly in your proposal.

Selection Criteria

Applications are reviewed in the DC office and in the proposed country. Each country has its own Fulbright commission, and their needs and criteria differ across the world.

Criteria include:

- Quality and feasibility of the applicant's proposed project or activity.
- Applicant's academic, professional, and personal qualifications.
- Language preparation.
- Alignment of the application with the Fulbright mission of promoting understanding among nations.

Consider how your application reflects these (including letters of recommendation).

Advising by Year: at start of of fall term

Freshman Year — Explore

- Learn about Fulbright and other major fellowships
- Begin or continue language study
- Get involved in campus organizations, research, or community service
- Identify your campus Fulbright Program Adviser (FPA)

Sophomore Year — Build

- Deepen your academic focus and look for a research direction
- Consider studying abroad (choose destination thoughtfully — extended time in your target Fulbright country can hurt competitiveness)
- Build faculty relationships for future recommendations
- Attend Fulbright information sessions and webinars

Advising by Year: at start of of fall term

Junior Year — Focus

- Identify a specific country and award type
- Draft your project proposal and refine with faculty and your FPA
- Begin contacting potential host institutions or advisers abroad — this process can take months
- Develop your list of three recommenders

Senior Year — Apply

- Meet with your FPA immediately
- Finalize your Statement of Grant Purpose & Personal Statement
- Secure your affiliation letter
- Request recommendation letters with 4–5 weeks lead time
- Submit before your campus deadline

Advising by Year:

Postgrad

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program

This is the route for those further along in their careers. It offers over 400 awards in more than 135 countries for teaching, research, and professional projects. It's open to college/university faculty as well as artists and professionals across a wide range of fields.

Key tracks within it:

- Postdoctoral Awards — for recently graduated scholars who received a doctoral degree within five to seven years of the fellowship start date. These may involve limited teaching.
- Early Career Academics — for those who have been working as a teacher or scholar for no more than seven years.
- Distinguished Scholar Awards — the most prestigious appointments, open to scholars with more than seven years of experience in their discipline.

Application Timelines

May 2026

Study/Research Award & ETA
application open

Non-US citizen application open

Oct 2 2026 (5p Eastern) Study/Research
Award & ETA Application deadline

Non-U.S. Citizens Fulbright Program
participants: Please contact the Fulbright
Commission or the Public Affairs Section
of the U.S. Embassy in your home
country to apply and for more details.

**Requires institutional
endorsement**

Resources

Award Search:

us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/award-search

Find your FPA:

us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/search-for-a-fulbright-program-adviser

Webinars:

us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/information-sessions

Apply:

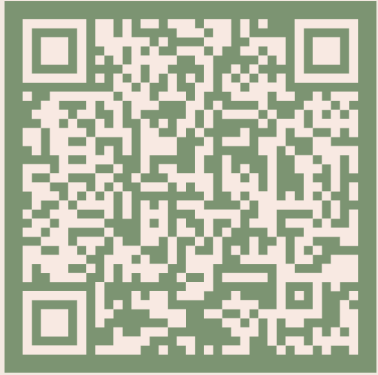
apply.iie.org/fulbrightusstudent

IIE support:

fbstudent@iie.org

Fulbright Programs

<https://us.fulbrightonline.org>



**Take this
survey to
give
feedback!**

Questions?

We're here to help you navigate the process.

FASAOffice@caltech.edu

fasa.caltech.edu/fellowships

Rm 319, CSS Building