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## Introduction

*“The Fulbright Program aims to bring a little more knowledge, a little more reason, and a little more compassion into world affairs and thereby to increase the chance that nations will learn at last to live in peace and friendship.”*

*-Senator J. William Fulbright*

Congratulations! You have been offered a Fulbright grant because of your academic accomplishments, career aspirations, and leadership potential. Your selection and grant award is based on a number of factors including approval of your nomination by the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, acceptance into an appropriate academic program at a university in the United States, and the availability of funds.

Your Fulbright grant is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) or a binational Fulbright Commission. As a Fulbright grantee, you will become a member of a community of more than 360,000 leaders in government, business, the arts, the media, and the academic communities who have shared the experience of studying abroad as Fulbrighters since the program was launched more than sixty years ago.

The honor of receiving a Fulbright scholarship has many attendant responsibilities. One of your most important duties will be to serve as an ambassador of your country to your U.S. campus and community. Another responsibility will be to fulfill the daily administrative requirements of the Fulbright program. AMIDEAST has developed this manual to help you understand these obligations. The manual contains most of the important information that you will need in order to take full advantage of your time as a Fulbrighter. If you cannot find the answer to your questions here, do not hesitate to contact your AMIDEAST advisor for more information. The team is here to help you.

Welcome to the Fulbright Foreign Student Program!

## HISTORY OF THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM

The Fulbright Program is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government, and is designed to “increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.” With this goal as a starting point, the Fulbright Program has provided over 360,000 participants—chosen for their academic merit and leadership potential — with the opportunity to study, teach, conduct research, exchange ideas, and contribute to finding solutions to shared international concerns.

The Fulbright Program, established in 1946, is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State.

The Fulbright Program awards approximately 8,000 new grants annually and operates in over 160 countries worldwide.



***“We must try to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy and perception, and there is no way of doing that except through education.”***

- Senator J. William Fulbright

## **PROGRAM FUNDING**

The primary source of funding for the Fulbright Program is an annual appropriation made by the United States Congress to the Department of State. Participating governments and host institutions in foreign countries and in the United States also contribute financially.

## **PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

The Fulbright Program is administered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State under policy guidelines established by the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board (FSB) with the assistance of binational commissions and foundations in 50 countries, U.S. embassies in more than 100 countries, and a number of cooperating agencies in the United States.

The J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, composed of 12 educational and public leaders appointed by the President of the United States, formulates policies for the administration of the program, establishes criteria for the selection of candidates, and approves candidates nominated for awards.

Some Fulbright Programs are administered directly by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Others are administered with the assistance of cooperating agencies, including AMIDEAST that administers the Foreign Fulbright for the Middle East and North Africa program.

## AMIDEAST

Founded in 1951, AMIDEAST seeks to strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation between Americans and the people of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

AMIDEAST is strongly committed to the view that education and exchange are critical forces in shaping rewarding relationships between the United States and the Middle East and North Africa at the personal, institutional, and governmental levels.

AMIDEAST today delivers professional skills and English language training programs to communities across the MENA region. AMIDEAST's activities fall into 5 major program areas:

- Educational services, testing services and advising
- English language and professional skills training
- Academic and Cultural Exchange
- Institutional Development and Capacity Building
- Education Abroad for Americans

AMIDEAST has administered Fulbright Foreign Student Program grants for Middle Eastern and North African participants for more than 40 years and is pleased to continue supporting the United States Department of State in operating this prestigious international exchange program.

Strengthening mutual understanding and

تعزيز التفاهم والتعاون

cooperation between Americans and the

بين الأمريكيين والأمة العربية والإفريقية

peoples of the Middle East and North Africa

التفاهم بين الأمريكيين والأمة العربية والإفريقية

## Understanding Your Grant

### TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

The Terms of Appointment is your contract with the Fulbright Program. It describes the conditions and financial benefits of your award and outlines your obligations and requirements under the Fulbright grant.

Your Terms of Appointment highlights the length of your grant, type of grant, your funding source (a binational Commission or the United States Department of State), and whether your grant provides full or partial funding.

Under this contract, you are obligated to return to your home country for an aggregate of two years of residency after completion of the grant. You will become a Fulbright grantee upon signing your Terms of Appointment. *Be sure to carry a copy of your Terms of Appointment with you to the United States.*

### DURATION OF YOUR GRANT

Your Fulbright funding will end on the day you complete your academic program, or upon reaching your Maximum Funding Date (MFD), **whichever date comes first.**

For example, if your MFD is July 31, 2017, but you complete your academic program in May 2017, your Fulbright funding will end with May's allowance. On the other hand, if your MFD is July 31, 2017, but a delay in your program does not allow you to complete your academic program requirements until December 2017, your Fulbright funding will still end on July 31, 2017.

*Note: Your J-1 status will likewise expire on the day you complete your academic program or the Program End Date in your SEVIS record, whichever date comes first.*

## INITIAL AND RENEWAL GRANTS

Your initial Fulbright grant term is for up to 12 months, even though your academic program might require more than twelve months to complete. The benefit start date indicated on your Terms of Appointment marks the start of your grant.

If eligible, a **renewal grant** will be awarded each year, up to your Maximum Funding Date (MFD). If applicable, you will automatically be offered a grant renewal. AMIDEAST or your binational Fulbright Commission will send notification of your renewal. You do not need to request or submit an application for a renewal grant.

Students who are given grants for one year of non-degree research are not eligible for a renewal grant.

## MONTHLY MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE (MMA)

Your Fulbright grant will cover basic living expenses estimated for a graduate student in the U.S. It does not cover the cost for clothing, a car, vacation travel, or other personal expenses.

You should keep in mind the following points:

1. You should plan to have access to **personal funds** while you go through the process of opening a bank account when you first arrive. You will need to have sufficient funds on hand for your transition to the U.S. for things such as food, lodging, and transportation.
2. **Make arrangements to receive your first monthly maintenance check.** Your AMIDEAST advisor will work with you on identifying an appropriate place to send your first check.
3. **Electronic transfer of your monthly maintenance payments into your U.S. bank account will be available to you as soon**



**as you enroll in Electronic Funds Transfer (direct deposit).**

To enroll in the system, complete the Electronic Funds Transfer Form found on the Grantee Resources webpage and return it to AMIDEAST as soon as possible. Enrollment in electronic funds transfer is mandatory.

## **U.S. INCOME TAXES**

As a Fulbright grantee, you are required to file a tax return **if** you received U.S.-source income.

AMIDEAST, on behalf of the United States Department of State, pays the 14% required federal income tax on your Fulbright scholarship, instead of deducting your tax obligation from your grant or requiring you to make the tax payment directly. You will receive allowances equal to the amounts specified in your Terms of Appointment. ***Any refund of the taxes paid by AMIDEAST on the Fulbright grant must be returned to AMIDEAST by the grantee.***

- AMIDEAST uses Windstar tax software for reporting taxes to the IRS (Internal Revenue Service). Windstar's web-based Foreign National Information System (FNIS) is used to collect student data and provide tax forms to students electronically.
- The Windstar system offers a service for filing your taxes called Foreign National Tax Resource (FNTR). All Fulbright grantees are eligible to use the FNTR service at no cost.
- After arrival to the U.S., AMIDEAST will send you details on how to complete and submit the online FNIS form. You will be required to send AMIDEAST your signed *Immigration Status Data Form*.
- In January, AMIDEAST will request that you update your FNIS record to reflect current changes.
- By March 15th of each year, AMIDEAST will email specific information about filing a tax return using FNTR. It is then your responsibility to complete and mail the forms to the IRS by the appropriate deadline.

