Fulbright U.S. Student Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What kinds of grants are available through the Fulbright U.S. Student Program (FUSP)?

Fulbright offers many different kinds of grants, which you can learn more about on the Fulbright website. However, most KU undergraduates apply for the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship (ETA) grant and the Fulbright Study/Research grant.

You should apply for a Fulbright ETA if you would like to engage in a rewarding cultural exchange while teaching students (from primary school all the way to higher education) English for 20-30 hours per week. Fulbright ETA grants provide round-trip transportation, maintenance for the academic year, supplemental health and accident coverage, tuition assistance (in some cases), and language or orientation courses where appropriate.

You should apply for the Study/Research grant if you would like to conduct research abroad at the graduate level. FUSP Study/Research grants generally provide round-trip transportation, book and research allowances, maintenance for the academic year based on living costs in the host country, supplemental health and accident coverage, tuition (in some cases), and language or orientation courses where appropriate.

Can I apply for a Fulbright after I graduate from KU?

Yes. After graduation, you can apply either directly to Fulbright as an "at-large applicant" or you can apply through KU's Office of International Programs. Applying through KU gives you the advantages of having our office's continuous support throughout the application process, as well as having the KU faculty committee review and make suggestions for your application.

Can I submit more than one Fulbright application in the same year?

No, you can only submit one application each year, to a specific country. However, unsuccessful applicants may reapply in subsequent years. Please note that this application limitation does not apply to the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad grant (DDRA); however, if you are granted both awards, you will need to choose between them. Doctoral students should carefully consider which award may be more appropriate for their research goals.

Can I obtain a Fulbright grant more than once?

If you have received a Study/Research grant, you cannot apply for a Study/Research grant again, nor can you apply for the ETA grant. There are other Fulbright grants you can apply for, but you must wait three years after the completion of your Fulbright Study/Research grant to apply for them. If you have received a Fulbright ETA, you are eligible to apply for a Fulbright Study/Research grant three years after the completion of your ETA.

Can I apply for multiple countries during the same application cycle?

No, you must choose one country and tailor your application specifically to that country.
**How do I choose a country? (for ETA applicants)**

Make sure to read the Fulbright Country Descriptions very carefully. You want to identify a country that will be the best fit for you, so you'll want to make sure that you meet the country's language requirement and that your interests and abilities match the country's needs. Country statistics are also useful when narrowing down your country choices, but should not be used as the sole basis of picking a country. If you have no actual interest in the country to which you are applying, it will be apparent in your application and your campus committee interview.

**How difficult is it to get a Fulbright grant?**

The Fulbright process is highly competitive; each year, approximately 20% of applicants receive awards. However, the odds of success vary from country to country, depending on the popularity of the country and the number of grants it offers. Some countries offer over 100 ETA grants while others offer only two. Statistics for each country are available on the Fulbright website.

**What kinds of people receive Fulbright grants?**

Each year KU's applicants are diverse, but they share some common traits, including: intelligence, motivation, interest in others, involvement, determination, and the ability to express these qualities in their Fulbright application.

**Is there a GPA requirement?**

Yes. The official GPA requirement is 3.0, but an even higher GPA may be unofficially required, depending on the level of competitiveness in the country to which you apply. Your GPA, however, is not the most important factor in receiving a Fulbright grant. Evidence of leadership and initiative (in the form of teaching or mentoring experience if you are applying for a Fulbright ETA or in the form of research experience if you are applying for a Study/Research grant) are of primary importance, as are community involvement and contributions to society. Previous coursework related to your major interest and/or project proposal (for the Study/Research grant) and command of the foreign language spoken in the country to which you are applying (if required) are also quite important.

**I studied abroad—will that help or hurt my chances of getting a Fulbright?**

Having international experience in any capacity is beneficial to your application; however, having lived abroad for extended periods of time (e.g., several years of high school) in the country for which you are applying does greatly reduce your chances of receiving a Fulbright grant for that country. Additionally, if you have not had the opportunity to study abroad, it will not hurt your application.

**I won't be on campus for the fall interview process. Can I still apply for a Fulbright?**

Yes, the campus interview can be conducted via Skype if necessary.

**Who should write my letters of recommendation?**

You should seek strong, supportive references who are able to speak to your accomplishments generally and also specifically to your ability to teach or carry out your proposed project (depending on grant type). For ETA applicants, we recommend that you have at least one letter from someone familiar with your teaching ability, and two other letters from people familiar with your academic ability, multicultural experience, and leadership initiative. For Study/Research applicants, you should seek out letters of reference from people who can discuss your academic ability and attest to your research skills.
How do I obtain a letter of affiliation from someone in the host country for a Fulbright Study/Research grant?

There are several possible options. Faculty members often have international contacts, so talk with professors who are likely to know a relevant person in your host country who may be willing to support your project. You can also identify academics abroad via their university websites.

