

Application Instructions

Fulbright Foreign Student Programme

2026-2027

**Deadline for completed applications is 5pm GMT
Tuesday 6 May 2025**

The Commission does not accept hard copy applications –
apply through the online system only.

Applications that do not comply with this deadline and instructions
will be deemed ineligible.

PLEASE CREATE AND SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION HERE:

<https://apply.iie.org/ffsp2026>

A complete application also requires completing a supplemental form here:

<https://fulbright.tfaforms.net/3>

Before you begin an application:

- The Fulbright online application is a global application and is used by all Fulbright Commissions worldwide. It is administered by the IIE (the International Institute of Education) on behalf of the Fulbright programme.
- Each Commission sets its own policies, procedures, and country-specific instructions for using the online application system. **If you encounter any discrepancies between this document and the application submission portal, you must adhere to the instructions outlined in the document.**
- Any questions about the application, eligibility or the Awards programme should be directed to programmes@fulbright.org.uk. Please note that we receive an incredibly high number of enquiries just before the deadline, so if you give us less than three working days to get back to you, we may be unable to assist you before the deadline.

Selection Process Timeline 2026-27

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

- **Early February 2025:** Applications open.
- **5pm GMT, Tuesday 6 May 2025:** Deadline for Applications.
- **May-July 2025:** Initial screening and review of applications are done by the US-UK Fulbright Commission and review panels. You should not expect to hear from the Commission during this time, and staff will be unable to comment on the process or an individual application's status.
- **August 2025:** Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a Zoom interview. You will be given at least one week's notice to prepare for the interview. Candidates who have not been selected for interview will be notified via email by the end of August 2025. Please check your spam folder for the message.
- **Early September 2025:** All candidates will be notified of the interview outcome.
- **From late September 2025 onwards:** Selected grantees on the IIE placement track will have initial input from IIE advisors and begin working on application submission plans.
- **March-July 2026:** Fulbright and J-1 visa paperwork.
- **From August 2026 onwards:** Independent departures, your Fulbright exchange begins. In exceptional cases, earlier departures may be permitted if no alternative grant dates can be arranged.

Eligibility Requirements:

CITIZENSHIP

Eligible:

- UK citizens (resident anywhere except the United States), or Irish citizens normally resident in Northern Ireland.
- Those with dual UK nationality with any country other than the United States.
- Those meeting the specific minimum qualifications for eligibility for the individual award. These can be found on the [awards web page](#).
- Applications from non-UK citizens based in the UK and committed to a life and career in the UK may also be considered. You will be required to follow these steps:
 - Contact the Fulbright Commission/post in your home country to check if you are eligible to apply through them. You can submit an application to us only if your home Commission/post do not accept your application due to your residency in the UK. You will need to obtain a written confirmation (e.g., an e-mail) and upload it as part of your application to the US-UK Fulbright Commission.
 - In addition to your passport copy, please provide evidence of your legal status in the UK (e.g., settled/pre-settled status, Indefinite Leave to Remain). Please note that we are unable to accept applications from non-UK citizens on a student visa.
 - All non-UK nationals meeting the above criteria will be expected to demonstrate commitment to returning to the UK after their proposed academic study in the US. Please note that this will be assessed at the application review stage by reading panellists.

Ineligible:

- Those holding or applying for U.S. citizenship/dual U.S. citizenship; holders of U.S. immigrant visas (green cards), or those with permanent residency in the U.S.
- Applicants currently studying at, or having recently graduated from, a U.S. academic institution; those resident in the U.S. currently or for five or more years in the previous six years.
- Applicants who are restricted from J-1 visa application due to U.S. Department of State visa waiting period guidelines.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY

- Grants are not given for:
 - Undergraduate Study
 - Attending conferences
 - Completing / writing up doctoral dissertations
 - Travel and consultation at multiple institutions
 - Clinical medical research involving direct patient contact by the applicant
- Medical research involving direct animal contact (alive or dead) by the applicant will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis during the application review process.

- To be eligible for a Fulbright Postgraduate All-Disciplines award the minimum grant period has to be four months.
- Awards offered in 2026-2027 competition must be taken up in the 2026-2027 academic year. Deferrals are not permitted.
- The earliest a grant should begin for this cycle is mid-August 2026* to allow for comfortable visa processing times and for attendance at the Fulbright Commission's UK Orientation event. The latest start date for a grant in this cycle is 30 April 2027.
*Earlier start dates may be possible, but this would have to be discussed with the Commission.
- Applicants can only apply to one Fulbright Office/Commission per Application Cycle.

J-1 VISA AND TWO-YEAR HOME RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

All Fulbright grantees must enter the United States on a U.S. Department of State J-1 Exchange Visitor visa. When you agree to participate in a U.S. Exchange Visitor Programme such as the Fulbright programme, you will be subject to the two-year home-country physical presence requirement.