- If you receive income from any source other than your Fulbright grant, you may have to pay U.S. federal and state taxes on that income.
- No state income tax is paid by AMIDEAST. However, you may be required to file a state income tax return *in addition* to a U.S. federal income tax return. Every state has different requirements, and you must check with your international student office for more details.

*AMIDEAST advisors are not able to give advice or assistance in completing tax forms. It is your responsibility to consult a tax expert if you have any questions on how to complete and file the required tax forms. Additional information about tax filing, required forms and using the Windstar system is available on AMIDEAST's Grantee Resources webpage.*

## **EARNING MONEY IN THE UNITED STATES**

**While you are a Fulbright grantee, you may not accept employment or an assistantship of any kind without prior permission of ECA, your binational Fulbright Commission, and AMIDEAST. If permission is granted, your maintenance allowance, as specified in your Terms of Appointment, may be reduced.**

## **ASPE: ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS HEALTH COVERAGE**

As a Fulbright grantee you will receive a health care benefit plan through the U.S. Department of State **Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE)**. The ASPE plan only covers accidents and illnesses and will not cover routine checkups or visits to the doctor. **ASPE** is administered by Seven Corners.

For all coverage information please visit the ASPE guidebook online:

<https://www2.sevencorners.com/downloads/usdos/ASPEHealthBenefitGuide.pdf>

### **Important ASPE coverage information:**

You are responsible for paying all co-pays:

\$25 co-pay for any office visit;

\$75 co-pay for emergency room, hospitalizations and urgent care;

\$15 co-pay for all brand name drugs with a generic equivalent.

- To enroll and receive these benefits, you will need your ASPE card, which can be printed out online. To do so, you will need to set up your “MyPlan” account with Seven Corners. For instructions, please visit:  
<http://usdos.sevencorners.com/myplan/>
- If your university requires mandatory medical insurance, you must use the university insurance, it supersedes the ASPE policy. The Fulbright grant will only pay for mandatory university insurance. If your university allows an insurance waiver, do not enroll in the university student insurance plan.
- ASPE health coverage is only valid in the United States and will not cover you in your home country or if you travel outside the U.S. The coverage is only for you and does not include any dependents with you in the United States.

- Pre-Certification: This healthcare plan requires pre-certification for treatments including: inpatient hospital admissions, skilled nursing, outpatient chemo and radiation therapy, outpatient surgeries and procedures, pregnancies. You must call the pre-certification phone number, (800) 461-0430, to obtain pre-admission approval at least one business day before a planned hospitalization in the United States. Certification for emergency admissions must be obtained within two business days following admission. A \$300 penalty will be applied if pre-certification is not obtained.
- Pre-existing conditions are not covered by the policy. You will need to obtain your own supplemental health insurance to cover any ongoing or potential medical requirements for pre-existing conditions.
- Plan to bring a sufficient amount of prescription medication for your stay in the United States, as well as a copy of your prescription. Many pharmacies will not honor a prescription written in another country.
- Most universities require students to receive immunization shots before arriving or during their first month on campus. The university will notify students about mandatory immunizations.
- Health insurance is very expensive in the United States. ASPE is not a health insurance plan.

## **Mental Health**

Your emotional well-being is as important as your physical well-being. As you adjust to your program and new surroundings, you may feel depressed, confused, or unhappy for a time. If you find that you are not feeling well emotionally, we recommend that you see a professional. Most universities have a counselling center with mental health professionals who can help you.

## *Before You Leave Your Country*

Your transition to life in the U.S. will be much smoother if you plan ahead. The following information should help facilitate this process.

### **J-1 IMMIGRATION STATUS**

As the recipient of a Fulbright grant, you must apply for an **Exchange Visitor (J-1) visa** under the sponsorship of the United States Department of State (Exchange Visitor Program Number G-1-12218). AMIDEAST is responsible for creating the record for you in **Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and issuing the Form DS-2019 Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status** needed to obtain your J-1 Student visa.

The **Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)** is an online database system that enables the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to maintain updated biographical and program information on J-1 Exchange Visitors living in the United States. SEVIS tracks all entries and exits to and from the United States. AMIDEAST is required to maintain the following types of information via SEVIS:

- Arrival at host institution and ongoing program participation;
- Name and address changes;
- Changes in host institution and field of study;
- Program end-dates, including extensions, completion, withdrawal, or termination.

As a J-1 Exchange Visitor, you must have these documents to enter the United States in Exchange Visitor status:

- A valid passport;
- A valid DS-2019 form;
- A valid J-1 visa.

Your **passport** should be valid for at least six months after the end date on your DS-2019. If your passport will expire during your stay in the United States, you must renew it through your country's consulate. When you send in your passport for renewal, keep a copy of the biographical information page, your J-1 visa, and your DS-2019 with you. Please also send a copy of the new passport to AMIDEAST. It is your responsibility to ensure that your passport remains valid during the period of your Fulbright grant.

**DS-2019 form:** Your **DS-2019 form** is your certificate of eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) immigration status. It reflects information in your SEVIS record at the time it was issued. When information on the DS-2019 form is updated in your SEVIS record, such as change of program dates, you will be issued a new DS-2019 form. Your DS-2019 outlines some of the regulations governing Exchange Visitor status. In order to remain in J-1 status, you must:

- maintain adequate health insurance coverage for you and your dependents at all times;
- be enrolled full-time in an academic program (unless otherwise authorized by AMIDEAST); and
- be in good academic standing.

You will need to present a valid DS-2019 form to the U.S. consulate or embassy when you apply for your J-1 visa. Once you enter the U.S., your DS-2019 form maintains the validity of your status during the time limits of your stay in the U.S. As long as you possess a valid DS-2019 and are participating in your academic program, you are legally present in the United States, even if the J-1 visa stamp in your passport has expired. **Your J-1 immigration status will end the day you complete your academic program or the Program End Date in your SEVIS record, as listed on your current DS-2019 form, whichever date comes first.**

## THE VISA PROCESS

A visa is the document in your passport that allows you to enter the United States. Your **J-1 visa** indicates the United States government's permission for you to enter the country as an Exchange Visitor. Receipt of the visa indicates that a U.S. Consular Officer has reviewed your application and has determined that you are eligible, but not guaranteed, to enter the United States for a specific purpose. Please remember that a valid J-1 visa is required to *enter* the United States, and a valid DS-2019 form is required to *legally remain* in the United States.

In order to leave and reenter the U.S. throughout your grant period you will need a visa that allows multiple entries. If you plan to travel outside the U.S. and the J-1 visa in your passport permits only one entry or has expired, you must apply for a new J-1 visa at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy before you will be allowed to re-enter the U.S. and return to your program. Keep in mind that, while you are allowed to apply for a renewal visa from any U.S. Consulate or Embassy, we *strongly* recommend that you renew your visa from your home country.

**Applying for a visa:** AMIDEAST will provide the **DS-2019 form** needed to obtain a J-1 visa. With a DS-2019 form, you are eligible to apply for your J-1 visa to come to the United States, and you should begin the process as soon as possible. As you prepare to apply for your J-1 visa, please keep the following in mind:

- Your passport should be valid for at least six months beyond the program end dates listed on your DS-2019 form.
- When applying for the J-1 visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, you will be asked for your passport and the DS-2019 form in addition to information about your medical history, university acceptance, and academic qualifications.

- The interview with the Consular Officer is short. Therefore, it is important to make a good impression, speak exclusively in English, prove your purpose for going to the United States, and demonstrate that you will return to your home country at the conclusion of your program.

