

Last Updated: April 2021¹

Guidelines for Olin College Fulbright Applicants

This document covers the following topics and is intended to help you succeed in your efforts to win a Fulbright grant!

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I. Background

The Fulbright U.S. Student Program is now more than 50 years old. Each year, the program provides one-year foreign study and research opportunities for over 1000 U.S. students. Opportunities exist in most countries, and there are exciting new additions every year. Most Fulbright grants provide travel, medical insurance, books, a monthly stipend geared to the cost of living in the host country (ranging from about \$1000 to \$4000 per month), and, usually, tuition. See information at <http://us.fulbrightonline.org/about/fulbright-us-student-program>

There are also English Language Teaching Assistantships (ETA) in many countries, including France, Argentina, Chile, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Korea, Romania, Taiwan, Thailand and Turkey. Some require language proficiency, some do not. For the Teaching Assistantships, see <http://us.fulbrightonline.org/about/types-of-awards/english-teaching-assistant-awards>

The Institute for International Education (IIE) in New York (the organization that coordinates the program and competition) updates the *U.S. Student Fulbright Grants and Other Grants for Graduate Study and Research Abroad website*. The Fulbright U.S. Student Program website contains all the information about the application process as well as vital information about each participating country, such as the number of grants available, language qualifications, and

¹ Adapted with permission from Tufts University's Fulbright materials.

required or preferred research areas. You can find this material on-line along with country summaries at <http://us.fulbrightonline.org/countries/regions>. Next year's competition material will not be available until May, but the program doesn't vary vastly from year to year. Your first step should be to read these materials **thoroughly**. You will find that most (but not all) of your questions regarding the application process will be answered on the website.

Obviously, your chances for success depend on your academic record, quality of your application, letters of recommendation, etc. But a primary determinant is the competitiveness of the country to which you are applying. Most English-speaking countries (U.K., Ireland, Australia) are extremely competitive, with 20 or more applicants per available grant. Indeed, these Fulbrights are nearly as competitive as Rhodes and Marshall scholarships. Take a look at the Fulbright website for statistics on success rates for each country available here <http://us.fulbrightonline.org/statistics> .

The opportunity to pursue post-graduate study in a foreign country with the support of a Fulbright grant can be a life-changing experience that may help determine your intellectual direction and provide the cornerstone for your future career. The application process demands thought, candor, creativity and time. In fact, students *have likened the process to the equivalent of an extra course*. Fortunately, this is a course that is completed by the middle of October.

The application process will involve research, multiple drafts of essays, and meetings with a variety of resource people. You should be prepared for some long-distance calls, e-mails, faxes, and a little frustration as you attempt to bring together the information you will need. However daunting this prospect may be, Olin provides wonderful resources to aid you, and you will find that we are all eager to ensure that your proposal will be as strong as possible.

II. Application Process

All Olin students applying in the fall will participate in Olin's Fulbright Preparation Program that starts in the spring. Members of Olin's faculty and staff are teaming together to help you in this process. Caitrin Lynch and Sally Phelps are members of Olin's Fulbright Committee. Gillian Epstein, Olin's Writing Consultant, will play an integral role in helping students prepare the best possible essays. The "Campus Committee" that conducts interviews and evaluates applicants will consist of at least some of the above people and possibly a few other Olin faculty and staff members.

When your essays are ready in the fall, there will be an interview with the Campus Committee, after which you will have the opportunity to revise your essays one last time. The interview has two functions. First, the feedback you will receive during and after the one-hour interview will further strengthen your application and should be incorporated into your final essays. Second, the committee is required to evaluate each applicant as "endorsed" or "not endorsed". That is, you are not being evaluated against any other Olin students, and there is no "curve." The evaluation by the committee is based both on your proposal and on your conduct in the interview. Be assured that the interview is **not a weeding out process**. Be sure to bring a pen and a copy of

your essays with you, so you can take notes on suggested changes. If the committee members recommend changes to your application, please check back in with them once these changes are completed.