If I feel like I don't have anything (or enough) to list under "Occupational Experience," "Academic Honors, Fellowships, and Scholarships," "Extracurricular Activities," and "Publications, Exhibitions, and Performances," should I just leave those sections blank?

No. Chances are that you have at least one thing you can list under each category. The only category it would be acceptable to leave blank is "Publications, Exhibitions, and Performances," if you are either not involved in the arts or haven't published any research. Even so, students have often found it best to over-list items on this section and then work with the Fulbright adviser to pare it down if necessary.

What should I include in my Personal Statement?

The personal statement on the Fulbright application is essentially a one-page answer to the question "What experiences have made you who you are today?" There are no specific guidelines given by the Fulbright program, and successful applications have covered a wide variety of topics. A guiding principle to consider: when the reviewer finishes reading your statement, he or she should have a feel for who you are and, most importantly, the reviewer should like you.

Ultimately, you should demonstrate strong writing skills, developed and organized ideas, and create (in both tone and theme) a sincere picture of yourself. Do not be afraid to use humor, and do not be afraid to admit to past failures, as stories of personal growth are often the most powerful when they shoe dramatic transformation. Try brainstorming about yourself, significant events in your life, home, jobs, travel, education, influential people, family members, etc. You can also have a friend interview you and take notes on what comes up, then consider the results to find a compelling story for your personal statement.

What exactly is the Statement of Grant Purpose and what should I include in it?

The Statement of Grant Purpose (SGP) is the crux of the Fulbright application, and it spells out in detail what you want to do, and why, where, how, and when you want to do it. It is normally no longer than one page (two pages for Study/Research grants). Generally, this essay should also address how well you are prepared for the project, that whatever you intend to do follows naturally on what you've already been doing, how your ETA or proposed Study/Research will further your academic or professional development, the significance of the teaching assistantship or project, why you must go abroad and to that specific country to carry out the assistantship or project, and the contribution the assistantship or project will make to the Fulbright objective of promoting cross-cultural interaction and mutual understanding.

For ETA applicants, we generally recommend that SGPs follow a 20-30-30-20 formula, dedicating 20% of the page to discussing personal/cultural exchange, 30% to articulating a clear and well-researched argument for teaching English in that specific country, 30% to explaining (not listing) the activities/jobs that have prepared you for the ETA position (i.e., what practical skills you have learned and how you will apply them), and 20% to communicating how the ETA position will better prepare you for your future
personal and professional pursuits. Keep in mind that the SGP itself does not have to be written in this particular order, nor does it need to be divided into these specific headings, but the 20-30-30-20 formula is a good way to keep your SGP balanced and organized.

**For Fulbright Study/Research applicants,** your SGP should communicate a feasible, well-researched and carefully thought-out project that has strong intellectual merit. Once you have articulated this, you should ensure that you discuss the contribution that will be made by your research (i.e., why your project is a fundamentally important one). Your SGP should also include specific information about the university program in which you wish to enroll as part of your proposed study, as well as your experience with the proposed topic, and your qualifications for undertaking the proposed project.

**I'm having trouble with the word limit for my Statements. What should I do?**

The best approach is to write down all of the information you want to include. From there (usually about 3-5 pages), try to get it reduced to a maximum of two pages for the internal deadline. After your application has gone through the campus committee and you have made additional edits, your statements should both be about a page in length (with a two-page SGP for Study/Research grant applicants).

**What kind of transcripts should I upload to my application?**

You should upload your unofficial transcript (not your advising transcript). You will only be asked for your Official Transcript if you are awarded a Fulbright grant.

**When I hit the "submit" button on Embark, does my application go to Fulbright?**

No. Your application is submitted to KU OIP, where we can review it and send it back to you if there are any necessary changes to be made. Your application only goes to the Fulbright Program Office on the Fulbright national deadline.

**Fulbright says the deadline is in October, why is the KU deadline so much earlier?**

The earlier KU campus deadline allows time for the campus committee to review applications and interview applicants.

**What is the Fulbright campus committee interview?**

The campus committee interview does two things. First, it gives you the opportunity to have your application reviewed by KU faculty members who will give you suggestions to make your proposal stronger. Second, the committee produces an evaluation that accompanies your application to the National Screening Committee. The purpose of this committee interview is not to weed out applicants, but to support them. Interviews typically last about 20 minutes; plan to have your application as close to perfect as possible, dress nicely, be yourself, and be open to constructive criticism and new ideas.

**When do I find out if I've been awarded a Fulbright grant?**

You will find out in late January whether or not your application has been forwarded to your proposed country. Finalists will not receive final word on application status until after the Fulbright Commission in the proposed country meets and deliberates. Once your country’s Fulbright Commission has picked their scholars from the pool of finalists, they notify the Fulbright Program Office, who then notifies you. Notification times vary from country to country, but are usually between the months of March and June.