**You must present the following items at the interview:**

- Form DS-2019
- Form DS-160 Online Non-immigrant Visa Electronic Application
- A passport valid for travel to the United States and with a validity date at least six months beyond your intended period of stay in the United States
- One (1) 2 inches x 2 inches (or 5cm x 5cm) photograph

***Please make sure that the spelling of your name is the same on all of these documents.***

You may also be asked to provide the following:

- Supplemental Non-immigrant Visa Application, Form DS-157
- Medical history (i.e. Certification of Good Health, proof of vaccinations, chest x-ray)
- University acceptance letter, including letters awarding scholarships or financial aid (if applicable)
- Fulbright Terms of Appointment

**Here are some helpful links to more information about obtaining visas and entering the United States:**

- The U.S. Department of State: <http://j1visa.state.gov>
- Traveler Information from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP): <http://www.cbp.gov/travel>



## PRE-ACADEMIC AND GATEWAY PROGRAMS

To better prepare you for your time in the U.S., ECA may sponsor a pre-academic program that takes place before your academic program begins. These programs focus on field-of-study training, intensive English, and/or academic and cultural skills.

If you are placed in a pre-academic program, AMIDEAST expects that you will attend. **Dependents may not accompany you to a pre-academic program.**

You must provide your physical address to your AMIDEAST advisor when you arrive at your pre-academic program in the U.S.

## PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE TO THE U.S.

Before you leave your country for the United States, you should plan to do the following things:

- Research **housing** options in the U.S., both short and long term.
- Obtain or update your **passport** and the passports of your dependents that will accompany you. Your passport must be valid for at least six months after the end date printed on your DS-2019 form.
- If you plan to bring any **dependents**, you must obtain a DS-2019 form for each accompanying dependent from the AMIDEAST office or U.S. Embassy.
- Apply for the **J-1 entry visa** and the J-2 dependent visa(s) if your spouse and/or children will accompany you.
- Review **medical coverage information** and purchase additional insurance/coverage for yourself or any accompanying dependents. Before you leave, take care of routine medical check-ups and purchase extra medications to sustain you while in the U.S.

## TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS TO THE U.S.

*Even if you received your J-1 visa well in advance, you are only eligible to arrive in the United States within 30 days of the program start date listed on your DS-2019.*

You will receive your airline ticket and travel funds to the United States from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, the binational Fulbright Commission, or from the AMIDEAST field office in your country. If indicated in your Terms of Appointment, you may also receive a Transit Allowance.

## TRAVEL TIPS

The United States welcomes international students and wants you to have a positive and productive experience. In recent years, more security procedures have been put in place at all U.S. airports. All travelers must remove their shoes during the security-check process, and individuals are randomly selected for more detailed inspections. To allow sufficient time for security procedures, please plan to arrive at the airport 3 hours prior to departure.

You should receive an “**Arrival Information**” email from AMIDEAST before you leave your home country. This email will provide you with the following information:

- University contacts and telephone numbers (international advisor and academic advisor);
- If you have requested temporary housing, the name, address, and telephone number of the hotel at which you will be staying (or other temporary housing instructions);
- Directions on how to reach your temporary housing location;
- Information on who will meet you at the airport if you are to be met.

Since unforeseen problems can arise when traveling, please travel with an adequate supply of U.S. dollars and your AMIDEAST advisor's contact information, in case of an emergency.

## Special Meals

If you have any special dietary restrictions, you should request a special meal at least three days prior to traveling by contacting your travel agent or the airline directly. Standard special request meals include vegetarian, Halal, and diabetic meals.

## PACKING TIPS

Below are a few logistical guidelines to assist you as you prepare to pack:

1. Always check your airline's regulations regarding baggage costs and what not to carry in your luggage.
2. **Keep all important papers and documents (passport, DS-2019 form, original transcripts, travelers checks, medical documents, medications, etc.), as well as arrival information, with you in your carry-on bag. Place copies of these documents inside your checked luggage. Leave another copy with a friend or relative in your home country.**
3. Allow enough time before flights for random security searches. All travelers are subject to these searches. Both checked and carry-on luggage may be opened and checked.
4. It is a good idea to include a change of clothes and some toiletry items (toothbrush, brush, etc.) and any medication you may need in your carry-on bag in case your baggage is lost or your flight is unexpectedly delayed.
5. Flammable products and sharp objects are not permitted in carry-on luggage. Most of these objects can be carried in checked luggage, but you should check with your airline before you pack them.

6. Be sure to keep your carry-on bag and baggage with you at all times, except for when the luggage has been checked with the airline. Do not leave your belongings unattended.

Be sure to visit the website of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) for the most recent updates and alerts:

<http://www.tsa.gov/traveler-information>

## **WHAT TO BRING TO THE U.S.**

**Documents** (carry these items with you, **not** in your checked luggage):

- Your passport, DS-2019 form, and all other immigration documents
- Original diplomas and transcripts you received from all post-secondary academic institutions
- Medical and dental records for you and dependents, including certificates of vaccinations and immunizations
- Information about current medical treatments or conditions, including prescriptions for eyeglasses and medications (both the generic and brand names)
- Your U.S. Social Security Number if you were issued one during a previous visit
- An official document stating the date of your birth, if it is not shown on your passport
- Medical records and academic records of any dependents who will be enrolling in school in the U.S.
- Birth certificates or other proof of age for children who will be entering school for the first time
- Copies of your marriage certificate

### **Finances:**

- We recommend you bring \$1000 – \$1500 in travelers checks, as well as a limited amount of U.S. currency
- Credit cards (if you possess any)

**Clothing:**

- Research the climate of the area in which you will be studying so you know what types of clothes to bring.

**Other:**

- Tools and supplies that are appropriate to your field of study (although you can usually buy these items in the United States, they may be expensive)
- Photographs, maps of your country, or items that can be used in informal talks that you may be invited to give
- Small souvenirs, especially craft items from your country, to present as gifts to colleagues, friends, and hosts

**TEMPORARY HOUSING**

**Only if you request** temporary housing, will AMIDEAST-Washington, D.C. make a hotel reservation on your behalf so that you will have a place to stay when you first arrive at your campus. You should alert AMIDEAST and suggest suitable accommodations as soon as possible.

Even though AMIDEAST may hold your reservation with a credit card, you will be responsible for paying for the room charge at check-in. Please do not allow the hotel to charge your room to the AMIDEAST credit card. You will be responsible for paying for any phone calls made from the hotel room. Remember that the AMIDEAST toll-free phone number 1-800-368-5720.

Note: If your travel plans change while you are in transit, you will be responsible for informing the hotel. Many hotels require that a reservation be canceled 24 hours in advance. If, for any reason, you do not cancel your reservation by the approved time and AMIDEAST is charged for your space, you will be responsible for payment of the one-night penalty charge, and the money will be deducted from a future maintenance payment.

## *When You Arrive in the United States*

### THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS

All nonimmigrant visa holders must participate in a biometric system that tracks entry to and exit from the United States. It begins when you apply for your visa and consular officials collect digital fingerprints, a digital photograph, and biometric data from you. Upon arrival in the United States, a digital finger-scanner will capture your fingerprints, and your photograph will be taken. This process ensures that your data match the identity that is on record at the Department of State.

At your port of entry in the U.S., proceed to the terminal area for arriving passengers. You will be asked to present your passport, the DS-2019 form, the Customs Declaration Form, and any other documents that prove your status in the United States. You will be asked to state your reason for wishing to enter the U.S. and information on your final destination if it differs from your port of entry. Be prepared to know the name and address of your academic institution. The United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer will stamp and scan your passport to generate an electronic arrival record. Your passport will be stamped with "J-1 D/S". This stamp indicates your status as a J-1 visa holder and your end date as "D/S" (duration of status), as long as your J-1 status is valid.