The Campus Committee will complete an evaluation form to accompany your application. It will be heavily based on the interview but also the committee's impression of working with you since the spring. The criteria on the evaluation form are the following. Keep these in mind! Your strengths in all areas should be clear in your essays, interview, and interactions with the committee members during the months between March and October.

- Academic or professional qualifications (especially in relation to proposed project)
- Validity and feasibility of proposed project
- Language qualifications
- Evidence of maturity, motivation, and adaptability to a different cultural environment (personal stability)
- Knowledge of host country
- Evaluation of impression candidate will make abroad as a citizen representing the United States
- General comments

The schedule for completing a Fulbright application is quite compressed. In order for us to meet their deadline of Tuesday, October 13th, you will need to meet our deadlines (see detailed schedule on the handout entitled "Olin's Fulbright Preparation Program").

- Spring preparation workshop: **Tuesday, April 13th, 6:00pm – 7:30pm EST**
- Gillian Writing Workshop: **Friday, April 23rd, 10:00am – 11:00am EST**
- Drop in consult with the committee: **April 27th, 2:30pm – 4:00pm EST**
- Good drafts of project proposal and personal essay: **Monday, July 12th**
- **Early August:** Visit <https://apply.iie.org/apply/?sr=4a36c387-667d-4d6c-8cbd-925055e84440> Fulbright's online application system, and start your application. Fill in your name and other details.
- Revised drafts of project proposal and personal essay due by midnight to [Courtney](#) via email: **Monday, August 9th.**
- **Early September (TBA):** Required 1-hour workshop (followed by individual help if needed) on both Fulbright essays; students will give written peer feedback (details TBA). Second hour immediately following for students wanting additional assistance from Gillian Epstein, Caitrin Lynch and Courtney Beach.
- **Friday, September 3rd:** Provide Courtney your time availability between 9am - 5pm for your Fulbright Committee Interview (between Sept 20th – Sept 24th). Keep *in mind we will be scheduling 5 or 6 people so your schedule will need to be flexible.*
- Between **August 27th and September 16th:** Required technical review of your essays with Caitrin, Sally and a faculty member on your review committee or an academic adviser to discuss essays.

- Best drafts of two essays, **letters of affiliation** (if possible), unofficial Olin transcript, and letters of recommendation uploaded and all Fulbright forms due: **Thursday, September 16th**.
- Committee Interviews between **September 20th and September 24th**

Final revised essays and all materials (including official transcripts), submitted on-line to the Okta application by: Monday, October 4th 2021

Final Fulbright Deadline: Tuesday, October 12th 2021 at 5pm EST

III. Tips for Completing the Application Forms

These forms are fairly straightforward, although there are a few items that sometimes cause confusion:

- 1) Campus Rating - Leave blank.
- 2) Country and Field of Study - You will be considered for all IIE-related programs for the country to which you are applying. However, if you are applying only for a Teaching Assistantship (available only in a few countries), write that in the appropriate space at the top. The list of fields of proposed study is printed at the end of the application materials; select one of these fields, the one that is closest to what you are proposing.
- 3) Foreign Experience (Line 20) – They are primarily interested in when you have actually lived abroad. Include Study Away and any other times when you have attended school abroad, also include educational or recreational travel or visits to relatives. Preference is usually given to applicants who have not had extensive foreign experience (although Study Away does not generally count against you). If you have attended secondary school overseas this will definitely work against you.
- 4) The Fulbright Program Advisor (FPA) at Olin is Courtney Beach.
- 5) Foreign language report. This is required for application to all countries that require a language other than English. You can find out if the country you are applying to has a language requirement by checking the country description on the website. It is your responsibility to arrange for testing. We will assist you in finding someone to test you if your attempts fail. **Do not leave this until the last minute.**
- 6) There is a special form required for those submitting applications in the creative arts.
- 7) References. The default should be professors who know you well. One reference may come from a work supervisor, someone from the country to which you are applying, etc. Form 9A is for reference letters if you are applying for a research/study grant; 9B is for reference letters if you are applying for an ETA.
 - a. Urge your references to be expansive and to type the evaluation, and not just check boxes. “Generic” references are not helpful. Instead, **it is extremely important that the evaluation speak to your project**, so you need to provide each person with a draft of your proposal, and you need to give the referee approximately 3-weeks to write the letter. You might be able to give the near-final draft that you’ll have on **August 9th** but you should confirm this with your

referee. It is most useful for references to address the importance of your project and its feasibility: your ability to carry it out. You may feel uncomfortable being so direct with professors, but they will understand.

