

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

(for Canadian applicants)

Eligibility for the award

Q. What is the difference between a Fulbright student and a Fulbright scholar in the Fulbright Program?

A. Fulbright "students" are participants in the Fulbright Student Program, which allows college graduates, graduate students, young professionals and artists to study, teach, or conduct research. A bachelor's degree (or equivalent) is normally required by the start of the Fulbright grant period. Fulbright "scholars" are participants in the Fulbright Scholar Program, which allows college and university faculty members with a Ph.D. (or equivalent terminal degree), post-doctoral researchers, and senior professionals to teach and/or conduct research.

Q. Are Fulbright grants only intended for the humanities and social sciences?

A. No. Fulbright grants are available for a variety of disciplines and fields, including the performing and visual arts, the natural sciences, mathematics, engineering and technology. Fulbright encourages applications from all fields, including interdisciplinary ones. Medical training is not supported.

Q. Are Fulbright Canada grants available for study and research in "third countries"?

A. No. The Fulbright Program cannot fund your studies in another country. The Fulbright program operates on a bi-national basis. The Canada-U.S. Fulbright Program only funds Canadian citizens for study, research and teaching in the United States, and U.S. citizens for study, research and teaching in Canada.

Q. I am a Canadian currently living in the United States. Am I eligible for a Fulbright grant to start or continue study/research in the United States?

A. No. You are not eligible for a Fulbright grant to the United States if you are already in the United States. Note that Canadians who are permanent residents of the United States are also ineligible. If you are currently living in a third country, you may still be eligible for an award.

Q. I am a Canadian living in Canada now, but I was living in the United States. Does this affect my eligibility?

A. A candidate who has resided in the United States for five or more consecutive years in the six-year period preceding the date of application is ineligible for a grant. Note that a candidate who has lived in the United States for nine months or more during a calendar year is deemed to have resided in the United States for that year.

Q. If I am currently in the United Kingdom finishing my graduate degree can I still apply?

A. This depends upon how long you have lived outside of Canada. A candidate who has resided abroad for five or more consecutive years in the six-year period preceding the date of application is ineligible for a grant. Note that living abroad for nine months or more during a calendar year is deemed to have been abroad for that year.

Q. What is significant recent experience?

A. *Significant recent experience* is defined as study, teaching, research, or employment for a period aggregating more than an academic year (nine months) during the past five years. Preference will be given to candidates who have not had significant recent experience in the United States.

Q. I am a citizen of both Canada and the United States, can I still apply?

A. Canadian Fulbrighters enter the United States under a J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa. As those with U.S. citizenship do not require a visa to enter the United States, they cannot be issued a J-1 visa. This means that American citizens and dual Canada-U.S. citizens are not eligible for a Fulbright award from Canada to the United States.

Note: depending upon how long you have been residing outside of the United States, you may be eligible to apply as a U.S. citizen for a Fulbright award to one of the 155 other countries in the program.

Q. May I enrol in a medical degree on a Fulbright grant?

A. No. You may, however, conduct research in the areas of public health and global health. The Fulbright Program will not fund applicants seeking to enrol in a medical degree program nor does it offer grants to those who wish to conduct clinical medical research or training involving patient care and/or contact.

For Canadians who wish to study clinical medicine in the United States, the U.S. Department of State has designated the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) as the sole agency authorized to sponsor alien physicians for internship, residency and specialized clinical training in the United States. Fulbright grantees cannot simultaneously be sponsored by ECFMG; therefore, proposals for medical research involving clinical training, patient care or patient contact cannot be approved under the Fulbright Program.

Q. Can I apply to a graduate program which may take more than one year to complete?

A. Yes. An award for the Fulbright Student program will support your first academic year. While the Fulbright award is not renewable, your visa can either be extended or transferred to your host institution until the end of your studies.

Q. I have received my Master's degree but will not start my PhD for another year. Can I use a Fulbright award to conduct research in a gap year, if I have the intention of remaining in the United States for a PhD afterward?

A. No. If at the time of application you do not indicate that it is your intention to enter the United States for the purposes of a degree program that will last longer than the nine month period of your award, then you are obliged to return to Canada for two years upon the completion of your award.

Q. I am nearly finished my PhD studies, should I apply for the student competition or the scholar competition?

A. If you expect to hold your PhD at the time you will take up your award, you must apply under the scholar competition. Otherwise, you can apply under the student competition.

Q. I want to conduct post-doctoral research, should I apply?

A. Yes. Fulbright scholar awards are granted to scholars at all stages of their careers.

Q. If I already had a Fulbright, can I get another one?

A. Yes. The Fulbright Program has lifted the limit on the number of Fulbright awards that students and scholars can take up during their lifetime. As a general matter, preference for Fulbright opportunities will be given to candidates who have not previously received a grant, however, repeat applications will be considered. We would encourage repeat applicants to emphasize a strong justification for receiving another grant.

Applying for the award

Q. If I want to conduct research, what are the requirements with respect to institutional affiliation?

A. All Fulbright award recipients must be affiliated with an institution in the United States.

Applicants for a Fulbright Student or a Traditional Fulbright Scholar award are responsible for securing such affiliation. As the affiliations with partner schools in the Fulbright Chairs program are already in place, applicants for these awards do not have to secure such affiliation.