This means you will be required to return to your home country for two years at the end of your exchange visitor programme. This requirement under immigration law is based on Section 212(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended, and Title 22 Part 40 and Part 41 in the Code of Federal Regulations. Home country is generally defined as your country of citizenship or your country of legal permanent residence.

Fulbright award holders will not be eligible for a U.S. residency or work visa until they have fulfilled the two-year home residency requirement of the J-1 visa. This does not affect tourist visits made to the U.S. under the ESTA visa waiver programme. Any accompanying J-2 dependents will also be subject to a two-year home residency requirement.

PLACEMENT MODELS

In the 2023-2024 Awards cycle the US-UK Fulbright Commission introduced two tracks of Placement Model that impact university selection for candidates. These are the Independent Placement and the IIE Placement models. For more on these placement models, we recommend reviewing the information available on our website.

INDEPENDENT PLACEMENT

The Independent Placement track is ideal for students who come to the Fulbright application with specific universities in mind that they wish to apply to or hold deferred offers from universities in the United States. Students who select this track will be expected to make applications to their chosen institutions independently. Before commencing with a Fulbright award, candidates will be required to have secured admission at a university in the U.S. **However**, you do not have to have submitted any applications by the time that you apply for a Fulbright Award. If you select the Independent Placement track, you **MUST** reference the institutions that you are applying to/hold a deferred offer from, in the Study Objective essay. We understand that it may be difficult to write about all the institutions you are considering applying to, please demonstrate your research and save any detail for a maximum of two institutions.

IIE PLACEMENT

The IIE Placement track differs from the Independent Placement track as students selecting this track at the application stage do not have to have chosen universities to apply to. Rather, the IIE Placement track is for students interested in exploring postgraduate education in the US and who are willing to approach finding a university with flexibility and an open mind. Applicants on this track who are successful at the interview stage will have an application submission plan created for them by an educational advisor at the IIE to find the best academic and funding fit for the student. Their Fulbright application will be submitted to those universities for consideration and the IIE will cover the costs of admission and admission tests. Applicants on this track should not reference any U.S. universities in their Study Objective or Personal Statement.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- Applicants must hold or expect to obtain a minimum 2:1 honours undergraduate degree or the equivalent prior to your anticipated enrolment with a U.S. university.
- In exceptional cases, the Commission may accept applications from individuals who obtained a 2:2 undergraduate degree result. Applicants who have obtained a 2:2 must submit an [additional form](#) with their application providing an explanation as to why the 2:1 was not achieved and why the applicant believes they would be competitive in the Fulbright awards programme. The Commission will evaluate these applications separately to determine if each application will be included in the selection process.

SPECIFIC COURSE OF STUDY OR RESEARCH IN THE U.S.

Anyone meeting the above criteria, regardless of age, that intends to enrol on a U.S. Master's or a PhD degree programme, or to conduct independent research (minimum one academic semester) as part of a PhD programme, is eligible to apply to the Fulbright Student Programme.

Please note that we now offer two models through which you can secure a Fulbright Award: the IIE Placement model and the Independent Placement model. We strongly encourage you to review our website to understand the differences between the two and to select the option which is right for you.

Those candidates who have chosen the [Independent Placement](#) model must apply and secure admission to a U.S. university, directly and independently, before commencing an award. However, you do not have to have applied to your chosen institutions to be able to submit a Fulbright application. Applications to U.S. institutions should be submitted by the U.S. institutions' deadlines which will be after the Fulbright application process. For the Study/Research Objective essay, the online form states that you should not reference any institutions you plan on attending. However, **self-placed UK candidates MUST reference the institutions they are applying to in the Study Objective essay.**

Those candidates who have chosen the [IIE Placement](#) model should not reference any institutions in their Study Objective or Personal Statement. If successful at the interview stage, they will instead work with an allocated IIE Advisor to identify a selection of U.S. institutions which will be the best

fit for the applicant. Their Fulbright application will then be submitted to those universities for consideration, and the IIE will cover admission and test costs.

Medical sciences applicants: please note that **no clinical programme of study (i.e., that includes patient contact) is permitted on Fulbright grants.** *The U.S. Department of State has designated the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) as the sole agency authorised to sponsor alien physicians for internship, residency, and specialised clinical training in the United States.* If you intend to study a degree in the medical field, you and your host institution must sign a **statement of confirmation of no patient contact.**

LEADERSHIP & UNDERSTANDING OF FULBRIGHT

The Fulbright Awards Programme is looking not only for academic excellence but also:

- demonstrable leadership qualities and ambassadorial skills with evidence of cultural sensitivity and a genuine desire to learn more about the United States and share with U.S. citizens aspects of British culture and its diversity;
- experience and interest in a range of extracurricular and community activities;
- an understanding of and commitment to the Fulbright Programme's mission and to giving back to your home country upon return.