- b. ETA letters are **very** different from the letters for the full grant. ETA letters are non-traditional and require the referees to answer five questions. Make sure you communicate this with your referees well in advance.). Sample ETA reference form:[http://us.fulbrightonline.org/uploads/files/application_samples/Form9B_ET A Reference Form-Sample.pdf](http://us.fulbrightonline.org/uploads/files/application_samples/Form9B_ET_A_Reference_Form-Sample.pdf)
 - c. Feel free to have your references contact the Fulbright Committee with any questions. And feel free to provide your referees (including non-Olin people) with a copy of the guidelines for letters of recommendation that the Olin has prepared and that are available at http://www.olin.edu/sites/default/files/guidelines_-_faculty_letters_of_recommendation.pdf
 - d. On the back of each reference form is an instruction to provide a summary of your research proposal. Simply type in “see attached” in the space provided (so that the Fulbright people know you’ve done what you should).
 - e. The recommendation letters need to be submitted on-line to the [Okta](#) application system by the referee. All your recommendations should be in Okta on **September 16th** no exceptions. Please indicate the importance of this deadline to your references. The process is as follows:
 - i. You fill out the top part of the form, and have the link sent to your referees from the Fulbright website.
 - ii. The recommender follows the website instructions and uploads a letter. (Your recommenders do not have to send a copy of their letters to us. We will be able to access your letters via Slate’s application management system for advisors.)
 - f. Important points to tell your referee:
 - i. Olin has an internal deadline prior to what the Fulbright website lists for a deadline (some referees have missed our deadline because they consulted the website, and went with that deadline).
 - ii. The maximum page length for a reference is 2 pages (ETA reference has five questions only).
 - iii. The audience for the letter is varied: the letter will be read by Olin’s Fulbright Committee, the US Fulbright Committee, and the Fulbright Committee in the country to which you are applying.
- 8) Transcripts: Transcript labels should be attached to each transcript. This is taken from the website, “The Fulbright Program requires transcripts from each post-high school academic institution attended by the applicant. However, if courses, grades, and credits from transfer institutions appear on the transcript of the applicant’s degree institution, then it is not necessary to submit a separate transcript from the transfer institution. In addition, with the exception of language study, transcripts or records from institutions which did not award academic credit need not be submitted. Only one official transcript is required from each institution.” This may be a Student Copy of an official transcript or

a copy of the official transcript itself. **Printout or PDF of the online version is not acceptable.**

- 9) Letter of affiliation (not required for ETAs): Have the letter of support uploaded to the Okta application directly. **We need to have the letter at Olin so we have it in hand for our on-campus interview process.** The more specific the overseas person can be in the letter, the better. So you should provide as much information as you can to your prospective host. You may want to tell him/her you'll send him/her a good draft of your project essay in late Aug/early Sept--then he/she will have that to work with. More than one affiliation letter is fine, in fact, it looks good!

There are no specific requirements for the letter of support from the host institution. Every affiliation relationship will be different depending upon your project. The letters should state how the host institution will help you facilitate the project (i.e., what resources will be offered, what kind of supervision will be given, etc). Letters of support should complement to the overall application, but attest to its feasibility. Therefore, you should try to get a letter of support that is as detailed as possible. Ultimately, it is up to your host affiliation as to the level or kind of support that they are willing to offer you

Please note: an original signature on an official letterhead is required for the letter of affiliation.