While there is no set model, before taking up a Fulbright award each grantee must have obtained a letter of invitation from the host, normally a professor or department head, who will be overseeing their work at the host institution. Normally, affiliation includes access to library and research facilities, use of a computer and network, and a workspace.

Q. Do I need to have a Letter of Invitation?

A. This depends upon the proposal:

Students who plan to formally enrol in a U.S. graduate program do not. They should instead provide a copy of correspondence that acknowledges their application to the host institution.

Students who plan to conduct research, either in support of their studies in Canada, or as an independent researcher in the United States require a letter of invitation.

Scholars applying for a Traditional award require a letter of invitation.

Scholars applying for a Visiting Chair award do not require a letter of invitation.

Q. I need a Letter of Invitation. How do I get one?

A. If you do not have a contact, your goal is to determine the name of an appropriate faculty member for a specific discipline or subfield within the discipline. Once you have determined possible hosts, write that faculty member a description of who you are (an attached C.V. can be helpful) and what you want to do while in the United States. Note that you plan to apply for a Fulbright grant and that the application requires a letter of invitation. There may be several communications before a letter is forthcoming, but this method often works.

Q. I have not yet received a letter of invitation/acceptance. Am I eligible to apply?

A. Yes. Please indicate on the application form that you are in the process of discussing arrangements with your host institution or seeking acceptance for admission. You can include a copy of your correspondence or acknowledgement of receipt that you have applied for admission with your application. When your formal letter of invitation/acceptance arrives, please forward this to Fulbright Canada. Proof of existing contact with your host institution would be an asset to your application. If your application is successful, you will be offered an award on the condition that you are accepted at your host institution.

Q. I intend to apply to several universities in the United States, should I list them all on the application form?

A. Yes. Please list your top three to five schools in order of preference.

Q. Do I submit my GRE result with my application for a Fulbright Student award?

A. No. GRE results are not required when your application is submitted for a Fulbright award. However, your GRE results may be required when you submit your application for admission at your host institution.

Q. What level of achievement is required to be considered for a Fulbright award?

A. The Fulbright Program does not have a grade baseline or requirement. Successful candidates have generally scored very high in all course work. Most successful candidates are normally in the top tier of their respective classes and fields.

Q. Who should write my reference letters?

A. While it is useful to have someone with a known reputation in the field, the best criteria for recommendations is someone who knows your work and character extensively. We also advise mixing internal and external letters to demonstrate the breadth of your contacts. You may also contact a professional reference who knows you well. The Teaching Report required for lecturing awards should be written by the Head of your department or the Dean of your school.

Q. Can my Letters of Reference be in French?

A. No. The letters of reference must be written in English, or alternatively, letters written in French must be accompanied by a confidential translation (not translated by the applicant).

Q. As a student applicant, must I complete the Academic Records Information form?

A. No. A scanned copy of your unofficial or official transcripts must be attached to your Embark application.

Q. If I have a French diploma and transcripts, do I have to get them translated?

A. No. The Fulbright Canada adjudication committee will accept French transcripts.

Q. My mother tongue is English, must I complete a language proficiency report?

A. No. ONLY if your Mother Tongue is **not** English, are you required to complete a language proficiency report. And if you have **not** completed *at least* 3 years of study or work in English you are required to either complete and submit a Report on Proficiency in English or take a TOEFL (or IELTS) standardized test for English language proficiency.
IF you have results from a TOEFL or IELTS test please add this to your application.

Q. Who can complete the Report on Proficiency in English, and which evaluation method may be used?

A. This report may be completed by a director of courses in English at a binational (Canada-U.S.) center, or a professor of English, whose native language is English, using any method, at the discretion of the evaluator, deemed appropriate to complete the test.

Q. May my spouse apply for a Fulbright in the same year as I apply?

A. Yes. Each application is judged on its own merits.

Q. Can I apply for a Fulbright Scholar award to teach, as opposed to conducting research, at my host institution?

A. Yes. Please indicate your intentions on your application and in your project statement. You should also include a sample syllabus with your application.

Q. I am a student who has been conducting comparative studies between Canada and Brazil, but I am now interested in looking at my topic in the United States. Is it acceptable to apply to conduct a project that compares Canada, the United States, and a third country?

A. Yes. The competition is open to all fields of study. There is a particular preference for those who are conducting comparative studies between Canada and the United States, even if those studies involve a third country, group or nationality.

Q. Does it matter if my project is about a politically sensitive matter?

A. All recipients of Fulbright awards will have full academic and artistic freedom, including freedom to write, publish, and create, and no grant may be revoked or diminished on account of the political views expressed by the recipient or on account of any scholarly or artistic activity that would be subject to the protections of academic and artistic freedom normally observed in our universities.

Q. How can I make my application more successful?

A. There is no "formula" for a successful grant. Each individual's application should be about the candidate, how the grant time will be spent, and what outcomes can be reasonably expected. What is successful for one applicant may not be effective for another applicant.

