

## Guidelines to Obtaining a Letter of Invitation from a U.S. University/Institution:

All prospective applicants for Fulbright Advanced Research and Lecturing Awards and the Professional Scholar Awards need to identify a U.S. academic or professional host institution and mentor prior to applying for an award. A letter of host affiliation is a required document for the Fulbright Visiting Scholar awards application (for both Advance Research & Lecturing and Professional Scholar Awards).

The United States-Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission's Educational Advising service can assist applicants to research and identify potential U.S. universities/institutions and mentors. Please visit our website [www.fulbrightsrilanka.org](http://www.fulbrightsrilanka.org) (**the website is supported only on Microsoft Edge and Mozilla Firefox platforms**) for information about our advising services and programs. Since researching institutions and communicating with potential faculty will require time, it is recommended that you allocate about 4-6 months for this to be able to find the institution that will best fit your proposed Fulbright program objectives.

Once you have identified a host institution, write to a relevant faculty member, staff or administrator at the institution, indicating that you are applying for a Fulbright Visiting Scholar Award and that you are exploring possibilities of finding a host institution and a mentor to work with during your Fulbright tenure (Academic year 2024-2025). A copy of your curriculum vitae and a description of the proposed Fulbright program and activities you wish to pursue should also be attached, including why this particular institution, program or faculty mentor will best fit your Fulbright program objectives. If the potential collaborative mentor agrees that there is a match between what you wish to undertake, his/her work, and the host institution's ability to support this work, you may request a letter of invitation from your contact.

Below is a *Memorandum to Institutional Hosts for the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program* prepared by the Institute of International Education (IIE), our cooperating partner organization that provides program administration support for the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program. You can share the document below with your prospective U.S. host institution contact so he/she understands the role and responsibilities of the host mentor/institution and also the terms of the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program.

There is no specific format for the letters of invitation from a host institution contact. The letter should be on an official letterhead (emails are not acceptable) and should include the items on the checklist below prepared by IIE titled *Key Components of the U.S. Host Institution Letter of Invitation*. In addition, it should also include the country-specific requirements for Sri Lanka.

- The activities for which you are being invited for must be identified (i.e., research activities, special lecturing, etc.) with what % of time will be devoted for each type of activity if both Lecturing and Research are included in the proposal and confirmation that the activities can be conducted and will be supported during your Fulbright program period, including the availability of your potential mentor/collaborator with whom you plan to work.
- The period of time for which you are invited must meet award requirements for Sri Lanka.
- A description of the host mentor's interest in the applicant's project and how it will benefit the host institution and any long-term collaborative plans.

A single institution is free to send letters of invitation to multiple candidates, so be aware that a letter is not a legally binding pledge, nor does it guarantee an applicant a grant.

## MEMORANDUM TO INSTITUTIONAL HOSTS FOR THE FULBRIGHT VISITING SCHOLAR PROGRAM

Thank you for partnering with the Fulbright Program in hosting a Fulbright Visiting Scholar. Hosting is a rewarding experience personally and professionally, contributes to diversity and internationalization on your campus and in your home department, and strengthens your, your colleagues', and your students' connections with scholars and scholarly institutions abroad. This memorandum describes the essentials of the Visiting Scholar Program and outlines the critical role of the U.S. Host institution faculty and administrators in the program's success.

**What is the Fulbright Program?** The flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government, widely known as the Fulbright Program, is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people of other countries. The program's primary support is provided by the United States Congress through the United States Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). IIE administers the Fulbright Visiting Scholars Program on behalf of the Department of State in collaboration with Fulbright Offices around the world. U.S. institutions and their faculty have made significant contributions to the success of the program since its inception in 1947.

**What is included in a Fulbright Visiting Scholar award?** All Fulbright Visiting Scholars (~1000 annually) receive round-trip international travel and health benefits for accidents and sickness provided by the U.S. Department of State. Most scholars also receive a monthly stipend and additional allowances as benefits of their grants. Some scholars may be partially funded by their home institutions through sabbatical pay. Fulbright Scholars enter the United States under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of State's J-1 Exchange Visitor Program.