IV. [General Writing Tips for Both Essays](#)

[Courtney Beach](#)/PGP has a PDF version of the past successful essays. Email her if you are interested in reading them. A key to writing successful Fulbright essays is doing multiple revisions and receiving feedback from others. We encourage you to seek feedback on your essays from faculty, staff, family members, and friends. There is no single source of ultimate wisdom on whose opinion you can depend; ultimately, you must decide how best to present yourself.

Although the following suggestions about writing style are important, the best advice we can give you is to try to communicate your **passion** for the proposal. This happens by showing (via examples) rather than telling. Share with the reader the excitement you feel about studying in the host country. We have found that often students whose proposals seem quite bland are actually very impassioned when we speak with them in person. Try reading your proposal out loud to a friend to see if you are really communicating your enthusiasm.

Successful applicants will have essays to which the reader responds in the following three ways. There are different approaches for how to achieve this:

- The reader is drawn in/grabbed.
- The reader thinks, "Wow, I would like to meet this person."
- The reader thinks, "It makes a lot of sense for this person to do what s/he is proposing."

Embrace and learn to love these tips:

- Careful proofreading is essential: look for missing diacritical marks, split infinitives, incorrect subject-verb agreement, etc. Some readers overreact to these errors. Avoid “s/he” as a substitute for “she or he” (or some other construction).
- Pay attention to your language; don’t use technical jargon.
- The first paragraph is the most important part of the essays. Often reviewers will read your essay along with hundreds of others, trapped in a hotel room for a weekend. If the first few lines don't grab them, your essay will go in the discard pile. So, avoid fluffy introductions. Grab the reader. There are two common options. 1) Use a personal anecdote that flags the subject you’re interested in or your passions. 2) Refer to an "apparent paradox"--in this more "intellectual" opening, you're referring to something really interesting that you want to study, and you're showing the reader right away why it's interesting.
- Show (via example), don’t tell.
- Use detail and provide examples whenever possible.
- Make sure your project essay structure follows the format below.
- Remember that this is a formal application. Keep your tone and diction very professional.
- Use active (not passive) voice. This sounds more confident: e.g., “I will utilize the special archives at the Borogrove Institute to test my hypothesis that....” rather than “The special archives at the Borogrove Institute will be examined as a test of the hypothesis that....”
- Undergraduates tend to use certain words with great regularity: words that have lost much of their meaning through overuse and inappropriate use. Following are some of these words; try to avoid them, unless they truly are appropriate in your proposal. (Use the “find” function in your word processing program.)
 - fascinating, fascinated; captivating, captivated: e.g., “I have long been fascinated [captivated] by the study of international monetary policy.” (Sounds like you have been bewitched or charmed.)
 - intriguing, intrigued: e.g., “I have long been intrigued by the study of Algerian immigration patterns in France.” (“Intrigued” seems to trivialize the problem.)
 - unique - e.g., “My background and training give me a unique perspective on this problem.” (Well, sure, each person is one-of-a-kind, but surely there are many others with similar backgrounds and training. In this case, substitute “unusual” or “distinctive.”)
 - awe, awesome - e.g., “That first view of Turkish acrobats was such an awesome sight, that I resolved to devote my life to the study of biomechanics in South Asia.” (A perfectly respectable word, but one that has been so overused that you are bound to hit someone on the committee who will gag.)
 - infinitely, endlessly - These words quite literally mean that there is no end; therefore, unless your proposal is cosmological (“the infinite reaches of the universe”) you should use a more finite word.
 - in regard(s) to - an awkward expression that can always be simplified. “In regards to my earlier experiences living in Bhutan, they have given me a more international perspective.” Change to: “My earlier experiences...have given me a

more international perspective.”

Peer Editing Instructions

1. Provide each other with both your latest essays.
2. Create written comments, both typo-level comments but also larger comments. For the latter, we ask you to please write out the following, and share with your peer partner. We suggest you send comments and also meet to discuss.

-In your own words, what does the person want to do on the Fulbright? Recipient of this info: If this is not accurate, you should fix your essay to reflect what you DO want to do.)

