THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE KNOXVILLE

OFFICE OF NATIONAL
SCHOLARSHIPS & FELLOWSHIPS

Fulbright U.S. Student Program: ONSF Guide for UT Candidates

– UT Campus Application Deadlines and Process for the Fulbright –

1) Monday, May 15, 2017: UT Campus Pre-Application Deadline, submitted through the ONSF site.
This is the starting point for your Fulbright application, which will evolve in the coming months.

2) Monday, July 10, 2017, 5:00pm: First Drafts Priority Deadline, submitted through the ONSF site.
Only for the Personal Statement and Statement of Grant Purpose. ONSF will provide feedback on these drafts, which are a check-in ahead of the UT Campus Deadline. This is a priority deadline; drafts submitted after this will be reviewed as possible—first-come, first-served.

3) Tuesday, July 11, 2017, 5:00pm: *Initiate* **your application profile in the Fulbright's Embark system.**
By this date, UT Fulbright candidates must have *created* an application profile in Embark, a full draft of which will be due for the UT Campus Deadline in August.
> ***CRITICAL NOTE:*** *In Question 25 of the Application –* ***25. U.S. Institution (through which applying"*** *– you must select* ***University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN****. This will ensure you are in UT's ONSF-managed dashboard in Embark, which allows you to work with us throughout the application process and allows us to help troubleshoot your application and, at the end of the process, attach our university endorsement to your application.**

– NOTE: Candidates who have missed the above deadlines are still eligible to apply for the Fulbright; contact Andrew Seidler at aseidler@utk.edu to discuss your plans. –

4) Monday, August 28, 2017, 5:00pm: UT Campus Deadline, submitted via Embark.
Full draft of your application package is due, submitted via Embark. This includes Biographical Data in Embark; solid drafts of your Personal Statement and Statement of Grant Purpose; 2 of 3 recommendations; if possible, a letter of affiliation (Study/Research applicants only) and language evaluations (if applicable); and a PDF of your UT academic history. (NOTE: For the UT Campus Deadline, it's OK to upload a PDF of your UT academic history—found in MyUTK under "Student Records". "Print" as a PDF and save. ONSF will share more info on UT transcripts at a later date. *Transcripts from other universities are your responsibility to secure.*)

5) September 2017: Campus Interviews.
For all UT Fulbright candidates; Skype interviews for candidates who are off campus in the fall.

6) Tuesday, October 3, 5:00pm: UT Final Deadline to submit completed application, via Embark.
Incorporate feedback from the campus interview prior to submitting your *final* application, via Embark. All recommendations, transcripts, affiliation letters, language evaluations are due by this deadline. Any applications or supplementary materials received late will not be accepted.

– Summer Fulbright Checklist—that is, leading up to the August 28th UT Campus Deadline –

□ *First things first: Get to know the Fulbright!* Dig into the website: http://us.fulbrightonline.org/, including Country Summaries for host countries of interest and the grant types. The two main types of grants are **Study/Research** grants (which include creative and performing arts) and **English Teaching Assistantship (ETA)** grants. *You may only apply for one type of grant in one country per application cycle.*

□ *Check out AT LEAST ONE (there are several different ones) Fulbright webinar (recorded or live),* which is a great way to hear straight from the Fulbright about what makes a competitive application.

□ *Read up on the Application Components and Application Tips* on the Fulbright site.

□ *Begin contacting recommenders with details about the Fulbright.* Once your plans are pretty solid, send them a brief draft of your proposal, CV, and how they need to submit their recommendations. If at all possible, please give recommenders the UT Campus Deadline (August 28) as a submission date. Note: You will need 3 recs for the UT Final Deadline; 2 of the 3 for the UT Campus Deadline. *You and your recommenders should refer to ONSF's resources, which include specifics on Fulbright recs: http://onsf.utk.edu/writing-recommendations-for-national-scholarships/*
     TIP: Give your recommenders *at least* 3 – 4 weeks of lead time, ideally more.

□ *Research contacts in your country of choice (Study/Research applicants only) and begin to identify potential sources for your letter of affiliation.* Request a letter as soon as you have established a working relationship with the affiliate. More details below (see p. 5).

□ *Work on your Personal Statement* (1-page, single-spaced); First Draft priority deadline is July 10.

□ *Work on your Statement of Grant Purpose* (1 page for ETA; 2 pages for Study/Research); First Draft priority deadline is July 10.

□ *Start planning for any Foreign Language Evaluations (FLEs) you might need.*

□ *Complete the Biographical Data portion of the Fulbright's Embark online application,* which includes short-answer questions; at the very least, you must create an application profile by July 11.

