



Fulbright Program Application Deadlines, Tips, and FAQs

The website for all Fulbright competitions is <https://us.fulbrightonline.org>. The electronic application and instructions are found here. If you haven't been on this site, and you are intending to apply for a Fulbright, drop everything (including this document) and go there now. It is the authority on application requirements, and it is chock full of helpful information.

The Fulbright Advisor for the Graduate School of Emory University is Mark Risjord (mark.risjord@emory.edu, 404-727-3901). Contact him if you have any questions.

Deadlines and Dates

Now. By this time, you should have already started the electronic application, drafted your research proposal, and discussed your application with your advisor(s).

August 31, 5:00 PM. This is the “**campus deadline.**” Hard copy of the *entire* application is due in the Graduate School. This includes transcripts, letters, and language evaluations. Fill out the on-line application (including the proposal and personal statement) and print a copy. Faculty writing letters for you (including language evaluators) fill out their letters/evaluations on line. They must print a copy, sign it, and give it to in a sealed envelope (signed across the flap). Again, *all* materials are due on this date. (Applications received after the campus deadline will not go through the campus committee process, but may be submitted “at large.”)

Turn in a cover sheet with your email address, telephone number, and a list of times you absolutely cannot meet with the Fulbright committee on days designated as campus interview days

14-18 September. The Graduate School Fulbright Committee will interview all applicants. Interviews are scheduled around faculty availability. If you cannot attend any of the available interview times, you may have to apply “at large.” The Committee will provide feedback after the interview and you will be able to rewrite your proposal before the Institute of International Education (IIE) deadline.

8 October, 5:00 PM. Applicants print a hard copy of their revised application to the Graduate School. Be sure to sign the application! Applicants will also submit their on-line application electronically at this time. Notice that this is earlier than the deadline published by IIE in the application.

31 January, 2010. IIE expects to inform applicants of first round results. Applications that are successful at this round go on for Host Country Review. Final selection letters are sent between mid-March and late June.

Application tips

1. Go to the on-line application immediately and become familiar with it. While the on-line application is very user friendly, you may be frustrated by the technology if you wait until the last minute to use it. Know the application's quirks and limitations long before you have to submit your proposal. (For example, you should print out sample forms and make sure that they are legible and that no text is cut off by improper printer settings.) The on-line application allows you to make entries, save your work, and return to edit.
2. When you visit the Fulbright website, be sure to check the country page for the country you intend to visit. There are often requirements that are country-specific.
3. Faculty who will write letters for you will do so on line. They will *also* print a copy of the letter, sign it, and give it to you in a sealed envelope with their signature across the flap. These letters must be submitted to the Graduate School on the campus deadline.
4. One function of a letter of support is to establish the feasibility and intellectual interest of your project. It is therefore very important for the writer to be familiar with the details of your project. Provide your letter writers with a copy of the research proposal and the personal statement.
5. Remember that faculty who are writing your letters are also writing letters for other students and are juggling a great many professional obligations. Let them know in advance what grants you are applying for and what your deadlines are.
6. Language evaluators follow the same procedure as recommenders; they both submit on-line and provide a signed, hard copy in a sealed envelope.
7. It is strongly recommended that you get a faculty member to do the language evaluation. The evaluator need not be from Emory.
8. You will need one official copy of your Emory transcript, one official transcript from each post-secondary school you have attended. These should be issued to you in sealed envelopes and turned in this way.
9. Do not trust the mechanical grammar and spell checks of your software to find errors of spelling, punctuation, or word usage. Proofread the entire application. Have a friend or associate proofread the entire application. Then check it again.
10. Question 33 of the application is a very short abstract of the proposal. Each time you finish a draft of the proposal, go back and revise your abstract. Be sure that it still correctly describes your project.
11. Remember the abstract in question 33 is a first impression, and first impressions count. Use several short, clear sentences, not a single rambling, run-on sentence. Avoid jargon *completely*. Make it exciting and interesting. Make the reader care.

Application FAQ

Do I really need an affiliation?

Yes, you must have an affiliation. The Fulbright web page includes some helpful pointers about it: https://us.fulbrightonline.org/howtoapply_tips.html#affiliation.

Why?

Fulbright is not just about research. Fulbright is looking for academic ambassadors, and your affiliation is one avenue through which you can contribute to the host country.

What form should the letter affiliation take?

IIE prefers letters of affiliation to be written on letterhead, and submitted as a signed hard copy.

What if my letter of reference, affiliation, or language evaluation comes in after the campus deadline?