CBP will make the electronic arrival (I-94) number available at: [www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94). Please visit this website to print your electronic arrival record before applying for benefits such as a social security number. Your university might also require a hard copy of your electronic arrival record. For more information about the Form I-94 please visit the [factsheet](#).

You may also be asked to participate in a second interview, which would be held in private. It simply means that the immigration

officer wants more details on the purpose of your visit. Be truthful with your answers, but do not offer any unsolicited information.

## **ARRIVAL AT YOUR ACADEMIC INSTITUTION**

Your university's International Student Office (ISO) is a great resource for you. Please make frequent visits to your ISO, especially when you first arrive on campus. You should also meet with your faculty advisor or department liaison.

When you arrive at your academic institution, please prioritize the following immediate tasks:

1. Contact your AMIDEAST advisor in Washington, D.C. with the physical address of your residence. **If you do not report your address within 10 days of arrival, your I-1 status will be in jeopardy.**
2. Update your current address on the AMIDEAST grantee website: [https://apply.amideast.org/Address\\_update/](https://apply.amideast.org/Address_update/).
3. Check in with the International Student Office on your campus. inquire about any planned orientation programs, and any welcome activities for family members traveling with you.
4. Locate permanent housing.
5. Open a bank account with your first MMA check from AMIDEAST.
6. Update the university with your permanent address and phone number. Ask them to delete AMIDEAST's contact information and replace it with your personal contact information.
7. Complete and return all AMIDEAST arrival forms within 15 days of registering for classes.
8. Print your ASPE health insurance card following the instructions on AMIDEAST's Fulbright Grantee Resources web page: [http://www.amideast.org/sites/default/files/otherfiles/hq/fulbright/6\\_how\\_to\\_print\\_your\\_aspe\\_card.pdf](http://www.amideast.org/sites/default/files/otherfiles/hq/fulbright/6_how_to_print_your_aspe_card.pdf).
9. Identify a hospital in case of an emergency.

10. Apply for a Social Security Number or Individual Tax Payer Identification Number and send AMIDEAST a copy of your Social Security card as soon as available.
11. If you plan to purchase a vehicle, obtain a driver's license. Even if you have a driver's license from your home country, you must obtain one for the U.S. You will need to register the car, and purchase car insurance.
12. Look for cultural enrichment or volunteer opportunities on your campus or in the local community.

## **HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS**

Whether you will be making arrangements for yourself or for you and your family, it is wise to consider the housing options available to you as early as possible. *You are responsible for making your own housing arrangements for the academic year.* AMIDEAST cannot make housing arrangements for you. It will be your responsibility to research the options available at your host university and complete the steps to obtain a place to live. Most universities include housing information on their web pages, including on- and off-campus options, local rental laws, average rental costs, etc. Also, consult your university's housing office for up-to-date information.

<p>You should expect to spend at least half of your monthly maintenance allowance on housing rent.</p>
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If you decide to accept **on-campus housing**, you will be responsible for completing all required application forms. AMIDEAST can, at your written request, advance payment to the university, for your on-campus housing deposit/fees. If this arrangement is made, the advance will be deducted from your maintenance allowance. Please ask your AMIDEAST advisor for assistance if you find yourself in this situation.



If you will live off campus, please review the *Guide to Finding Housing* and the *Off-Campus Housing* information available on the AMIDEAST [Grantee Resources](#) web page.

Please note that on-campus housing contracts and off-campus rental leases are legally binding, so pay special attention to deadlines, lease breakage penalties, and length of commitment to your housing lease. Lastly, AMIDEAST recommends students purchase **renter's insurance**. More information is available in the online guides.

## **AUTOMOBILES**

AMIDEAST strongly discourages grantees from owning automobiles unless one is absolutely necessary, such as when public transportation isn't available or adequate. An automobile is expensive to maintain and ownership of a car carries with it certain liabilities and responsibilities. If you however must have access to a car, you will need copies of the following documents:

- An international driver's license if you plan to apply for a driver's license in the U.S.
- Proof of your safe driving record in your home country for the past three years if you plan to purchase automobile insurance in the U.S.

If you are considering owning an automobile while in the U.S., please read the automobile information on AMIDEAST's Grantee Resources web page.

## **BANKING AND FINANCE**

Banks are the safest place to keep your money. You will need to open a bank account as soon as possible when you arrive in the U.S. Once your bank account is open, you will need to complete the AMIDEAST Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) form. Your Fulbright allowances will then be deposited directly into your bank account. Your International Student Office should be able to

provide information on banking in your area. AMIDEAST will not issue a check to you beyond the one you receive upon arrival to the U.S. To receive subsequent payments, you must open a bank account and submit the required form to AMIDEAST.

Although credit cards prove to be very useful, beware that debt can accumulate with high interest rates. We recommend that you do not make any purchases on a credit card that you cannot readily pay off.

### **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER or INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER**

Every person who receives income in the U.S. is identified by either a Social Security Number (SSN) or an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). For tax purposes, you are required to obtain an SSN or an ITIN after arriving to your host institution. **AMIDEAST must be informed of the SSN or ITIN within 60 days of the beginning of the academic program.**

#### **Applying for a Social Security Number (SSN)**

As a Fulbright grantee, you are eligible to apply for a Social Security Number. You will need this number in order to:

- file federal and state taxes;
- engage in any employment (without prior written authorization from AMIDEAST);
- Apply for a driver's license.

Remember your SEVIS record must be “validated” **at least ten days** before you can apply for a Social Security number. It may take several weeks for a card to be issued. Send a copy of the card to AMIDEAST, and keep the card in a safe place. Never email your Social Security Number to AMIDEAST (or any other entity or person) because it may be compromised.

AMIDEAST serves as your sponsoring agency. If the local Social Security office asks for a letter from your university or the U.S. Department of State, remind them that AMIDEAST serves as your

sponsoring agency and is responsible for issuing any employment authorization. If you encounter problems applying for the Social Security number, try to return on a different day and speak with a different employee or visit a different nearby Social Security Administration office. Please inform your AMIDEAST advisor if you are unable to secure an SSN. The application process for a Social Security Number is available on the Grantee Resources web page.

### **Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)**

If you are not able to obtain a Social Security Number, then you will need an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). The ITIN is a nine digit tax processing number issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The IRS issues ITINs to foreign nationals and others who have federal tax reporting or filing requirements and are not eligible to obtain a Social Security Number. To apply for an ITIN, you should complete Form W-7 and send the original signed form (**do not send a copy or a scan**) to AMIDEAST – Student Taxes. Form W-7 is available online at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

### **WAIVING UNIVERSITY HEALTH INSURANCE**

Your university will automatically enroll you in its own health insurance policy unless you “waive” this enrollment. With the exception of grantees from Egypt, you are required to waive any optional university health insurance upon arrival. When you “waive” enrollment, you specifically request not to be enrolled in the university’s insurance program.

Often optional health insurance coverage can be waived by presenting proof of coverage under another plan (in your case, the ASPE-Seven Corners policy) or simply by signing a document indicating that you do not want the university policy. **Sometimes a waiver will be good for an entire academic year; in other cases, you must waive coverage every time you register for a new**

**academic term. It is your responsibility to understand the university policy and deadlines.**

If you are at an institution where the university insurance cannot be waived, or if you are an Egyptian student with university coverage as part of your grant, then you must remember that the university policy is your “**primary insurance**” when completing any medical forms or seeking medical care or services.

Subsequently, the ASPE Seven Corners health coverage becomes your “**secondary insurance**”.