-What stands out to you as especially strong in the application?

-Are there any areas where you are confused about the student’s past experiences? Future plans?

-Does the student cover everything required in the essays per the [Olin Fulbright Guide](#)?

-See the [Campus Committee Evaluation form here](#) (for full grant- you are all applying for that). These are the criteria for selection. The Olin Committee will be completing this form about each of you in October. Peer reviewer, use these prompts and write out what your assessment would be based on this form. Recipient of this info: Look at the responses for places to celebrate your clarity or to improve!

V. Asking for Affiliations

Those of you applying for an ETA (English teaching assistantship) don't need an affiliation, but anyone applying for a FULL grant does. The sample “asking for affiliation” email might be helpful while reaching out to your contacts. We do NOT suggest you use this as a template. But we think you may find this useful so you know what elements you would want in your own email.

Dear _____,

My name is XYZ and I am a student at Olin College of Engineering in Massachusetts. I write to you on the suggestion of Prof. ABC (if relevant). I have been working/researching with Prof. ABC/Institute/Lab ABC on _____(give some background information about your research and/or project, but keep it brief).

I would like to pursue a Fulbright scholarship for postgraduate study, and I write to ask if I may affiliate with your _____ (institute/lab name). Your work on _____ (research/paper/project) on _____ at (institute/lab name) resonates with my own interests in xxxxx. It would be an honor to work with you as my adviser on _____ (topic of choice) during my time as a Fulbright student. Also given the _____ (institute/lab name) 's work/ in the field of _____ (topic of choice) I believe it is the ideal institute/lab to affiliate with to carry out this research/project. (Or, refer to enrolling in a Master's program, if relevant.)

Please allow me to tell you more about myself. My resume (and portfolio?) are available at xxxxxxxx. I am currently _____ (where and doing what - provide links to websites if possible). (Here add in something about what skills/experiences YOU would bring to them - what's in it for them!).

The Fulbright scholarship would provide me with funds to support my studies. The Fulbright application process requires me to submit a letter of affiliation on university/institution letterhead. I would be happy to provide you with the details for what is required in this letter.

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

VI. Winning Tips for Project Essay

A. Overview

You have two single-spaced pages (12-point) to present your proposal. The project essay is your opportunity to convince the committees that will be reading your application that you have thoughtfully developed a plan of study and/or research for the country to which you are applying. Seniors applying for a Fulbright will normally be expected to propose a course of study, supplemented by a small research project. It is possible to propose a year of coursework only, but you need to show why you could not accomplish the same thing in this country. (For applicants to the U.K., please note that priority is given to “young scholars who intend to pursue structured courses that lead to a recognized academic qualification.” Thus, any research project should be relatively minor.) Seniors are not expected to have the necessary sophistication to embark on a year of exclusively independent study, so such awards are rare. It is therefore of great importance to investigate carefully the opportunities for study in the host country, to make the necessary contacts that will result in an on-site supervisor or advisor for your work, to apply for admission, and to prepare a proposal that will be both valid (i.e. significant) and feasible (i.e. possible to complete successfully in one year).

Re-read the appropriate country summary on the Fulbright website to ensure that your academic status (graduating senior) and proposed field of study are acceptable to that country. If you have any questions about the appropriateness of your proposal, contact Olin’s Fulbright Committee.

You need to present a well-defined project that requires your presence in another country. Convince your American and non-American readers of the importance of your project. Will it advance knowledge, both in this country and the host country? Could it just as easily be conducted in a good library here? Without stretching things too much, can you show how your proposal would foster greater understanding between the U.S. and the host country? (In some

countries, this is required.)