The hard copy for the Graduate School Fulbright Committee should include everything that will go in the final submission. We recognize that faculty are sometimes slow, and that letters of affiliation can be difficult to get. We can be a bit flexible, but the more the committee sees, the better it can help you make your application stronger.

Who should do my language evaluation?

IIE prefers that the evaluation be done by a faculty member.

I will be using one language for research, but the language of the host country is different. In which language should I be evaluated?

Get an evaluation for all languages you may need to use. The feasibility of your research proposal depends on your language ability, so an evaluation in your research language is absolutely essential. You will also be an academic ambassador, so you should expect to have a tourist-level knowledge of whatever language you'll be using to get around. Show an interest in learning the local language; if you don't have it, explain what you are doing to get it.

Everybody speaks English these days. How important is language, really?

Really, really, important. The National Committee's opinion of your language abilities and/or plans to develop them is a significant part of their evaluation. You don't necessarily need to be fluent, but if you aren't, have a clear plan for linguistic development.

Research Proposal Tips

1. Write and re-write. Show drafts to your advisor, friends, neighbors, parents, drinking buddies, and anyone else you can think of.
2. Remember that Fulbright committees are composed of experts from a wide variety of disciplines. It is possible that your discipline will not be represented at all. It is therefore *essential* that your proposal be comprehensible to someone outside your field. It also means you should:
 - 2.1. Find a friend in another field and show it to him/her. If s/he misunderstands it, then so will the committee.

- 2.2. Be careful with technical terms. For example, the word “realism” looks simple and easily comprehensible, but it means very different things to scholars of literature and scholars of politics. Eliminate technical terms where possible.
- 2.3. Write so that you capture a generally educated reader’s attention. Make them curious about your questions, no matter what their background.
3. Do you have any cute, clichéd, corny phrases or unnecessary plays on words, including those of the Derrida-esque variety? Do they make your project title sound like a newspaper headline? Get rid of them. Avoid terms that are so over-used as to have lost their meaning, such as “deconstruct,” etc.
4. Write concretely. Use the active voice.
5. A good proposal answers the following questions in this order: What? Where/when? How? Who?

- 5.1. What? Begin with the broad intellectual issue you will be investigating. Try to make this compelling to a general audience; it should be a question that will grab the reader, no matter what their background. The main or primary question should be clear, and—as a matter of logic—there can only be one primary question. Other questions will relate to the primary question or problem.

In this first part of your proposal, you will also provide some background to your question. Synthesize what is known in a succinct way. Try to relate your question to issues in the field; do not be narrowly focused on your discipline.

- 5.2. Where/when? Fulbright looks for knowledge of the place. Your broad intellectual question should be made more specific by relating it to a location in space and time. You are proposing to study in a particular country because something there will shed light on the big question. What contribution will knowing something about this place (time) make to the larger intellectual problem articulated in the opening section?

In this section, your question gets specified. It should become clear how answering your question will contribute to the larger intellectual problems.

- 5.3. How? This is the “methodology” of your proposal. Avoid jargon here too. Your audience may not know what a chi square test or a phenomenological interview is, or they may never have worked with literary texts. You will be doing something in the field. In concrete terms, what will you be doing and how will that provide information that answers the main question of your study? What, specifically, will you be doing to this information to put it in a useful form?

If you will be working in an archive or similar location, this is where you should show that you have a good sense of what is there to be found. Funding agencies do not support fishing expeditions. Give them reason to believe that you know what you are looking for and have a good chance of finding it.

- 5.4. Who? A good proposal must convince the reader that you are qualified to do the proposed research. Most, if not all, of this can go in the personal statement, but it is appropriate to mention research affiliations, previous experience, language skills, etc. in the main proposal.
6. Make it clear that you are familiar with the relevant literature. This will appear as part of the answers to the “what?” and “where?” questions. You want to present your work against the background of what is already known, thereby highlighting your contribution.
 7. But, there is no space for footnotes in the Fulbright grant narrative. Yet, you need to show your knowledge of the literature in a concrete way. There are two tricks, and you should use them together.
 - 7.1. First, do your citations in-line, and abbreviate them. An author and date will suffice, or perhaps just the author, or just the title. E.g. "Previous work on this topic (Jones 2000, Smith 1965) has shown..." or "Works like *Outline of a Theory of Practice* have proposed..." Now, this will only work for very prominent books or essays. The work should be prominent enough that if the reader knows something about your area, s/he'll recognize the name.
 - 7.2. Second, synthesize. In academic writing, we rely on the references to do a certain amount of work for us. Because your reader typically is familiar with the background literature, you can off-load the articulation of some background knowledge to the reference list. In a grant narrative, you can't count on the reader's background knowledge. So, you need to find ways of synthesizing what has been said. Try to capture the main points of an interpretive tradition, or the main results of recent studies in a sentence or two.
 8. Use what you know. If you have already done preliminary research, or if you have experience in the country that is relevant, build on this. It can help make your proposal more concrete and specific.
 9. Include a timeline for your research, especially if the project has several parts.