### **MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR YOUR FAMILY**

If you are eligible to bring your family to the United States, you must read and acknowledge the information on AMIDEAST’s [Grantee Resources](#) webpage carefully **before** you request dependent DS-2019 forms for your spouse or children. The cost of living for a family in the United States can be very expensive and **your Fulbright monthly maintenance allowance will not be adequate to cover your family’s expenses.**

## *During Your Study Period*

### GENERAL ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

During your stay in the United States, AMIDEAST will be ready to assist you whenever possible. You will be assigned to an advising team that will be your primary contact at AMIDEAST. **Please provide AMIDEAST with your local phone number, your personal email, and your university e-mail address.** Throughout the year, we will send you general instructions and announcements, typically via e-mail, to inform you of reporting requirements and any special opportunities available through the Fulbright Program. For information about academic and campus matters, consult your academic and international student advisors.

The following are examples of information that must be shared with your AMIDEAST advisor:

- Change of address within 10 days of moving;
- Any change in your contact details (email and phone number);
- Any important academic problems;
- Major changes in your personal status such as marriage, divorce, births, and deaths;
- Name change due to marriage, divorce, etc. within 10 days of making such a change;
- Health or legal problems;
- The arrival and departure of any dependents in the United States;
- Any international travel;
- Any domestic travel;
- Plans for departure from the United States.

## REPORTING TO AMIDEAST

AMIDEAST is responsible for creating, maintaining, and updating your record in the U.S. government Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and for maintaining compliance with SEVIS and J-1 exchange visitor regulations. **It is therefore imperative that you comply with the AMIDEAST reporting requirements outlined here.**

All the forms that AMIDEAST will ask you to complete can be found on our Grantee Resources webpage:

<http://www.amideast.org/fulbright/grantee-resources/required-forms>

***UPON ARRIVAL:*** *It is imperative that you report to AMIDEAST within ten days of your arrival in the United States and provide your local address. AMIDEAST can then validate your record in the SEVIS database. If you fail to report to AMIDEAST within ten days of your arrival, your SEVIS record is automatically marked as invalid.*

***WITHIN THE FIRST WEEKS:*** AMIDEAST will request several forms from you over the course of the first weeks of your academic program. These forms include:

- Academic Program Outline;
- Information Release Form;
- Electronic Funds Transfer Form (must be submitted with a voided check);
- Emergency Contact Information Form;
- W-8 Ben Tax Form – To be completed only by **Egyptians, Moroccans, and Tunisians**;
- Copy of your Social Security card or ITIN (as soon as available);

**Your documents can be sent via e-mail, fax, or U.S. mail. Keep copies for your records.**

**EVERY TERM:** Most universities rely on a term system that consists of semesters (Fall, Spring, Summer), or quarters (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer).

During your first term, you will be required to submit an Academic Program Outline which details a proposed course sequence for your graduate program.

For both **degree and non-degree seeking grantees**, beginning with your second term, AMIDEAST will ask you to complete a Progress Report at the start of each new semester or quarter. This form will give you and your academic advisor the opportunity to tell AMIDEAST what you will be doing during the coming semester and to give AMIDEAST an assessment of your progress. If AMIDEAST does not receive these documents by the date specified, we will be forced to hold your next month's allowance.

If you are a **degree-seeking grantee**, you must also request that a university-issued grade report be sent to AMIDEAST at the end of every term. Even when you reach the advanced stages of your program and only register for research credits, you are required to send AMIDEAST a grade report at the conclusion of each academic term. This grade report must be an official, cumulative transcript. It is your responsibility to pay any fees associated with this service.

**SUMMER PLANS:** In April of each year, AMIDEAST will request that you and your academic advisor complete a Summer Plans Form. This form will tell AMIDEAST what you plan to do during the summer and what allowances you are eligible to receive.

If you are in a degree program, you should enroll in a full-time summer load of courses that will contribute to the completion of your degree program. If there are no courses offered during the summer, you should work on your thesis or conduct research on-campus and confirm whether or not you need to register for thesis/research credits. If neither of these options is feasible, we

encourage you to create your own research work-plan for the summer, have it approved in writing by your academic advisor, and send it to AMIDEAST at the same time you return your Summer Plans Form.

If you are a non-degree student, you should continue with the research work-plan you have been following all year during the summer.

**If you are not engaged in academic work (courses and/or research) during the summer, you will not be eligible for a summer book allowance.**

If you travel outside the United States for any reason, please be aware that if you are gone for more than twenty-nine (29) consecutive days (including your days of departure and return), **you will not receive maintenance for the month or months during which you are outside the United States. Students who come from countries with a Commission (Egypt, Jordan, and Morocco) may be subject to different travel deduction rules. Check with your AMIDEAST advisor and your Terms of Appointment.**

**ALWAYS:** You must keep your AMIDEAST advisor informed of your current residence, mailing address, telephone number, and e-mail address at all times. The residence address you provide must be the actual physical location where you reside. In no case may the address of your host institution be used as your residence address. *If any of your addresses change, you must notify AMIDEAST within ten days of the change.*



**PRIOR APPROVAL:** You must obtain *advance authorization* from AMIDEAST for the following activities:

- On-campus Employment;
- Academic Training;
- Transferring to a different academic institution;
- Changing degree objective or field of study;
- Travel outside of the United States;
- Online course enrollment, which is only approved in rare circumstances;
- Reduced course load (less than full-time).

Employment and Academic Training policies are discussed later in this chapter. Procedures for travel outside of the United States are discussed in the subsequent section Short Term Travel Outside the United States.

## **MONTHLY AND SPECIAL ALLOWANCES**

***Monthly Maintenance Allowance (MMA):*** You will receive a monthly allowance based on your location. This allowance will be deposited into your bank account automatically once you submit your Electronic Funds Transfer Form. The monthly allowance will be deposited in advance of the first of the month for which it is intended. **For instance, you will receive your allowance for October at the end of September.**

***Book Allowance:*** Your Fulbright grant provides funds for books as long as you are engaged in academic work in the United States. Installments will be paid to you in September as a Fall Book Allowance and in January as a Spring Book Allowance. A Summer Book Allowance will be made available in June if you are enrolled in summer classes. Please note that students on the quarter system will also receive one book allowance in September and one in January and an optional Summer Book Allowance.

***Equipment Allowance:*** As a Fulbright grantee, you are eligible for \$500 towards required equipment, such as a computer. This allowance is issued once during your grant and will be automatically deposited with your monthly allowance at the start of your program.

***Conference Allowance:*** As a Fulbright grantee, you are eligible for a reimbursement or advance of up to \$500 towards a professional conference that is related to your area of focus and *takes place in the United States*. This allowance requires receipts or any advanced funds must be returned.

***Thesis Allowance:*** Eligible grantees may request a \$300 thesis allowance in their last semester to use toward printing their final thesis. Please check your grant agreement to see if you are eligible. This allowance is issued once during your grant and requires receipts or any advance funds must be returned.

## **REQUESTING ADVANCES**

An advance is similar to a loan because AMIDEAST will consider the money outstanding on your account until you repay it. If you request an advance of your monthly maintenance allowance for a special circumstance, you will need to determine with your AMIDEAST advisor a deduction schedule for paying back the advance using your next monthly allowance(s). If your request is approved, you will receive payment within two weeks.

## **ACADEMIC REGULATIONS**

You are required to comply with the regulations of your academic institution. These regulations include such matters as class attendance, course assignments, absence from campus, and withdrawal from courses for which you are registered.