**What does our institution gain from hosting a Fulbrighter?** Hosts typically report benefits in the areas of student engagement, collegial collaboration, and institutional capacity building. Many Fulbright Visiting Scholars advise students, teach, and seek to create collaborations between students in their home countries and students at their host institutions. According to our survey data, typically 80% of Faculty hosts report that they grew professionally by hosting a foreign scholar, often citing co- publications with their scholar. The benefits and returns of hosting a scholar are wide-ranging and a Fulbright grant is frequently reported as the root of long-term international collaborations, both individual and institutional.

**Who is the Faculty Associate and what is their role?** The Faculty Associate is the Fulbrighter's main academic contact and advisor at the host institution, and likely the person to have the most day-to-day interactions with the visitor during their grant.

**Who is the Administrative Official and what is their role?** The Administrative Official is typically a Department Chair, Dean, International Student/Scholars officer or other comparable figure with budgetary oversight, as they must confirm administrative policies and applicable affiliation fees that may be relevant to consider in hosting a Fulbright Visiting Scholar.

**Can one individual serve as both a Faculty Associate and Administrative Official?** Yes. A department chair, for example, might be able to serve in both an academic and administrative capacity. However, host universities are encouraged to check with their Dean/Provost/International Scholar Office to ensure they are up to date with university-wide policies that may apply to Visiting Fulbright Scholars on your campus.

**Does it cost our institution anything to host a Fulbright Visiting Scholar?** Apart from in-kind contributions detailed below, U.S. host institutions are **not** responsible for providing financial assistance to the scholar. Your institution also should **not** provide the Form DS-2019 as it will be issued by the Fulbright Program. Your institution is **not** responsible for health insurance for scholars or their dependents, as coverage compliant with J visa regulations is provided to Fulbright scholars, and as individuals they must arrange for sufficient insurance for their dependents.

### **How does our institution confirm our willingness to host a Fulbright Visiting Scholar?**

It is important to determine whether your department and institution is prepared to offer the following as in-kind contributions:

- 1) Consultation with faculty and access to facilities consistent with the project outlined in the scholar's application;
- 2) Access to libraries, an office or shared work space and computer facilities.

**Must our institution provide housing for our Fulbright Visiting Scholar?** Fulbright does not require that host institutions arrange or assist with housing for their Fulbright Visiting Scholars. However, as the search for housing is one of the most challenging obstacles scholars face upon arrival, any assistance or insights the host institution can share are encouraged and appreciated. If the scholar is eligible to pursue accommodations or housing advice through your institution, for example, that is extremely helpful. Any and all housing arrangements need to be done in consultation with the Visiting Scholar.

## We are ready to accept our Fulbright Visiting Scholar! What's next?

**Step 1: Confirm the dates** when the Visiting Scholar will be affiliated with your institution.

**Step 2: Complete the IRF.** The Administrative Official and the Faculty Associate need to return the completed and signed form (digital signatures accepted) it to the IIE contact who initially reached out to you.

**Step 3: Communicate with the Scholar:** The scholar will be encouraged to correspond directly with their Faculty Associate before departing for the United States. However, the Faculty Associate is encouraged to initiate and maintain communication.

**Step 4: Plan for Arrival:** The Fulbright program strongly encourages that someone be at the airport to greet the scholar (that can be a faculty member or a graduate student or other representative). There is also a critical "Notification of Arrival" form that you will be asked to sign by your scholar at this time; the Fulbrighter will be prompted to share this form with the host institution.