You should identify a specific university or research institute where you wish to study and, ideally, a specific professor to supervise your work. In most cases, it is your responsibility to apply to that university. Your Fulbright application does not constitute an application to the institution in the host country. Certain countries require prior acceptance (check the Fulbright [website](#)). If you have a letter of acceptance, include it with your application. Even if it comes in late, bring it in and we will send it along as a supplement to your application. Originals are preferred; faxes may be acceptable if they are printed on department letterhead. E-mails are **never** acceptable. Comparative studies requiring extended stays in more than one country are possible, but the odds for success are very long: you must be accepted by each country. Many students obtain information on available programs while studying abroad. Other useful sources of information include:

- Members of modern foreign language departments.
- Faculty in the departments at BBW schools most similar to that where you wish to study. Many faculty members have international connections, and not just in the obvious departments such as Anthropology, History, and Political Science.
- Reference materials in libraries. The Post Graduate Planning Resource Center has extensive information on Commonwealth Universities.
- Cultural/Educational Affairs Office of the embassy (in D.C.) or the Boston consulate (if there is one) of the host country.
- Most universities now have web pages, with listings of courses and faculty members. This is rapidly becoming the most important source of information.

You should be able to list specific courses or, at least, specific areas of study in the host university; therefore, you will need to obtain relevant materials on the university. If you are unable to obtain these materials (sometimes it is simply impossible for certain countries), do not despair; this will not sink your application. Again, web pages are often the best source of information.

It is a good idea to include sufficient information about the host country in your proposal to persuade a reader that you are knowledgeable and respectful of concerns of that country. If your proposal contains factual information, do the research to ensure its accuracy. Errors of fact about the country to which you are applying will be glaringly obvious when read by host country Commission members. You will communicate respect by suggesting that you will be learning from the experience in the country as well as contributing something to that country.

It is essential to be aware of political or social sensitivities of the host country. For example, a study of family planning in the Philippines (or other predominantly Roman Catholic country) would have to be approached with great caution (if at all). Certain countries are suspicious of what is perceived as overly intimate contacts; therefore, questionnaires or surveys in such countries might not be feasible.

The committees that will be reviewing your application are composed of professionals, not necessarily experts in your field of study. Therefore, you should avoid jargon or other specialized words not likely to be understood by educated lay people. The exceptions are Germany, France and Israel, where there are separate screening committees for science proposals; feel free to use appropriate scientific terms in such proposals.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, projects are evaluated in terms of their validity and feasibility. Validity can only be demonstrated by convincing the reader of the project's worth and importance. Feasibility can be demonstrated through your academic credentials (including relevant coursework and research experience) and the supports available in the host country (will you have access to the relevant archives and supervising faculty?). You will need to demonstrate clearly both of these in your proposal.

Special note for those applying for the English Teaching Assistantships: The proposal for ETAs is of necessity somewhat different. (See tips on the Fulbright website.) Applicants tend to be more career-oriented, so it is more common to relate the ETA experience to what you intend to do upon returning to the U.S. Most applicants for ETAs propose an extra project, either coursework at a university or some research. It is useful to specify a region of the country where you would like to be an ETA, but there are no guarantees this will be honored. In the proposal, indicate what you expect to get out of the experience, and what skills you bring to it.

B. Structure (Seven-Paragraph Model)

Your project proposal should answer the basic questions: Why do you want to do it? Why is it worthwhile doing? How are you qualified to do it? What do you hope to accomplish? How will you do so? With whom? In addition, you should indicate what special resources you will need (e.g. archives), and what you plan to do when you return to the U.S. (even if it does not relate to your project). Many times campus committee members have written in the margins of a proposal, "What exactly will you be doing?" Be very specific about your actual activities. In testing your hypothesis, will you be designing and conducting surveys? Running an experiment? Examining archives? How will you know if your research is successful?

We recommend the following Seven-Paragraph Model, developed over many years by Tufts University's Fulbright Committee.

The project essay should be direct, clear, business-like, and unemotional. Below is an extremely effective outline for independent research projects. Many essays work well by following this outline precisely. Even if you alter your paragraph order, your essay should answer all 7 questions to be complete. Don't spend too much time elaborating the importance of your project in Paragraph 2. Essays for the ETAs or for taking classes can be substantially different, but they can also follow this model, especially Paragraphs 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7.

