Fulbright U.S. Student Program English Teaching Assistantship

CUSE Pre-Application Advice | 2015-16 Application Cycle

Please consult this application advice as you are completing the Fulbright U.S. Student Program ETA Pre-Application Form. If anything on the form is unclear, please contact fellows@nd.edu for clarification. Please remember that the Pre-Application does not commit you to anything, and it’s okay if some of the answers are tentative or not fully worked-out.

One general point is that you should make liberal use of the official Fulbright website at http://us.fulbrightonline.org. You should pay special attention to the information at http://us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/application-tips/eta. Although this site will be updated on March 31, after the Pre-Application Deadline, much of the information will remain the same, so you should feel comfortable using it. You’ll have plenty of time to make adjustments in light of the March 31 information, if necessary.

**Proposed Host Country:**

Be as specific as you can here. If you have narrowed it down to a particular country, that’s great; if you’re still narrowing things down, then it’s fine to list a few possibilities here. We can help you with the decision. However, be sure that you review the country information available at: http://us.fulbrightonline.org/countries/regions

Some countries have specific preferences in terms of language proficiency or candidate profiles, and you want to be sure that you meet them. For instance, some countries require teaching experience or are seeking applicants who plan to pursue TEFL as a career (we see you, Peru).

If you’re off in the clear blue sky and brainstorming, take a peak at: http://us.fulbrightonline.org/statistics

to consult the “odds” for each country, which might influence your decision. However, 100 times out of 100, we will encourage students to pursue the country that provides the best “fit” for their interests and background.

**Brief Explanation:**

It will be essential that you have compelling reasons for why you want to do an ETA in a particular country. Please be as specific as you can at this point, and think about reasons that would be unique to a particular country and connect to your interests.

**Primary Recommender:**

This is the person who can speak most effectively and enthusiastically to your credentials, passion, and fit for the Fulbright program. We will contact them only after meeting with you to outline some of the specifics for what makes a great recommendation letter and how an ETA recommendation differs from others (for one thing, it’s a form: five short answer prompts about how you as a candidate fit the profile for an ETA and Fulbright representative). We strongly encourage you to meet with your recommender and discuss your plans; faculty are a terrific resource! Please note that you will ultimately need three recommenders.
Experience:

Try to give specific examples of experiences you’ve had that indicate that you will be an effective ETA. Somewhat obviously, experience with teaching English as a second language is the most compelling evidence that you can teach English as a second language. However, any teaching or tutoring experience makes a strong case for success as an ETA. If you do not have this kind of experience (and we have had people win without it!), how do you think you’ve developed the qualities and skills that are associated with effective teaching?

Note that some countries require teaching experience; some countries do not; however, every country will want to know why you’d be an effective ETA. This is, in a way, a job application. Make sure you’re thinking about how you’re qualified to do the job of an ETA (and, in all likelihood, you are), not just what a cool experience/career development tool it would be.

Creativity/Resilience:

Part of being an ETA is dealing with what will likely be a brand new experience. People who evaluate these applications are looking for standout communicators who have the dynamic and/or resilient personality that is necessary to succeed in an unfamiliar environment. Think about times when you were challenged (bonus points if it’s related to a time when you were teaching/instructing!) and what steps you took to adapt and succeed (or, if you failed (it happens!) what you learned from the experience).

Short/Long Term Goals:

The Fulbright reviewers will want to see that this experience will be meaningful for you. Even if you don’t plan to teach English as a foreign language (or teach at all) as a career, what will you gain by spending almost a year immersed in a specific country, working as an ETA and participating in civic engagement? This question is getting at how the ETA will impact you in the short-term; how will this experience connect to what you plan to do immediately afterward?

Thinking more long term, how does this experience connect you to your overall career goals? What role will this experience play in your life’s trajectory? Try to be as specific as you can. However, remember that no one will be following up and checking in on your career. What you propose here isn’t a contractual obligation, but another opportunity to add dimension to yourself as an applicant.

For the love of all things international, “broadening horizons” and “experiencing other cultures” are not good responses. They’re vague and, at this point, trite. Ideally, what you present in your application is unique (you’re a snowflake, dang it!) – you want your application to stand out from the crowd.

Cross Cultural Engagement

The fundamental mission of Fulbright is to promote cultural understanding through educational exchange, so civic engagement has to play some role in your application. Most of the ETAs are “part time,” meaning that they leave you time to pursue civic engagement and (in some countries) small independent projects. So what will you do to contribute to the country while you’re there? Will you volunteer? Will you give presentations about U.S. culture? Will you try to connect with an NGO? Think about ways to engage that also connect to your interests.
Miscellaneous

Foreign Language Proficiency: Some countries prefer it. Some countries have no preference, (though it’s never a bad thing to have some proficiency in the host country’s language in order to facilitate civic engagement). If you don’t have any proficiency in the host country language, strongly consider working language study into your proposal and, better yet, get started learning the language now. It doesn’t have to be an intense commitment, but beginning to get the basics under your belt goes a long way toward establishing your sincere interest in the program.
Official Resources
We highly recommend that you review all of the information at the following websites before beginning your application. You will also want to consult them throughout the application process.

- [http://us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/getting-started](http://us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/getting-started)
  - General information
- [http://us.fulbrightonline.org/application-components/eta](http://us.fulbrightonline.org/application-components/eta)
  - An overview of the required components of a Fulbright ETA application
- [http://us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/application-tips/eta](http://us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/application-tips/eta)
  - More information about what reviewers expect to see in the application; this may be your single most important resource throughout the process
  - Checklist of steps in the application process
- [http://us.fulbrightonline.org/eta-grant-application-statistics](http://us.fulbrightonline.org/eta-grant-application-statistics)
  - Statistics from past Fulbright competitions
- [http://us.fulbrightonline.org/countries/regions](http://us.fulbrightonline.org/countries/regions)
  - Country information
- [http://us.fulbrightonline.org/alumni/alumni-ambassadors](http://us.fulbrightonline.org/alumni/alumni-ambassadors)
  - Profiles of former Fulbrighters
- [http://us.fulbrightonline.org/about/resources](http://us.fulbrightonline.org/about/resources)
  - Here you will find a wealth of useful information – webinars, videos, tutorials, and more – which you should definitely consult as you are applying for the Fulbright

Unofficial Resources

- [https://community.scrippscollege.edu/beyondtheelms/2012/09/03/fulbright-part-1-how-i-chose-bulgaria/](https://community.scrippscollege.edu/beyondtheelms/2012/09/03/fulbright-part-1-how-i-chose-bulgaria/) (reflections on selecting a country for the ETA)

If you’d like to review some examples of successful Fulbright applications, please visit CUSE in 110 Brownson Hall. We have a binder of successful applications available that you can peruse in our offices. If you are off campus, please email fellows@nd.edu to request access to selected successful applications.