## Full-Time Enrollment

If you are enrolled in a degree program, you must maintain full-time enrollment as defined by your host institution and in order to graduate by your grant end date. You must maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or above, unless your institution has set a higher standard. Also, you cannot carry more than one “Incomplete” grade per term. If you are a non-degree student, your academic advisor must be able to attest that you are engaged in work that is equivalent to full-time course work.

## Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

While studying in the United States, plagiarism, cheating, falsifying information, and other forms of academic dishonesty are strictly prohibited and can lead to failure in a class or expulsion from the university. You should carefully consult the academic honesty policy of your university before beginning your program.

Here are some overarching rules to remember:

- **When writing or creating a piece of work, proper use of citation is critical. Failure to properly cite work that is not your own can lead to charges of plagiarism.**
- **Plagiarism is the unaccredited use (both intentional and unintentional) of someone else’s words or ideas.**
- Some cultures may not insist on documenting sources of words, ideas, images, sounds, etc., however in the U.S. educational system it is required.
- A charge of plagiarism can have severe consequences, including expulsion from a university or loss of a job, as well as loss of credibility and professional standing.

## **Online Courses**

When planning your course schedule, it is important to note that enrollment in online courses is not authorized. Should an online course be a requirement for your degree completion, contact your AMIDEAST advisor to seek special approval prior to enrolling.

## **Study in a Third Country**

Study trips or internships in 3<sup>rd</sup> countries (not in the U.S.) will not be supported by your grant award. The purpose of your grant is to conduct your studies and experience the culture in the U.S. Often, required international trips or internships can be replaced with domestic alternatives and these options should be discussed with your academic and AMIDEAST advisors.

## **RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR STUDENT ACCOUNT**

AMIDEAST will pay required tuition and mandatory fees directly to your academic institution unless the institution provides tuition assistance (such as a tuition scholarship or waiver). AMIDEAST will not be held responsible for other fees or tuition not required for your academic program. Any optional charges incurred, such as library fines, parking violations, and housing payments, will be your responsibility.

## **SHORT-TERM TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES**

Before you travel outside of the U.S. at any time during your program, you must:

- Notify AMIDEAST of your travel plans;
- Send AMIDEAST a copy of your travel itinerary;
- Send your DS-2019 by traceable mail (e.g. UPS, FedEx) at least two weeks in advance to AMIDEAST to get required travel validation signature;

- Remember that your monthly allowance may be affected by the length of time spent outside the United States.

Please remember that as a J-1 Exchange Visitor, you must have these documents to re-enter the United States:

- A valid passport
- A valid DS-2019 form
- A valid J-1 visa

## **Passport**

If your passport or other travel documents expire before you return to the U.S., you must contact your Embassy or nearest Consulate before you depart from the United States to renew these documents. It is your responsibility to ensure that your passport remains valid during the period of your Fulbright grant.

## **DS-2019**

Your DS-2019 is your certificate of eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) immigration status. If you wish to leave the United States, you must send it to your AMIDEAST advisor immediately to sign the Travel Validation section of your DS-2019 before you leave the U.S. A travel validation signature is valid for one year. Only an authorized AMIDEAST representative may sign your DS-2019. Allow up to two weeks for the return of your signed DS-2019.

If your DS-2019 form will expire before you plan to return to the United States, you must obtain a new DS-2019 from AMIDEAST headquarters before you leave the United States. Take your new DS-2019 with you when you depart the United States. Since J-1 visa expiration dates typically correspond with DS-2019 expiration dates, you will likely have to use your new DS-2019 to obtain a new visa to re-enter the United States. See the previous section on “The Visa Process” for details on applying for a visa.

## J-1 Visa

Your J-1 visa indicates the United States government's permission for you to apply to enter the country. If the J-1 visa in your passport will expire by the time you wish to return to the United States, you must apply for a new J-1 visa at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy. While you are allowed to apply for a new visa from any U.S. Consulate or Embassy, we strongly recommend that you apply in your home country.

If your J-1 visa is no longer valid, or if it will expire while you are out of the U.S., you must *immediately* make an appointment with the U.S. Consulate to apply for a new J-1 visa upon arrival at your destination. After you obtain your new J-1 visa, you may return to the United States.

When you reenter the United States, an immigration officer will process the DS-2019 and extend your permission to stay in the United States.

This procedure may also apply to your J-2 dependents if they travel outside the United States during the period of your Fulbright grant.

## STUDENT EMPLOYMENT (On-Campus)

As a J-1 Exchange Visitor, you are legally eligible to work only if your program

**A note of caution:**

As a J-1 visa holder, you are eligible for a variety of work opportunities in the United States, but employment without proper authorization is a serious violation of your status. Before you start any kind of employment, you must first consult AMIDEAST and obtain the required written authorization *in advance*.

sponsor authorizes you to do so in advance. Please discuss your interest in paid employment with your AMIDEAST Advisor before accepting any offers.

Student employment must be on-campus and typically comes in the form of university teaching, research, and graduate assistantships. Any request to engage in on-campus employment must be related to your field of study, and requires AMIDEAST's prior authorization. Under no circumstances will employment of more than twenty (20) hours per week be considered during the academic year.

If employment is approved, your monthly maintenance payments may be reduced by any amount you earn over \$500 per month after taxes. For example, if you earn \$700 a month, \$200 will be deducted from your monthly maintenance allowance (\$700 - \$500 = \$200).

If you have been offered a university teaching or research assistantship, you must submit your request for work authorization at least three weeks before the start date of your proposed job. AMIDEAST will inform you in writing of the authorization decision and any terms and conditions.

### **ACADEMIC TRAINING (Off-campus, Short-term)**

As a U.S. Department of State sponsored student in J-1 status, you may be eligible for Academic Training (AT). Academic Training, such as an internship, is training authorized for a specific period of time to gain practical experience, off campus. An AT opportunity must complement a student's academic activities and supplement the stated program objectives.

Prior approval is required before starting any AT opportunity. The U.S. Department of State reserves the right to deny any requests that involved politicization of scholarly inquiry and/or do not follow the primary program objectives.

## During the Program

Students may participate in part-time AT while taking classes or full-time academic training in the summer/winter break. The training program you select must be directly related to your field of study and must be appropriate for someone with your level of education. The total number of months in academic training cannot exceed the prescribed time limitations listed below.

Eligibility and Conditions:

- The maximum length of participation in training activities is 18 months.
- You may not participate in Academic Training during your academic program if such participation will delay the completion of your academic program requirements.
- Your AT can not exceed the length of time spent in your academic program.

## Post-Program

You *may* also be eligible for Academic Training (AT) upon completion of your academic program. Please be advised that *authorization for Academic Training is not guaranteed, but rather, is contingent upon approval from the U.S. Department of State and your home country Commission or post.* Each request for AT will be carefully examined to ensure that the training will be beneficial to the overall program objectives.

Academic Training requests must be submitted to your AMIDEAST advisor **at least six weeks** before the start of the training opportunity. Remember, Academic Training will not be granted automatically.

Eligibility and Conditions:

- Academic training conducted after completion of the academic program **cannot** exceed 12 months.



- Total Academic Training (i.e., during + after your academic program) **cannot** exceed the length of your academic program up to a maximum of 18 months.
- Your primary purpose in the United States must be for study and not Academic Training.
- You must be in good academic standing at the university named on your DS-2019 form;
- The proposed AT must be directly related to your major field of study.
- The training must be authorized before the completion of your academic program.
- The training period must begin within 30 days of program completion.
- You will not receive financial support. Your academic training after degree completion must involve paid employment, or, you must demonstrate proof of financial support equivalent to the monthly maintenance rate (after taxes) of the city where the training will occur.
- You must maintain accident and sickness coverage for all J-2 dependents throughout the Academic Training period. If your employer provides health insurance to you and your dependents, but the policy does not fulfill J-1 visa requirements, you must purchase supplemental coverage for your dependents.