□ *If necessary, request transcripts from post-secondary institutions (other than UT) from which you received degrees (including community colleges), and transcripts for coursework/grades not reflected on your degree-granting transcripts.* ONSF will share more information on UT transcripts at a later date.

□ **Questions?** *Contact Andrew Seidler, Director of ONSF, at aseidler@utk.edu. Andrew is available during the summer to meet with you individually, Skype, follow up with recommenders, provide feedback, etc.*

– Frequently Asked Questions –

What is required for a Fulbright application?

Although the UT Campus Pre-Application and First Drafts are submitted through the ONSF website, official Fulbright applications are ultimately submitted entirely online through the Fulbright's Embark online system: https://iie.embark.com/apply/usstudent A complete app will consist of the following.

- Biographical Data (CV information and short answers entered into the Embark system)
- Statement of Grant Purpose (1 – 2-page grant proposal)
- Personal Statement (1-page narrative essay)
- Reference Letters for the Study/Research Grant (3); Reference Forms for the ETA (3).
  - NOTE: Reference letters and forms must be uploaded *directly* to the Embark system by your recommenders. *ONSF's guidance to Fulbright recommenders can be found HERE.*
- Academic transcripts from each post-secondary institution from which you received a degree, as well as transcripts for coursework and grades not reflected on degree-granting transcripts.
  - NOTE: For the UT Campus Deadline, it is OK to upload a PDF of your UT academic history—found in MyUTK, under "Student Records". Just "Print" as a PDF and save. ONSF will share more information on UT transcripts at a later date. *Transcripts from other universities are your responsibility to secure.*

Depending on the type of grant and the host country requirements, applicants may also need to submit:

- Letter of Affiliation (see below, p. 5)
- Foreign Language Evaluation(s) and Language Self-Evaluation(s)
- Supplementary Materials (for students pursuing creative and performing arts grants)

What support/resources do I have as I develop my application materials?

Plenty! ONSF is here to support and guide you throughout the application process; however, we are not your sole source of support. *Check out* at least one Fulbright webinar, which is a great way to hear straight from the Fulbright about what makes a competitive application. *Refer over and over to* the Application Components & Application Tips. **MANY** of your questions will be answered there! ONSF's guide to *Personal Statements* is also included below (pp. 7–8). *Visit* UT's Writing Center. *Finally, work with* faculty in your discipline—especially your recommenders—on your Statement of Grant Purpose.

Should I apply for a Study/Research grant or an ETA grant?

Students who have a focused interest in the host country that could be pursued through study or research—often that builds on what you're doing at UT—should consider a Study/Research grant. (Note: Fulbright is unlikely to provide you with your first-ever research experience.) For ETAs, it is not necessary to have a long-term professional aspiration to teach, although that's certainly OK. But ask yourself: 1) Do you have some teaching/tutoring/mentoring experience (even if it's not ESL) that has been meaningful to you? 2) Do you have a sincere desire to attend to the needs of English-language learners in the host country? If so, an ETA might be a good fit. ONSF is happy to weigh in on your decision, too.

How should I decide which country and award to apply to?
Study/Research projects should be tightly connected to the host country (i.e., Why do you need to do this research, on the ground, in country X?), while ETA applicants should offer a compelling reason for their interest in the host country. In addition, applicants should demonstrate some understanding of the host country's culture and possess requisite language skills (see individual country pages for language requirements, which vary by country). Note that a "strong desire" to visit the country or a "passion" for the culture or commitment to "broadening your horizons" is great but, unto itself, insufficient; you'll need to dig deeper than that—into your interests, story/background, trajectory, motivations—to get reviewers' attention. You might begin by perusing the country pages of potential host countries. This will provide basic understanding of what different host countries are looking for in Fulbrighters (and, perhaps as importantly, what they're *not* looking for). See what draws your attention. *And don't overlook some of the niche opportunities the Fulbright provides* (e.g., Austria's "Community-Based Combined Award" … there are others!); sometimes these receive relatively few applications but are terrific opportunities. Relatedly, you might also consult the Fulbright's statistics, but don't go overboard. This should be only one of your data points in selecting a country and award. Think first about those especially meaningful experiences you've had—studying a foreign language, doing research, working/interning, studying abroad, leading an initiative, doing service—and how you might build on them in a post-graduate year abroad. ONSF is here to help you think through your options and offer feedback. It is your decision to make, but we are happy to weigh in.