1. What are you going to DO?
 - What do you plan to do with your Fulbright grant? A one-sentence summary.
 - This section can give a brief synopsis of your proposal.
2. Why is this project IMPORTANT?
 - Perhaps include 1 or 2 academic citations to backup your claims (not required).
3. Why are YOU the person to do it?
 - What are your qualifications to undertake and successfully complete this project?
 - How familiar are you with this topic?
 - Have you conducted independent research before?
 - How well will you adapt to the culture and expected conditions of your host country?
 - How fluent are you in the host country's language(s)? If you do not speak the language, what are your plans to become competent in it?
4. Why should this project take place in your chosen country?
 - Why is this location the best for your project? Indicate any demographic, cultural, ecological, historical, or geographical advantages this region possesses that make conducting research here so unique, important, or relevant.
5. What is your DETAILED PLAN? *This is the most important section*
 - WHO will you work with? Be sure you have a contact in the host country, and mention him/her here. In some cases, you will also need to affiliate with an institution (university, NGO, branch of government, etc.). You have to arrange these contacts yourself.
 - HOW will you conduct your research? Give precise details about your methods of research, resources or materials required, places or regions you will visit, and how your contacts in the host country will provide support and when.
6. What will be the RESULT of your project?
 - This should be something that communicates what you've done so the Fulbright committee gets a maximum yield from their investment in you. Fulbright wants to see you disseminate your results back in the U.S.
 - If you intend to prepare a written report, who will receive it?
 - If you write an article for publication, to which journals will you send it?
 - If you will create a film or photojournal, how will you distribute it or show it? Think about your audience.
 - Will you write about it or present on it at Olin? In your hometown? At a Rotary Club meeting?
7. How will this Fulbright grant impact your FUTURE CAREER?
 - Be specific. Remember, your plans can change later.
8. What will you do in that country besides the project?

- How will you engage with the community?

VII. Winning Tips for Personal Essay

A. Overview

In one single-spaced page, you are expected to provide an intellectual biography that indicates the factors that brought you to this point, including obstacles overcome, opportunities taken advantage of, and where you are headed. Do not use the personal statement to re-hash information already provided on your application form (your list of honors and accomplishments). This essay should not be cute or gimmicky. Tell your story in an interesting, but straightforward manner.

The personal essay accomplishes two major purposes:

- 1) First, and most importantly, you should use this essay as an opportunity to present yourself as the sort of person the host country would like to have as a Fulbright scholar for a year. It is always a challenge to present oneself as a competent, skilled, and scholarly individual without sounding arrogant. Following the suggestion to “show” not “tell” is particularly important here. This is probably why most applicants find this the most difficult and time-consuming part of the application.
- 2) Second, you should relate this essay to your proposed project. How have your background and interests motivated you to pursue the scholarship? Keep this second point in mind always in deciding what picture of yourself to offer.

Think of this as a companion to the project essay, one of two ways to make your case. The project essay is all business. The personal essay is an emotional battle. Take the reader somewhere unexpected, and leave the reader impressed by what he or she saw and felt on this “small walk of life,” your curriculum vitae.

If you blend the two essays, you’re missing a chance to show two important but different aspects of your personality. Let the reader do the blending. This is where most draft writers go wrong – by conflating these two different essays.

The personal essay is not about why you should win a Fulbright or why a Fulbright would be good for you. Don’t even think of going there!

Olin students should address the question of “What on earth is Olin College,” but not just in the sense of “It’s a new engineering college with the following mission... project-based learning... small and personal.” Your reference writers will do some of that. As the applicant, you need to address things like: What is it like to be here? Why did you choose to come to a new school? Look at Olin’s admission material and let that inspire how you talk about it.

There is a balance to strike between showing you have diverse interests, but also showing you

have a focus. You don't want the essay to read like a laundry list of interests (they can see the entire laundry list in your application forms). Instead, whatever interests you choose to mention in the essay should all tie together--you should be able to show how they're all connected to your vision in life.

