

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FULBRIGHT FOREIGN STUDENT APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION

During your review and selection of Fulbright Foreign Student applications for the upcoming cohort, we urge you to consider the following recommendations to ensure that selected candidates are competitive for placement (admission) at U.S. institutions. While each country can set their own review/selection process according to their country objectives and priorities, all selected candidates should also meet the basic eligibility requirements for admission to a U.S. host institution. By incorporating these recommendations into your evaluation process, you can submit the strongest possible slate of candidates. If your candidates work with IIE's Academic Placement Team, adhering to the recommendations below will help streamline the placement process. Additional information about the overall placement process at U.S. institutions is available on [Fulbright Online](#).

In addition to selecting candidates who are competitive for placement, it is also important that applications be as complete as possible upon nomination to ECA and IIE, so that IIE can begin the placement process right away. U.S. universities are not able to review incomplete applications, nor can IIE create a full submission plan with incomplete applications. We encourage you to share with your finalists the [Fulbright Foreign Student Application Checklist Document](#) within our Placement Resources on Fulbright Online, and to use this checklist to ensure that applications are complete prior to nomination.

**To be considered for admission to U.S. institutions, the key components of a successful application are:**

1. Clearly defined plan of study that aligns with future (actionable) goals.
2. Academic background and/or professional experience that supports plan of study.
3. Complete record of previous academic study, equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree.
4. Demonstrated English proficiency via a standardized test.
5. Strong letters of recommendation.

IIE has created Application Resource documents to assist applicants with submitting the strongest application possible for admission to a U.S. institution. Please share the [Resources](#) found on Fulbright Online with your candidates.

### Study Plan:

A clear, well-articulated Study Objective is a key component to the application and admission to a U.S. institution. Applicants must outline their proposed degree and field of study as well as identify a sub-interest. The essay must explain why the applicant is interested in the proposed areas of focus and outline how it fits within their educational background and future goals.

Additionally, the essay may also note how their research interests are relevant to current trends/challenges in their home country and indicate how they will apply their studies upon returning to their home country. The ideal essay should be at least one page and no longer than two pages. For IIE-placed candidates, the essay should not contain any references to a particular U.S. institution.

**Essays will be run through our plagiarism software so it's important to remind applicants to use their own words and avoid plagiarism. Applicants must always credit the source if they are referencing someone else's work or research.**

## Academic Background:

In many fields of study, an undergraduate degree in that specific field or a related field of study may be required by U.S. institutions as a foundation for advanced study. If an applicant is choosing to pursue a field of study for which they may not have adequate prior undergraduate preparation, the placement could be challenging and may require a number of pre-requisite courses that will lengthen their time to degree. We encourage you to reference our [Placement Resources on Fulbright Online](#) to confirm individual degree requirements.

## Records of Previous Academic Study:

### Bachelor's Degree Equivalency:

To gain admission to Master's or Doctoral programs in the U.S., applicants are required to have an undergraduate degree equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree. **It is important to note that equivalency determination is held at the discretion of the admitting institution. Note that the U.S. institution reviewing the application will decide whether the candidate has the equivalent of a U.S. bachelor's degree.**

Here are some general guidelines that we recommend candidates with three-year bachelor's degrees meet to receive full consideration by U.S. institutions.

U.S. institutions may consider three-year bachelor's degrees equivalent if the following are met:

- The primary and secondary educational system, combined, is 13 years in length.
- Graduate level study can be immediately pursued in the country where the undergraduate degree was awarded.
- The quality of education from the awarding institution should be comparable to receiving U.S. institution.
- The awarding body adheres to national quality assurance and accreditation standards.
- The undergraduate degree is in the same or of a similar field of study and with a compatible curriculum to the U.S. degree.

*\* If primary and secondary education, combined, is less than 13 years, some U.S. institutions may consider additional tertiary study.*

*\*\* Some U.S. institutions may require Bologna-compliant three-year bachelor's degrees to meet the above criteria to be considered.*

### Transcripts and Diplomas/Degree Certificates:

All U.S. institutions require transcripts and diplomas/degree certificates for all applicants from all previously attended academic institutions as part of the application review process. For international candidates, depending on the home institution's language of instruction and whether they issue these documents in English only, U.S. institutions will require them in both the native language and English translation.

Please ensure that digital copies of ALL transcripts/diplomas/degree certificates (even for in-progress degrees) are included in the application, and meet these requirements:

- Transcripts must list all courses and/or subjects taken, and the grades received. Ideally, they should indicate when the course was taken. Most transcripts contain a 'legend' that will explain what an 'excellent' grade, a 'passing' grade, etc. is. (Please note a description of the course is NOT required).
- Transcripts and diplomas/degree certificates should be in the official language of the country unless the school provides these documents in English only.

- If the transcripts come with a transcript key that provides guidance on how to interpret the grades, symbols, terminology, etc., applicants should include this document.
- If a translation is necessary, it can be issued by the school or by a qualified translator. Translations must be literal—not interpretive.
- For individuals studying in Europe and completing a Bologna-compliant degree, a diploma supplement in English is also needed.
- Please note that these are recommended requirements, and some U.S. institutions/evaluation agencies may require further documentation.
- Upon placement, U.S. institutions often will require hard copy academic transcripts and translations (sometimes referred to as mark sheets or degree statements):
  - Hard copies of **official** transcripts and diplomas/degree certificates must be certified by the school, e.g., the Registrar’s Office or Controller of Examinations (official documents may NOT be certified by a professor or other legal authority) and be sent directly to the U.S. institution in an envelope that has not been opened by the student.
- Applicants should not submit original transcripts either to Posts/Commissions or a U.S. institution. An original transcript is a document that is issued only once from the higher education institution upon graduation and course/exam completion. Instead, applicants should request an attested official transcript, which is a copy of the original transcript certified by the school official or appropriate authority for that country.

### Demonstrated English Proficiency:

English proficiency is critical to a successful placement and therefore we highly recommend that applicants demonstrate satisfactory English proficiency prior to selection. Applicants should take an English proficiency exam that is universally or widely accepted such as TOEFL IBT (not TOEFL ITP) and IELTS. An interview in English is often not sufficient to assess the English skills of an applicant for graduate-level study in the U.S. Therefore we suggest that final selections be dependent on the outcome of standardized test scores.

**Duolingo can be used in lieu of TOEFL during the initial application and selection review phase, but TOEFL and IELTS are generally required for admission at a U.S. institution.**

Please consult the [Testing Information](#) section of Fulbright Online for general guidance on test score minimums.

### Letters of Recommendation:

Most institutions require a minimum of three (3) recommendation letters.

Recommendation letters should ideally be obtained from individuals who know the applicants well either academically or professionally and can speak at length positively about their academic or professional capabilities, work ethic and character.

For professional letters of recommendation, referees should be individuals who have **directly supervised** the applicant’s work either in an academic or professional setting. Recommenders should not be work colleagues, classmates, friends, or relatives.

Ideally, letters of recommendation should be uploaded to the Fulbright Application Management System (Slate) and should be signed by the person writing the letter. While Posts and Commissions are not required to use a specific number of Letters of Recommendation for their country review and selection, this is a critical component of the application submitted to U.S. institutions, and three letters should be obtained prior to nomination. If otherwise strong candidates do not have strong letters of recommendation, it is appropriate for

you to request new letters of recommendation using these [Guidelines for Requesting a Letter of Recommendation](#).