Proposal FAQ

Can I add a bibliography?

Don't even think about it. IIE will not accept more than two pages, and you need every bit of available space to explain your research.

What if I need to refer to a specific work?

If you absolutely positively need to refer to a specific work, use the author's name and the title of the work. If it is really well known in the field, you might just use the name and date. See point (7) above.

Is the page limit absolute?

Yes. The electronic application form will enforce the limits.

Personal Statement Tips

1. First and foremost: the Personal Statement is *not* a personal statement. It is not about your family life, the neighborhood where you grew up, or an inspiring high school teacher. It is not like the Personal Statement you wrote for your college or graduate school application.
2. Think of the personal statement as a narrative CV, specially tailored to highlight your qualifications for the proposed project. Think through the skills, abilities, experiences, training, etc. that your project requires. (It is advisable to get some outside advice about this.) Then, use the personal statement to show that you have them. If you don't have them, explain what you will be doing to get them.
3. Be concrete, but don't be cute. Leave out the stories about how much you love your parents, friends, or travel to exotic lands.
4. The personal statement is a good place to discuss:
 - Your plans to develop the language skills required for your research.
 - If your language skills are strong, this is a place to demonstrate it. E.g. perhaps you worked as a translator, or lived in-country using the language for two years.
 - Your experience in the country or other relevant experiences. Again, focus this so it helps show why you are qualified for this project
 - Relevant, in-country contacts you have developed.
 - Your training in the research techniques mentioned in the methodology. This includes interviewing techniques. Anyone who has done this will tell you that there is more to an interview than asking questions. Nothing will tick-off an anthropologist faster than the hint that anybody can conduct an interview or do participation observation.
 - If you have not yet taken your comprehensive exams or had your dissertation prospectus approved, say when you expect this to happen.
 - Relevant coursework. Again, think in terms of a field, not your discipline. A committee member with a political science background may be unimpressed when you say you took a course on Hegel; s/he may be much more interested when you talk about your training in political philosophy. Also remember that titles on a transcript can be quite uninformative (“Directed Study” or “African Thought”). If it shows that you know important parts of the background literature, briefly explain what the course was about.

The Interview

1. Interviews are scheduled at 45-minute intervals. Arrive at least five minutes early and, because some interviews run overtime, prepare to wait. The committee is asked to evaluate how you will respond to the stresses of overseas research, including the everyday frustrations of life. If you respond to a delay in your scheduled interview with anger, impatience, or petulance, it will be difficult for the committee to certify that you are

equipped to handle the dual pressures of conducting dissertation research and representing the United States abroad.

2. Committee members often pose questions in the language your research requires (e.g., Arabic, French, Hindi, German). If your language skills are not what they should be, have a concrete plan for gaining competence. Language skills make the difference between a good proposal and a funded proposal.
3. Expect tough questions about your research problem, methodology, and your preparation to do what you propose. The purpose is to engage you in a serious, if brief, discussion of your proposal. You may find them more critical of your work than any other faculty or students have been. The ability to think on your feet, remain composed, and respond thoughtfully is one of the things that Fulbright is looking for.
4. The goal of the committee is to help you make your proposal as strong as it can be. If they find defects or confusions, you can be guaranteed that the National Committee will too. So, expect them to be critical, but they will also try to be helpful. Feel free to email committee members after the interview and follow up on specific points or suggestions.
5. Be prepared to listen to other perspectives and to be open to suggestions. Avoid patronizing or defensive tones. Expect to take notes—bring paper and pencil.
6. Recommendations for revision will be emailed to you after your interview. Do not wait for written comments to begin revising your proposal. Committee comments are based on what goes on in the interview, so consider possible revisions as soon as you walk out the door. Think about questions raised in the interview. Discuss the interview and follow-up comments with your advisor. In all cases, the committee's recommendations are advisory; you know the area best and the ultimate proposal is yours.