*Please be advised that authorization for Academic Training requires approval from the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Embassy in your home country or your binational Commission prior to the start of the training. Further, the U.S. Department of State reserves the right to deny any requests that involve politicization of scholarly inquiry and/or do not follow the primary program objectives.*

## **How to apply for work authorization for on-campus employment or Academic Training:**

Please submit to AMIDEAST:

- An offer of employment with pertinent details;
- A completed advisor approval form;
- Your own letter of request;
- Please refer to the Employment section on the Fulbright Grantee Resources webpage for information on how to apply for approval. Remember: Federal, state, and local taxes may apply to any earnings received through employment.

## **CHANGING FIELD OF STUDY**

You may not change your field of study or degree program without prior consultation with, and the approval of your academic advisor, your Fulbright Commission (if applicable), and the United States Department of State. A request for change must be submitted in writing to AMIDEAST at least one month prior to the academic term in which you intend to begin studying the new field. Strong justification for the change, including the following items, must accompany your request:

- A photocopy of the university's letter offering you admission to the new academic program;
- A photocopy of the university's letter offering you tuition assistance (if applicable);
- A letter from you requesting permission to change fields of study and justifying your request;
- A letter from your academic advisor supporting your request;
- If you have obligations to an institution in your home country, a confirmation from that institution that you may change your field of study.

## **TRANSFERRING TO A DIFFERENT INSTITUTION**

University transfers are made only in rare instances because there is inevitably some loss in time and academic benefit. However, if you find that your placement is inappropriate after you begin your program, you are expected to discuss the matter first with your academic and international student advisors and then contact your AMIDEAST advisor. You should not proceed any further without approval from AMIDEAST. Information about transferring to a different institution is outlined on the Grantee Resources webpage.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Should you find it necessary to interrupt your studies in the U.S. and return to your home country for personal reasons, you may petition your AMIDEAST Advisor for a leave of absence (and temporary suspension of your Fulbright funding) for a specific period of time, generally limited to one academic term.

Authorization for a leave of absence would require approval from your university, the U.S. Department of State and, in some cases, the U.S. Embassy in your home country or your binational Commission. Grantees are not eligible to receive their MMA or any other allowances while on a Leave of Absence.

## CULTURAL ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- **Institute of International Education (IIE):** On behalf of the United States Department of State, IIE hosts several four-day Enrichment Seminars every year, during the spring semester, for first-year Fulbright students. Each seminar brings together 150 Fulbrighters in an open and interactive forum to discuss and learn more about a selected topic. Travel and other costs associated with your attendance are covered by your sponsor, the United States Department of State. Between November and February, you will receive information about the upcoming seminar and an invitation to apply. These seminars offer a wonderful opportunity for students to meet other Fulbrighters from all over the world who are studying at universities throughout the United States.
- **One To World:** Through One To World programs, Fulbright grantees in the New York Metro area have the opportunity to meet New Yorkers, explore American institutions “behind the scenes,” visit local neighborhoods, and learn about facets of U.S. culture and society they might not otherwise encounter. Please visit [www.one-to-world.org](http://www.one-to-world.org) for more information.

- **Fulbright Association:** The Fulbright Association has a national network of chapters run by alumni volunteers to offer current Fulbrighters educational and cultural program opportunities to enrich their experience. Please visit [www.fulbright.org](http://www.fulbright.org) to see if there is a chapter near you.
- **International Education Week:** Each November, the U.S. Department of Education promotes International Education Week in an effort to recognize the value of gaining a broad understanding of the cultures, languages, and governments of other nations. As a Fulbrighter, you are encouraged to participate in such activities on campus. For more information, contact your international student advisor or visit: <http://iew.state.gov>.
- **Exchanges Connect:** This international online community managed by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs connects potential current and former educational and cultural exchange program participants to discuss application processes, programs, and living abroad. For more information, visit: <http://connect.state.gov>.
- **International Exchange Alumni:** This is a dynamic and interactive networking website for all past and current participants of U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs. Here, you can build on your exchange experience and explore all the resources available to you as a member of the site. For more information, visit: <https://alumni.state.gov>.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Volunteerism lies at the very heart of American culture. As a Fulbrighter you are an ambassador for your country - we encourage you to get involved in your new U.S. home! There are many opportunities that you will have to volunteer and get involved in

your community as part of your experience in the U.S. Listed here are some examples of opportunities for service:

**Days of Service:** Look for national, state or local holidays or days of remembrance in your community on which university offices will plan events for service and involvement. These could include: Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Earth Day, and Veterans Day for example.

Inquire with your university student center about **community volunteer groups** to join; there will be plenty to choose from.

**International Education Week:** Get involved during this week in November by sharing your culture with the community! Check for opportunities on campus as well as perhaps sharing your culture with a local school or youth group.

## **FACEBOOK, BLOGS & OTHER INTERNET-BASED MEDIA**

**Social media** is a great way to connect and leverage opportunities with the Fulbright network. Fulbrighters today have more opportunity than ever to share their experiences with friends, family, and the Internet community through social media. This in turn brings positive attention to the Fulbright Program and its impact not only on the Fulbrighter but the host community. Here are some great ways you can stay connected and involved with Fulbright program as a grantee and alum:

**Facebook page:** \*We want to hear from you on Facebook!\* The *Fulbright Program for the Middle East and North Africa* Facebook page is a great way to showcase your latest Fulbright story. We encourage you to share your experiences, photos, and stories. The Facebook page is also a handy networking tool and Fulbright news outlet to always stay connected with current Fulbrighters and alumni. And check back frequently to get the latest updates and announcements posted about the program. The Facebook

page can be found at:

<https://www.facebook.com/FulbrightProgramfortheMiddleEastandNorthAfrica>

**Fulbright Blog:** AMIDEAST/Washington, D.C. publishes a Fulbright Blog for current grantees and alumni called the *Fulbright Program for the Middle East and North Africa*. Please keep in touch often so we can highlight your latest and greatest achievements. The Fulbright Program in the Middle East and North Africa blog can be found at <http://fulbrightmena.blogspot.com>

Should you decide to share your Fulbright experiences publicly via any web-based media (and we hope you will), there are a few points that you should keep in mind:

1. Avoid confusion by explicitly acknowledging that your website is not an official Department of State site, and the views and information presented are your own and do not represent the Fulbright Program or the Department of State.
2. While participants in all U.S. State Department-sponsored academic exchange scholarships have full academic and artistic freedom to write, publish, and create, they are also expected to maintain a standard of conduct that is in keeping with the spirit and intent of the Fulbright Program – to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.
3. Any Fulbright grantee who posts inappropriate or offensive material on the Internet in relation to the Fulbright program may be subject to revocation or termination of their grant. Be aware that what is deemed culturally acceptable in the United States (or, more specifically, on the internet in the United States) may not be received well overseas. Describing the challenges of living in a foreign country is fine, but please refrain from using disparaging language to describe your host country or the people you live and work with.

## Concluding Your Fulbright Program

### END OF YOUR PROGRAM

Approximately two months before you are expected to finish your degree or research project, AMIDEAST will contact you about your travel plans to return home. You will be required to complete a few forms, including a survey, before your flight arrangements will be made. Official academic transcripts must be submitted to AMIDEAST at the conclusion of your Fulbright Program.

### DEPARTURE INFORMATION

Several months before your Fulbright Program Maximum Funding Date (MFD), AMIDEAST will send you information concerning departure procedures. Your Fulbright funding will end on the day you complete your academic program or upon your Maximum Funding Date, whichever date comes first.