What should I address in my Statement of Grant Purpose and Personal Statement? Any tips?
The Application Components and Application Tips are crucial. This is where you'll find the nuts-and-bolts explanation of what goes into a Fulbright application, from content to formatting and so forth. In addition, see below (pp. 7–8) for our thoughts on *Personal Statements*, keeping in mind that this is an idiosyncratic, reflective document. We hope you will embrace that. *Details/stories/examples* are key to the success of your application—*rely on nouns and verbs more than adjectives and adverbs*—as is conveying first what this experience would mean for YOU, not humanity. Be careful with sweeping commentary and save-the-world rhetoric. They don't impress readers; authenticity, perspective, and humility do. *Now, for the Statement of Grant Purpose:*

- ETA: Focus on your strategies for engaging your language learners, which you'll want to back up with relevant examples (needn't strictly be classroom teaching) of past experiences. Your "Supplementary Project", meanwhile, should receive less attention and needn't be grandiose—taking courses, for example, can be an excellent side project for an ETA.
- Study/Research: This is a grant statement, not an academic paper. *Let readers know from the outset what you plan to do.* Your first paragraph should NOT be a slow-burning introduction in which you provide copious background on your study; rather, it should quickly "hook" your readers (who will spend ~10 mins on your app) with compelling details about what you plan to do and why it's important. Then dive into the more fine-grained detail of methods and timeline, while keeping in mind that you'll want to also address how you'll engage with your host community—the Fulbright doesn't want you stuck in a lab all day and night for a year!

What is a Letter of Affiliation, do I need one, and, if so, how do I get one?
Although it varies by country, most students pursuing Study/Research Grants will need a letter of affiliation … or are at least strongly recommended to get one. (ETAs do not need these letters.) Most Fulbrighters undertaking Study/Research grants will affiliate with universities, although in some countries it is possible to affiliate with other types of organizations such as research institutes or NGOs. Some students will even have multiple affiliations. The Letter of Affiliation should come from the institution/individual in the host country with whom the applicant is proposing to work. The nature of an affiliation can vary considerably from project to project and from country to country; consequently, the letters can, too. Be sure you are referring to your country page to see what is expected of an affiliate and who can and cannot serve as an affiliation. In general, here are the things you can share with your contact(s) as you work on getting a host country letter of affiliation, which should be:
- printed on institutional letterhead, addressed to The Fulbright Commission, signed by author;
- indicate who your host is, what they do, and where;
- indicate at least basic knowledge of your project and its aims;
- explain the nature of the connection between you and the host—that is, the support being offered (e.g., access to facilities and/or courses at the institution, consulting/advising on research methods, supervision and/or mentorship, help with networking);
  - *Note: These are some common examples, but this is negotiable with your host.*
- comment on the feasibility of the project (e.g., in terms of resources, your and/or their relevant technical expertise, project timeline, and, if relevant, local political/cultural sensitivities); and
- show enthusiasm for your project and its value, and for the proposed working relationship.

These letters needn't be lengthy and don't often exceed a page. Scanned versions of the original hard-copy letters with hand-written signatures will be uploaded by *you* into Embark; a printed out e-mail will not suffice. Affiliation letters written in a foreign language must be translated into English; both the original letter and the translation must be uploaded into the application. Don't be afraid to initially cast a wide net in trying to secure an affiliation; you might be surprised how far a friendly, succinct introductory e-mail will get you—the Fulbright is well-known throughout the world. One primary way to find an affiliation is to ask the faculty/advisors whom you know right here on campus, as many of them have contacts and collaborators overseas. In addition, you might try the following:
- Reach out to past Fulbrighters in your country; use the Grantee Directory to help facilitate this.
- Scour the references list of research papers you are reading in your field; it would make for a compelling application if you were affiliating with someone who's writing what you're reading!
- Discuss with ONSF. This is not as difficult as it might seem; it just requires some planning.

How do my references submit their letters or forms?
All letters and forms must be uploaded directly into the Embark application system. Once you enter your recommenders' details in Embark, an automated e-mail will be generated for your recommenders with instructions on submitting their recommendations. Please advise your writers to submit by the UT Campus Deadline (August 28), if possible. *ONSF Guidance on Fulbright recommendations is found HERE.*

Do I need a Foreign Language Evaluation (FLE), and, if so, how do I get one?
For programs where language skills are "Strongly Recommended," you must submit a Language Self-Evaluation and an FLE, which is completed by a professional language teacher, ideally from UT. Submission of both forms is mandatory, even if you have advanced skills or native-speaker ability. For programs where language skills are "Recommended" or "Not Required," if you possess some language skills you should submit a Language Self-Evaluation *and* an FLE. Ultimately, it will be advantageous to have your language ability (even Novice) documented, even though it is not required. In some instances, you might want to have FLEs completed for more than one language. Please discuss with ONSF.