OUR COMMITMENTS

- The US-UK Fulbright Commission offers exceptional opportunities for those interested in international education. We are committed to a world in which there are no obstacles or barriers to learning, understanding and collaboration and as such we aim to promote diversity, inclusion and equity. We welcome and encourage applications from eligible candidates of all backgrounds.
- Applicants will be considered without regard to ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, and/or disability.
- The Fulbright Commission is committed to selecting a cohort which is diverse in terms of region, home institution, host institution, and discipline.
- Preference is given to those without recent extensive experience in the United States and who have not already held a Fulbright award.
- Applicants should be responsible individuals who can contribute to a full and fair picture of the culture of their own countries and thereby contribute to understanding between the people of the United States and the United Kingdom.
- Applicants should demonstrate the cross-cultural sensitivity and flexibility needed to adjust successfully to life in the United States.

Fulbright Application Overview

STEP 1: Prepare before making your application:

- Read the instructions contained in this document, carefully and in their entirety, so that you understand the application and eligibility requirements.
- Read the **UK Commission Application Terms and Conditions**

STEP 2: Complete and submit an Online Application:

Please note that not all sections in the application form are compulsory for UK applicants. You **MUST** complete the following:

- Personal; Contact; and Academic & Professional Information
- Reflective Essay
- Education and Employment
- Study Plan
- Applied U.S. Institutions if you are applying through Independent Placement
- CV, Study Objective, and Personal Statement
- UK Passport OR non-UK Passport with evidence of UK permanent residency
- Final/interim transcripts
- Three references

STEP 3: Complete the required UK Commission Supplemental Form:

This is required for all applicants and is accessed via a separate website. You must follow the link below to register for and access the form:

<https://fulbright.tfaforms.net/3>

Completing the Online Application

ESSAYS & RESUME/CIRRICULUM VITAE REMINDERS

Please keep in mind that your Study Objective and Personal Statement are the most important elements of your application and will largely determine whether you are invited to the interview.

STUDY/RESEARCH OBJECTIVE – 1,000 WORDS

- Write a clear and very detailed description of the programme you want to pursue in the U.S. in an essay format. As this is an indication of your written communication skills, make sure it is well organised, written and spell checked.
- Explain your motivation for applying to the Fulbright Programme.
- Clearly identify the area(s) within your field of study in which you want to specialise or concentrate. If there is specific research that you want to accomplish, please explain it as fully as space allows.
- Outline how the period in the U.S. will enhance your knowledge, skills and understanding, and your future development in the specified discipline.
- List the universities where you would like to study, highlight your top choice, and explain why you have made these selections. This **ONLY** applies to those who have selected **the Independent Placement model**.
- Applicants applying to a Master's or a PhD programme should detail the programme they wish to undertake, the course they wish to study, research objectives (if applicable) and how the study plan fits with their training and career to date.
- Applicants who intend to pursue research while being enrolled on and in the advanced stages of a PhD should identify the research question or objectives, methodology, expected results and planned dissemination of information.
- **You Research Objective essay must not exceed 1,000 words. Words beyond this limit will not be read.**

PERSONAL STATEMENT – 500 WORDS

- Conduct a careful, well thought-out self-assessment with reference to the US-UK Fulbright Commission's values and objectives to be able to demonstrate an understanding of our mission as well as how you can further it.
- Compose a narrative essay in which you include information about your formative experiences (educational, professional, personal), personal and professional ambitions and special non-academic, extracurricular interests.
- Describe who you are, what your goals are, and what you hope to achieve in the U.S. and upon your return to the UK.
- Outline your motivations, relevant preparations for and expectations of the Fulbright Programme.
- Do not repeat the study objective essay or provide a narrative of your CV.
- Remember: the personal statement is an indication of your written communication skills. Make sure it is well organised, written and spell checked.
- **Your Personal Statement must not exceed one 500 words. Words beyond this limit will not be read.**

REFLECTIVE ESSAY – 300 WORDS

- This year the reflective essay is a compulsory component of the application, applications submitted without a reflective essay will be considered incomplete by the review committee.
- You will need to upload this to the application form under "additional materials"
- At Fulbright, we believe that to solve global challenges, we urgently need to bring together the minds and the energy of people from all cultures and backgrounds, and build cohorts that reflect the vibrant diversity of both our countries.
- The Fulbright Programme was founded in the aftermath of the Second World War with the aim of increasing the understanding between peoples and nations. In a continuity

with this aim, we understand that our Fulbrighters come from a variety of backgrounds, bringing different lived experiences and beliefs that help build our cohorts and community.