Q. What is the application success rate?

A. The Fulbright Program is highly competitive. Although we may identify several top quality candidates, the number of awards is limited. The “success rate” is difficult to predict as both, the number of applications received, and the number of awards granted varies each year. In the recent history of the program, approximately 10% of the student applicants and 20% of the scholar applicants were granted awards.

Q. Can I hold other awards concurrently with a Fulbright award?

A. Yes. A Fulbright award can be held in addition to most other awards such as SSHRC, NSERC, Canada Council for the Arts, etc. Please check with other granting agencies for their requirements.

Q. If I am enrolling in a multi-year Masters or PhD program, can I stay until I am finished?

A. Yes. A graduate student enrolled at a degree-granting institution in the United States can remain in the United States until the completion of that degree, even if it requires more time than the initial nine month period of the Fulbright award. As your visa is prepared to cover the first nine months supported by the Fulbright program, additional time in the United States requires your visa to be extended or your visa to be transferred to sponsorship by the host institution.

Q. How is my application reviewed and how am I notified?

A. Your application will be reviewed in several stages.
The first review will be for eligibility, content, and completeness.
An academic review will be conducted by an adjudication committee that consists of academics and professionals from across Canada.
Next is a review by the Fulbright Canada Board of Directors Academic Committee.
Candidates for a Visiting Chair placement may be submitted for review at the host institution.
The final review will be by the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.
All candidates will be informed in writing of the status of their application. Notification of the final decisions will be in the spring.

About the award

Q. Why is the Fulbright Program unique?

A. Fulbright is the most widely recognized and prestigious international exchange program in the world, supported for more than half a century by the American people through an annual appropriation from the U.S. Congress and by the people of partner nations. The program -- working with universities, schools, binational Fulbright commissions and foundations, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector -- actively seeks out individuals of achievement and potential who represent the full diversity of their respective societies and selects nominees through open, merit-based competitions. From its inception, the Fulbright Program has fostered bilateral relationships in which other countries and governments work with the U.S. to set joint priorities and shape the program to meet shared needs.

Q. What do Fulbrighters do?

A. Fulbrighters play a variety of roles, both during and after their Fulbright experiences. These roles include being students, scholars, teachers, lecturers, researchers, mentors, artists, philanthropists, cultural ambassadors and social entrepreneurs.

Q. What is it like being a Fulbrighter?

A. Each Fulbrighter's experience is unique and depends on a variety of factors, including project details, location, and language abilities. Despite the variety of experiences, Fulbrighters all describe their experiences as life changing and having a profound influence on their professional and personal endeavours.

Q. What is expected from Fulbrighters?

A. In addition to carrying out their proposed projects, Fulbrighters are expected to involve themselves in the host community, sharing their culture while at the same time observing the host culture. After their grant periods, Fulbrighters are encouraged to bring what they have learned through this cultural exchange home and teach others about the cultures they have experienced. Fulbrighters are also encouraged to continue the Fulbright experience by reaching out to their home communities, participating in Fulbright alumni activities and networking with other Fulbrighters.

Q. How soon can I take up my award?

A. Fulbright awards are announced in mid-April for the cohort taking up awards starting in the following academic year (September – May). Upon confirmation of the awards, several administrative steps and processes are involved in preparing for your Fulbright experience. Our objective is to have your visa documentation finalized 30 days before your grant period begins. You should expect a minimum period of 8 weeks after receipt of your information forms before your visa documentation is ready.

Q. Can awards be deferred?

A. No. If you are selected for a Fulbright but are unable to take up your award you must withdraw. You are encouraged to apply to future competitions. Please be aware that the adjudication committee will not refer back to previously submitted applications.

Q. If I am selected, can I take my family with me on my Fulbright?

A. Yes. Many Fulbrighters bring their families and report that this experience benefited all family members. Your dependents will enter the United States under a J-2 visa.

Q. How do I get a visa for my spouse or children?

A. Fulbright Canada will prepare supporting documentation for your dependents. More details will become available when you are selected for a Fulbright award.

Q. Based on past Fulbrighter experiences, does the financial value of the award cover tuition, living, travel and visa expenses?

A. This is highly dependent on the Fulbrighter lifestyle, but in most cases, no. You will likely require some additional funds to cover all of your expenses. Fulbright awards can be taken up in addition to other bursary, scholarship, fellowship, sabbatical pay or other financial compensation.

Q. I have been granted a Fulbright award. What happens if I need to stay at my host institution another semester to finish my research/studies?

A. If you would like to continue your residence beyond your Fulbright grant period, you may request an extension to your visa. Please note that your Fulbright award funding will not increase.

Q. Do I have to return to Canada after completing my studies, research, or teaching in the United States?

A. Yes. Canadian Fulbright award recipients enter the United States on a J-1 Exchange Visitor visa. The United States Department of State requires that you will return to Canada for a minimum of two years upon the expiration of your visa before applying for an H, L, or K visa, or applying for lawful permanent residency (Section 212e of the Immigration and Nationality Act). Note that if you have been granted a Fulbright award for a multi-year program (Masters or PhD), your J-1 visa can be extended and/or transferred upon the conclusion of your Fulbright sponsorship.