

FULBRIGHT U.S. STUDENT PROGRAM GRANTS

Guidelines for your Statement of Purpose & Personal Statement

Once you have chosen the country and the type of grant (research or English Teaching Assistantship) for which you will apply, drafting the two major essays is perhaps the most challenging part of the application process. The two essays are the Statement of Purpose and the Personal Statement. They should be complementary and, because they are both very short, you should avoid repeating yourself in them. There are several general factors to keep in mind, as well as a few details specific to the type of grant.

Get Your Facts Straight

First, check the host country's information on the Fulbright website to verify the following:

1. Is your academic area and type of program being funded during the year in question? Some countries support arts projects or ETAs one year but not the next.
2. What are the language requirements (if any) for the host country and will it help you learn on site or are you expected to reach that level of fluency in advance?
3. Are you expected to work independently or in conjunction with an institution? Will you be placed in such an institution or are you expected to identify it on your own?

Find a Mentor

Early on, find a faculty mentor who can help you develop your ideas – preferably one who knows your proposed host country and/or your academic field. You are asking this faculty member to spend many hours over several months assisting you, so choose someone with whom you know you can work comfortably and candidly, and approach her or him with respect. Most faculty members will be delighted to help, unless for some immediate reason they simply do not have the time. If that is their response, do not be offended. They may have suggestions for others who might help.

Be Diplomatic

Your proposal should be both sincere and diplomatic. Frame your study plans in terms which reflect well on both the United States and the host country. If your study interests have potentially controversial content, find an optimistic, constructive, respectful, solutions-based way to address those issues. The Fulbright Committees in this country and abroad will need to believe that you understand points of sensitivity and national dignity in the host country. You will be representing the United States during your year of study, and you will be a life-long friend and advocate of the host country when you return home and launch your career. Your statement must project a genuinely friendly interest in the country where you will be a guest.

Be Honest!

Finally, present yourself honestly. The reviewers will want to see that your skills and past experiences are a realistic match for your proposal. They are looking for logical coherence between who you are, what you propose to do with the Fulbright, and your plans for the future – even if they are tentative at this stage in your life. Most of all, they are looking for a positive, self-starting, courteous, flexible, poised, energetic young person whose presence abroad will build bridges between the two countries and enhance international understanding. Both essays should present specific, concrete, interesting details about your unique personality and talents.

Statement of Grant Purpose/Project Proposal (What will you be doing?)

- Clear overview of project goals and how you will conduct your research
- Details and specifics – place, timeline, expected outcomes
- Why is the host country a suitable location? Why can it only be done in the proposed host country?

- Why is this research needed?
- What are the specific research goals and methodologies of your project?
- How feasible is your project in terms of time, resources, and outcomes? Show that the project can be completed in one academic year and does not require additional funds or access.
- What contribution will the project make toward the Fulbright goal of promoting cultural exchange and mutual understanding?
- Why do you want to undertake this project?
- How will your project help further your academic or professional development?
- How will you engage with the host country community? Give specific ideas for civic engagement.
- What are your qualifications for carrying out this project (academic, linguistic, intellectual, etc.)?

Personal Statement (How does your background relate?)

- Give the reviewers a picture of you as an individual. Provide evidence of your personal qualities as a diplomat, self-starter, idealist, etc.
- Outline the trajectory you have followed, what plans you have for the future (professional, academic, vocational), and how the Fulbright experience will enhance them.
- Describe past experiences that have instilled this interest and prepared you for this experience.
- Explain your interest in and knowledge of the host country.
- How has your background influenced your development and how does that relate to the Fulbright opportunity?
- Explain your personal history, family background, intellectual development, and the educational, professional, or cultural opportunities to which you have or have not been exposed. Explain their impact.
- Present ideas on how your proposal will promote international and intercultural communication, now and in the future.
- For proposals in the fine and performing arts, provide specific examples of how intense, in-person contact with the host culture will allow you to grow as an artist. Show how this is different from simply enjoying a visit to the country as a tourist.
- Do not repeat facts already listed in the Biographical Data.

ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP

This essay is similar to that for an academic grant, except that your teaching responsibilities will take up about half of your time in country, so that the research component should in proportion to the reduced time you will have for it. Your statement should also address your qualifications as a teacher, your past experience – especially if you have taught English as a second language before – and your personal philosophy and style of teaching. If you do not have extensive experience teaching, it is appropriate to emphasize relevant alternative experience: volunteering, mentoring, tutoring, peer or youth leadership, etc.

As with the academic grant, you should also demonstrate that you are motivated to teach in this specific country, that you are aware of its unique opportunities. Show that you don't just want to broaden your horizons by visiting a foreign country. Why this country, why teaching, and why you?