B. Seven Helpful Points

1. The Bio essay is NOT an explanation of your project. However, you are telling a story in your personal essay that is always self-conscious about illustrating the personal fuel for your proposed project. You want to build houses in Haiti or study animal behavior in Scotland, but why?
2. Do not try to squeeze your entire life onto two pages. Instead, find one small incident or aspect of your life that gives an insight into who you are and what you have learned or accomplished in life.
3. It often helps to start with a story. Think of this as creative writing (but not fiction!). Reflect on incidents (even minor incidents) that made you come to some realization or forced you to react in some way.
4. Don't worry about length limits in the early drafts. Write a lot, then cut out what seems unnecessary or repetitive.
5. The aim of the personal essay is to reveal you as an interesting, unique, capable, curious, intelligent, adaptable, and creative person. It is best to convey these qualities indirectly, through your stories, your statements, and your tone.
6. Sometimes your essay may need to explain how you overcame an obstacle in your life or why there was an interruption in your studies. Demonstrating (honestly) how you have overcome adversity is very important for this kind of essay.
7. Remember, this essay can take a variety of shapes, attitudes, and styles.

VIII. [Olin's Fulbright Committee's Top Questions](#)

Members of Olin's Fulbright Committee will work with you to ensure that you submit the best application possible. Keep in mind that members will ask themselves the following questions when they review drafts of your Fulbright essays. Try to hit these things from the start.

- Does the opening paragraph have a "hook"? Am I drawn in? Am I intrigued by how this person will present his or her story?
- Based on the essay, who do I think this person is? What are his or her interests and temperament? What is the tone of the essay? Is s/he a nice person? Would I want to have dinner with him or her?

- Is the story an applicant tells about herself as interesting and multi-faceted as I know the applicant to be? Is the person unrecognizably great in this essay?
- Does this essay make a compelling reason for why the applicant should pursue a project or do graduate study in a particular country or at a particular institution?
- What is the intellectual content of the essay? Is s/he a thinking person?
- Do the threads of the essay get tied in and tied together? Is there a cohesive structure to the essay? Has the writer chosen the threads of his or her story discerningly, or has s/he thrown a narrative of his life on paper to see what sticks?
- Does the essay/story conclude with abundant possibilities for next steps in the applicant's life? Or does the conclusion of the essay seem like the end of the story?

IX. What to Do between April 14th and August 27th

This is crucial Fulbright preparation time. What to do during this time? Find a country. Find a project. Find a host institution. Contact former Fulbrighters in that or other countries. Contact people in the country. Read up on the country. Make sure you and your plans fit that country's requirements. Read up on your project idea. Write drafts of your two essays and share them with many people. Talk about your ideas with many people. Get excited but stay on task! Check in on the Fulbright Google doc.

You will be notified by IIE by the end of January 2022 whether you have been recommended or not recommended by the National Screening Committee. Applications of the recommended candidates are next sent to the bi-national committees in the host countries, where the final determinations are made. Depending on the country, between 50% and 100% more than the numbers of final grantees are recommended. Therefore, while it is definitely good news to be recommended by the National Screening Committee, it is no guarantee that you will receive a grant. You should hear the final decision sometime between February 1 and June 1 (although some countries are notoriously late).

X. Other Resources

- Slate:** <https://apply.iie.org/apply/?sr=4a36c387-667d-4d6c-8cbd-925055e84440>
(application is open NOW)
- Fulbright Country Summaries:** <http://us.fulbrightonline.org/countries/regions>
- Instructions for Fulbright Reference Writers ETA:**
<http://us.fulbrightonline.org/instructions-for-eta-reference-writers>
- Sample ETA reference form:**
http://us.fulbrightonline.org/uploads/files/application_samples/Form9B_ETA_Reference_Form-Sample.pdf
- Application tips for ETA:** <http://us.fulbrightonline.org/application-tips/eta>

f) **Videos for ETA:** <http://vimeo.com/search?q=fulbright+ETA>