***Note:** The duration of your grant benefits are separate from the duration of your J-1 exchange visitor status. Your J-1 status and DS-2019 form will expire on the day you complete your study program or the Program End Date in your SEVIS record, **whichever date comes first.***

You have a thirty (30) day grace period following the Fulbright Program end date. Although you will not receive any Fulbright funding during this period, you may use the time, if needed, to complete your departure arrangements. *You may not engage in academic work during the grace period.*

*You will be responsible for your own expenses from the end of your grant period until your departure from the United States.*



## **TRANSFER OF DS-2019 SPONSORSHIP FROM THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAM TO YOUR UNIVERSITY**

A DS-2019 transfer is an exceptional authorization to release Sponsorship of a Fulbright grantee's DS-2019 and J-1 immigration status to a university. All Fulbright status, privileges, and funding are terminated upon the date of the transfer of sponsorship. To request a transfer of sponsorship, you must arrange your own financial support and provide documentation of your financial resources to your university, AMIDEAST, the U.S. Department of State, and/or your binational Commission.

A DS-2019 transfer may be requested in order to complete the original academic program for which you were given your Fulbright grant or to begin a second, higher degree program.

- As a Fulbright grantee, you must fulfill a two-year home residency requirement at the conclusion of your academic program. By transferring sponsorship, you are only delaying fulfillment of that requirement until the end of your studies.
- To start the DS-2019 transfer process, you should contact the international student office at the university you will be attending. If the university is willing to provide you with a DS-2019, the university will ask you to indicate the source of your proposed funding (from your home government, university financial assistance, or your personal resources). The university will then request that AMIDEAST enter a release date into your SEVIS record. Once your request to transfer sponsorship is approved by the U.S. Department of State and/or your binational Commission, AMIDEAST will enter a release date.

**To request a transfer of sponsorship**, you must submit several documents. Please refer to the [Grantee Resources](#) webpage for detailed information.

**Notes:**

- A transfer of sponsorship may only be requested if university sponsorship begins before your Fulbright grant expires. Your Fulbright grant will end on the day immediately after you complete your academic degree program, or on your Maximum Funding Date (MFD), *whichever date comes first*.
- A transfer of sponsorship cannot be completed for a grantee who wishes to pursue a second master's degree.
- If your university issues only I-20 Forms for F-1 visas, you will need to return home and apply for the F-1 visa at the U.S. Consulate in your home country.
- As a Fulbright grantee, you must fulfill a two-year home residency requirement at the conclusion of your academic program. Whether transferring J-1 sponsorship or re-entering the United States on a new F-1 visa, you are only delaying fulfillment of that requirement until the end of your studies.

## RETURN TRAVEL

Please refer to your Terms of Appointment to determine if you are eligible for return travel that is paid by the U.S. Department of State or your binational Fulbright Commission. During the summer months, international travel is particularly heavy, so it is important to make departure arrangements early.

\*Grantees from Morocco should contact their binational Fulbright Commission to make return travel arrangements.

Grantees from Egypt should consult their AMIDEAST Advisor for return travel guidelines.\*

All other eligible grantees should follow the guidelines below. Contact your AMIDEAST advisor if you have any further questions.

- The ticket may **only** be purchased by AMIDEAST.
- In order to comply with the Fly America Act, AMIDEAST must book your ticket with a U.S. airline directly to your port of arrival in your home country. If there is no U.S. carrier service at your port of arrival, you must fly with a U.S. airline from the United States to the furthest point available on the route.
- A one-way itinerary will be forwarded to you for approval. Once you approve the itinerary we will notify our travel agent to issue your ticket electronically. Any changes you wish to make to the ticket are subject to review by AMIDEAST to ensure compliance with J-1 visa regulations. Please note that any costs associated with changes to your ticket after it is issued will be your responsibility.
- The ticket may not include scheduled, extended layovers in a transit country. Only regular, short layovers necessary to change flights are permitted.
- The ticket will be the least expensive ticket available. Although we will do everything possible to accommodate

your requests in terms of dates, routing, carriers, and stopovers, the price of the ticket takes priority.

- When your Fulbright sponsorship ends, you are required to leave the country within 30 days. However, if you are transferring sponsorship, that limitation no longer applies and you are able to get a return ticket beyond the 30 days after your *Fulbright* sponsorship ends. You will be responsible for maintaining the validity of that ticket by changing the travel date and paying for any change fees.
- The ticket will be refundable only to AMIDEAST.
- You may not purchase a ticket or make a reservation and expect reimbursement.

### **Transit Visas**

Many European countries now require transit visas even for airline passengers who are not leaving the airport. Once you have been notified of your itinerary, you should contact the embassy of each country through which you will be traveling to determine if you need a visa. You are responsible for payment of any fees required to obtain such visas.

### **TWO-YEAR HOME COUNTRY PHYSICAL PRESENCE REQUIREMENT**

As a Fulbright grantee, you are participating in an exchange program that holds as its mission the premise that you will return home to share your experiences. To fulfill this mission, the Fulbright Program requires grantees to return to their home countries when their authorized academic activities are completed. Under U.S. law, upon expiration of your Exchange Visitor (J-1) immigration status, you are required to reside in your home country for an aggregated two years before you apply for U.S. immigration, U.S. permanent residency, or a U.S. nonimmigrant work visa. Grantees can satisfy the two-year residency requirement by returning and residing in their home country, for a total accumulation of two years. The two year home

residency rule does not prohibit you from applying for a tourist, student, or other exchange visitor visas.

Please be advised that any grantee who applies to waive the two-year home residency requirement will automatically become ineligible for post-program Academic Training, regardless of the outcome of the waiver application.

## **BECOMING A FULBRIGHT ALUMNUS/ALUMNA**

Close to the completion of your academic program, you will receive departure information from AMIDEAST in Washington, D.C. Please remember to complete your program evaluation and alumni information form, and send us your final official transcript before you leave the United States. Once you have finished your academic program, submitted these forms, and returned to your home country, you will have officially become a Fulbright alumnus/alumna!

Here are some great ways you can stay connected and involved with the Fulbright program as an alum:

- **Your Contact Information:** Please keep AMIDEAST up-to-date on any changes in your contact information by visiting the alumni website: [www.amideast.org/fulbright/alumni-information/alumni-information](http://www.amideast.org/fulbright/alumni-information/alumni-information)
- **Alumni Grants:** This grant provides qualifying alumni with up to \$2,500 of funding to attend a professional conference or seminar, complete a short-term training program, conduct a collaborative research project, or participate in a professional visit with colleagues in their field. **Please note: Alumni must complete their two-year residency requirement before they are eligible for this grant.** Please refer to the AMIDEAST website for more detailed information: [www.amideast.org/fulbright/alumni-information/alumni-development-grants](http://www.amideast.org/fulbright/alumni-information/alumni-development-grants)

- **Alumni Associations:** Please be in touch with the AMIDEAST office, binational Commission, or U.S. Embassy in your home country to find out about Fulbright Alumni activities in your home country.
- **Social Media:** Be sure to stay in touch! We encourage you to share your updates and accomplishments via the *Fulbright Program for the Middle East and North Africa* LinkedIn group, Facebook page and blog. We look forward to hearing from you!
- **U.S. Department of State Alumni Website:** Stay connected with your exchange experience and explore the various opportunities available to you by joining International Exchange Alumni. Visit <https://alumni.state.gov/>



Please keep in touch with AMIDEAST/Washington, D.C. and your local AMIDEAST office, binational Fulbright Commission, and U.S. Embassy.

We are always interested in hearing your news!