What are the campus interviews like?
UT campus interviews are organized by ONSF and conducted by teams of 3 – 4 faculty/staff. The purposes of the interviews are two-fold. The first is to provide constructive feedback to the applicant. Interviews are designed to elicit conversation about your application and ideas; we are not trying to stump you or decide whether or not to nominate you. Applicants cannot be rejected; we will submit all applications that come through ONSF's process. This is about supporting you as best as we can. The second is to gather information to complete our endorsement that accompanies your final application.

Can I continue working on my application after the August 28 campus deadline?
Absolutely. Students may continue to revise applications until the final UT Deadline (October 3). In fact, we strongly encourage students to incorporate feedback from the campus interview into the final draft.

After the UT campus process, what is the timeline for the Fulbright's selection process?
The Fulbright's selection process occurs in two stages. First, national screening committees—typically faculty with host country / regional expertise—review and select applicants they will "recommend" to the host countries as semi-finalists. Semi-finalist announcements are made all at once, typically in mid-to-late January. Semi-finalist applications are forwarded to host countries for final review. Grant offers are then made—the bulk of these in March/April, with different countries notifying at different times.

Any last tips as I jump into this process?
1. The Fulbright's mission is promoting cultural understanding through educational exchange; don't lose sight of that. Your views on cultural exchange should be evident in your application.
2. Do NOT leave the Biographical Data portion of the Embark app (which includes some short-answer questions) to the last second. It will be the first thing readers see; leave yourself time.
3. Language proficiency requirements vary by country: some require it, some prefer it, some have no prereqs at all (though it's advantageous for community engagement purposes to have some proficiency in the host country language). If you have little/no background in the language, please consider working language study into your proposal *and* start learning the language now. Basic self-study or a campus language partner will help and demonstrate commitment.
4. Enjoy the process. Surveys of our candidates suggest that it's a highly valued and meaningful experience unto itself. We admire what you're doing and look forward to working with you.

APPENDIX: THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

Goals of the Personal Statement
- *Introduce yourself and supplement resume/CV*
    - Reveal motivations and demonstrate ability to reflect and share meaning with others
    - "What makes you tick"
        - This document ought to be "singular"; only you could write this
    - Blending personal and academic voice; for many/most, this is tricky
    - Its success rests on concrete details and authentic reflection, not sweeping commentary about the world and your ability/potential to save it
        - Avoid clichés and hyperbole
        - Be precise, descriptive, concise
        - Jump into your story quickly
    - Personal Statement is the (underlying) WHY of your application
        - Trace back passions in time and space; avoid the easy, surface-level explanation
- *Show yourself to be an interesting candidate, but also a solid, trustworthy one*
    - Array of skills, knowledge, interests; drive to succeed; awareness of self and others
    - It is NOT a diary or musings on your life or the world; it's more focused than that
- *Define your current sense of self, for yourself and for others*

Two Potential Models (there are others)
- *Past, present, future you*
    - Past: Compact opening ("hook"); a defining (but not necessarily harrowing) life event
        - Don't overlook the mundane!
    - Present: Discussion of 1–3 important achievements/interests that define who you today
        - Tip: Reflect on activities and write them out separately at first; see what comes to life
            - Eventually, though, transitions become crucial; you cannot simply present a list of achievements or write your CV in narrative form
    - Future: Define it. Where you want to go and why you are ready to go there. (Why you *want* to go there should be apparent by now.)
        - Contextualize it within the scope of the opportunity/award
- *Intellectual autobiography*
    - Progression from objective to reflective to *interpretive thinking* (i.e., knowledge of how a personal experience or view fits into the larger world, into an historical context)
    - Ends with "Decision" level of thinking
        - Now what?
        - How have you prepared for this next step?
        - What is your future resolve?

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APPENDIX: THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

Brainstorming Questions

What questions do you ask yourself?

If you had one more hour in the day, what would you use it to do?

What are you passionate about? What is your "thing"? What common thread runs through your commitments?

What troubles you about the world? What might you do about it?

How have you turned challenges into opportunities?

What do you want to be remembered for?

What was most formative about your life up to this point?

What sets you apart?

What inspires you?

Who inspires you?

Why are your studying your subject, and how have you come to understand the challenges/opportunities in it?

Where have you been in the world that has shaped your sense of self and your place in the world?

What are your greatest dreams, and how are you building the foundation from which to launch them?

What do you hope to contribute to your personal circle, to your local community, to your state and country, to the world?