- With this in mind, please share with us a **300 word** reflection that you think will help us better understand your application and your journey to the Fulbright programme.
- To learn more about our commitment to inclusive excellence, read more on the Our Story page of our website <https://fulbright.org.uk/about-us/our-story/>

Remember to preview to check the formatting before submitting your application.

Sample Work

Only the applicants who are applying for a programme in arts (e.g., visual/performing arts, screenwriting) or architecture are required to submit four samples of recent work. Please note that any sample writing such as essays, articles, or dissertations will be removed from your application. If you are getting an error message when trying to submit an application, please attach a blank document with a note that work samples are not required.

All work samples must be submitted electronically. The Commission will not accept hard copy files, CD's or DVD's. Applicants may submit a link in their application or share the files through a file sharing website via email to programmes@fulbright.org.uk with a cover e-mail detailing their Name and the Award they are applying for.

UK Postgraduate Selection Panel's Checklist

Below you will find a list of the criteria your application must meet for the Selection Panel to consider you for interview. These are the questions we will be asking ourselves when reviewing your application. We would thus strongly encourage you to use them as a checklist before you submit your application. Unless you answer Yes to every single question, we suggest that you revisit your Study Objective (SO) and Personal Statement (PS).

- Does the SO outline a clear, detailed, and feasible study proposal which demonstrates potential for wider impact?
- **ONLY FOR INDEPENDENTLY PLACED APPLICANTS:** Does the SO list the universities the applicant would like to attend and reasons for choosing each institution?
- **ONLY FOR INDEPENDENTLY PLACED APPLICANTS:** Does the SO demonstrate the applicant's flexibility with regards to host institution?
- Does the applicant explain why they would like to conduct their academic work in the U.S.?
- Does the applicant show a keen interest in exploring a new culture and sharing their own?
- Does the applicant explicitly discuss what attracts them to the Fulbright Programme? Do they demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to the Commission's mission and values?
- Does the applicant demonstrate involvement in extra-curricular activities and community life outside academia?
- Does the application indicate that the Fulbright Award will have a transformative effect on the applicant's professional and personal journey?
- Does the applicant discuss their future plans and the ways in which they would like to give back upon return to the UK?

Please note that meeting all the above requirements DOES NOT guarantee that you will be invited to interview for a Fulbright Award. We receive a high volume of excellent applications, but as we can award a very limited number of grants, we are unable to interview every competitive applicant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

You must register three recommenders who can provide a reference for you.

The deadline for receipt of references is the same as the application deadline: 5pm GMT, Tuesday 6 May 2025.

Your application will not be considered complete if your recommenders have not submitted their references by this date.

Enter your recommenders' details into the online system. Once you click 'Send to Recommender', an e-mail with instructions on completing the online recommendation will be sent to your recommender. You will be able to track the status of recommendations and send reminders through this online system before and after application submission.

Letters of recommendation must not exceed 750 words.

To replace existing recommenders, you will have the option to "Exclude" and add an alternative.

IMPORTANT: it is your responsibility to check that your referees have received your reference request. We strongly encourage you to contact the referees within 24 hours after you have added their contact details to check if they have received an e-mail with instructions. If they have not, please let us know immediately and BEFORE THE DEADLINE.

Recommendation guidelines:

- References are to be submitted ONLINE only. We do NOT accept hard copy references.
- Your referees will each receive an e-mail with a set of instructions and a link to complete the online reference form, which they will upload to your application.
- Follow up with your referee that they have received the e-mail as it often goes into spam folders. The e-mail should come to them when the e-mail address is input. They do not have to wait until you have submitted your application to upload their reference.
- The system will show you the progress of your recommender requests. You will not be able to view the references.
- Please provide your referees with a copy of your project statement to help them write an informed reference.
- References should be from people qualified to evaluate your work; the abilities you bring to the proposed project; your ability to adapt to another country and culture; and the merits of the project itself. References should come from employers and academic supervisors.
- Choose your referees carefully and contact them early. Applications with an insufficient number of references or late references will be considered incomplete / ineligible.
- Do not ask someone for reference unless the person is well acquainted with your qualifications. A reference from a well-known scholar, a contact abroad or a prominent government official will carry less weight than a realistic assessment of your abilities from

someone who knows you and your work well.

SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

Please remember to submit your application. You can submit your application before all your referees have submitted their references. Once you submit your application, you will not be able to return to your application. After submission you will have access to a PDF proof of your submitted application. However, please note that you will not receive a submission confirmation from the Commission. You will be able to track the status of references, send reminders, and change reference information if necessary.

If you need to make any important changes to your application after submission, please contact programmes@fulbright.org.uk.