### Step 5: Support the Fulbrighter's exchange visit:

1. Facilitate the Scholar's inclusion and participation in the activities of their home department. Faculty Associates should be present and available to the Visiting Scholar during the grant period. If on sabbatical, for example, please recommend a colleague who could serve as primary host during this period.
2. Note that your Fulbrighter **must** reside within the local community or a reasonable commuting distance from the host institution.
3. Connect your scholar with any **area studies programs at your institution** focusing on the scholar's region. Making area studies programs aware of your Visiting Scholar's presence on campus early in the grant period (or even prior to arrival) would also allow your Scholar to serve as a resource for students and faculty interested in their home country.
4. Put your scholar in touch with your institution's **international office or foreign student/scholar advisors**. They will make the visitor aware of resources they could provide, and they may be able to suggest activities on campus or in the local community that would be of interest to a visitor from abroad.
5. If **conferences or meetings of relevant professional associations** are held during the scholar's grant period on or off campus, please advise the scholar of these opportunities so they have the option to participate.
6. Your Fulbrighter may have **questions about taxes, public assistance, or other legal topics**. The Fulbright program makes the following recommendations in these challenging areas:
  - a. Scholars are provided with a Social Security Number letter soon after their arrival. They are encouraged, regardless of the source of their funding, to obtain a Social Security Number;
  - b. Hosts are neither expected nor encouraged to advise your scholar tax law; IIE advisors provide basic guidance and services on U.S. tax obligations to Visiting Scholars;
  - c. Fulbrighters are strongly discouraged from accepting public assistance even if they appear to qualify;
  - d. Fulbright Program staff at IIE may advise on J-1 visa and Fulbright program policies only. Host Institutions may share resources on these topics with Fulbrighters at their discretion.
7. Your Fulbrighter may be invited to participate in the Fulbright **Outreach Lecturing Fund (OLF)**, or **Fulbright Enrichment** activities, which provide opportunities for Visiting Scholars to visit other institutions and regions in the U.S. as part of their exchange. We encourage your support of such activities.

Visiting Scholars can be reminded to consult the following resources as questions arise:

- [Visiting Scholar Guide](#)
- [IIE Advisor](#) *Note: Your scholar's advisor will likely be the IIE staff member with whom you corresponded in confirming your Visiting Scholar's details.*
- On-campus foreign scholar advisor or international office
- Local office of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
- The Internal Revenue Service

### After the Scholar's departure:

**Final Survey:** At the end of your scholar's exchange, the Faculty Associate will be asked to complete an electronic survey which will ask about various facets of their experience. Fulbright learns from the survey results to improve and to demonstrate the significant support that faculty across the United States provide to the Fulbright Program.

**Consider applying for other Fulbright Programs!** As an experienced partner with Fulbright, you will be well-placed to apply for (or to encourage others to apply for) Fulbright Exchange Programs. Some programs that may be of interest include:

[Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence Program](#)

[Outreach Lecturing Fund](#)

[Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program \(FLTA\)](#)

[International Education Administrators](#)

[Fulbright Scholar Program \(US and Visiting\)](#)

[Fulbright US Student Program](#)

[Foreign Student Program](#)

## Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program

### Key Components of the U.S. Host Institution Letter of Invitation

Thank you for your interest in the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program! The following checklist includes the key components that should be included in the institutional host's letter of invitation to support a Fulbright Visiting Scholar exchange.

#### The letter should:

- ✓ Be on the inviting institution's official letterhead.
- ✓ Indicate the Fulbright Visiting Scholar's name, country of origin, and topic/title of the proposed project.
- ✓ Include the exact start and end dates (month, day, and year) being proposed as the period of the exchange. This could help avoid rewriting letters after selection as precise start and end dates are required for visa sponsorship documentation. Country requirements vary, but typically, a Visiting Scholar award must be at least 3 months in length and no longer than 12 months.
- ✓ Indicate the nature of in-person activities your institution would make available to the scholar, whether regular meetings with the host faculty member, departmental events, office access, library access, lab work, teaching, or any collaborative activities. While the COVID-19 pandemic has moved many activities online, the J1 Exchange Visitor Program and the Fulbright Program still require consistent in-person engagement. This is the hallmark of Fulbright's person-to-person exchanges and fully virtual programs are not supported.
- ✓ Outline any financial or in-kind arrangements the institution can provide to the Visiting Scholar, which may include office space, computer, lab or library access, housing resources, meal plans, transportation, or a salary supplement (if applicable).
- ✓ Indicate whether the scholar would be expected to cover any affiliation fees that may be required, making sure to indicate the amount. Fulbright appreciates any level of cost-share that can be provided by U.S. institutions to, including waiving affiliation fees, covering supplies, or supporting lab costs or similar.
- ✓ Indicate the primary faculty host and hosting department where the Fulbrighter will affiliate.
- ✓ Be signed by an administrative officer of the institution who has the authority to approve official affiliations (Provost, Dean, Department Chair, or similar). The letter may include more than one signatory.
- ✓ Include any contingencies the host institution may have, including visitor policies pertaining to COVID-19 (such as vaccination or testing requirements for campus access).