

Greece

U.S. Embassy and Consulate, Athens

Consular services are available at the U.S. Embassy in Athens and visas can be issued as:

National Interest Exceptions—Non-Immigrant Visas

The following categories of travelers now qualify for national interest exceptions (NIEs):

Students: All students, and their dependents, traveling to the United States on an F or M visa to pursue a full course of study or on a J visa to participate in an exchange program as a bona fide student.

Academics: All exchange visitors and their dependents traveling to the United States on J visas in the following categories: Professors, Research Scholars, Short Term Scholars, or Specialists.

Travel

The Athens International Airport Eleftherios Venizelos is open and operational; however, there are no direct flights between the United States and Greece at this time. Many airlines currently operate flights departing Greece from which travelers can connect to flights to the United States.

As of November 10, 2020 permanent residents of Greece who travel by land or air to foreign countries are required to fill in the electronic form PLF (Passenger Locator Form) with their contact details in Greece before their departure from the country and to show at the border checkpoint the proof of completion of the electronic PLF form that is automatically sent by e-mail to each traveller.

ECA/IIE and Fulbright strongly discourage domestic or international travel during grant periods. Policies between States and countries differ greatly and change rapidly and grantees risk being unable to return to campus.

Background

Foreign Student Program

The Fulbright Foreign Student Program is supporting approximately 1,500 continuing students and nearly 350 new degree-seeking students this fall for in-person or hybrid programs in the United States. Another 500 students have begun their fall semester virtually from their home country. The IIE team will be supporting Foreign Fulbright Students in the United States and around the world this year. In January, the program plans to welcome those 500 virtual students along with another approximately 160 students to start in-person in the United States. Another component of the program, the Visiting Student Researchers, which totals approximately 400 more participants, were postponed until spring 2021 to begin their grants. Recent guidance from the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board will allow the 2020-2021 Visiting Student Researchers to delay their exchanges to academic year 2021-2022 if key conditions for their programs are not met (e.g. if their host institutions are online only, for example, or if travel restrictions prohibit their participation).

The enrichment programming will be virtual this academic year, but this change may afford the opportunity to engage more students than usual with the hope of creating connections and growing the Fulbright network and legacy. The summer English programs and Gateway orientations were held virtually and engaged a record number of participants, with 400 in English programs and 800 for the Gateway.

Visiting Scholar Program

In mid-March 2020, the Fulbright Visiting Scholar and Scholar-in-Residence Programs were severely impacted by the spread of COVID-19 as U.S. campuses moved online. While some scholars did continue their programs in various ways, many departed early. New arrivals planned between March and December 2020 were delayed. As the U.S. Embassies and consulates around the world have begun to reopen, J-1 visas are being issued again for programs/universities that are not 100% online. Therefore, the 2020-2021 cohort of Visiting Scholars/Scholars-in-Residence are permitted to begin their programs on a delayed timeline, starting as soon as January 2021 or as late as July 2021, and are currently working with host universities to confirm scholars' planned programs and facilitate their academic exchange. Recent guidance from the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board will allow the 2020-2021 Fulbright cohorts to delay their exchanges to academic year 2021-2022 if key conditions for their programs are not met (e.g. if their host institutions are online only, for example, or if travel restrictions disallow their participation). There are more than 800 selected scholars working to plan their programs this spring. Fulbright Scholar Enrichment programming will be entirely virtual in 2020-2021.

The Outreach Lecturing Fund, which allows Visiting Scholars to present their research at underserved institutions through site visits, turned virtual in March 2020 and will continue virtually until domestic U.S. travel presents less of a risk. The program team is rolling out a targeted pilot of such virtual engagements during the fall of 2020 and expects virtual programming to be necessary at least through August 2021.

Fulbright Greece

Since early 2020, Fulbright program staff worldwide, and you as Fulbrighters, have been adjusting to new and challenging circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are grateful for the resilience each of you has shown in adapting to resultant program delays, and appreciate your patience as the program continues to respond to the pandemic.

Our goal is for you to be able to travel to the United States to begin your academic program in early 2021. To help you plan for your Fulbright participation, we have provided the following guidelines to inform your decisions, which you should take in close consultation with your U.S. host institution and the Fulbright Foundation in Greece. These guidelines have been developed to assist the maximum number of Fulbrighters to have a successful in-person academic exchange experience in the United States.

Pathways to Participation for:

Fulbright Visiting Scholars, Visiting Student Researchers and Artists

- In keeping with the Fulbright Program's mission of building mutual understanding through direct personal experience, fully online programs will not be supported for Visiting Scholars, Visiting Student Researchers or Artists.
- U.S. embassies will not issue J-1 visas for entry to the U.S. if the overall operating status of the host institution is fully online.
- Entry to the United States may be denied even with a valid visa/DS-2019 if the university operating status switched to online after visa issuance. As your host university's operating status can change suddenly, it is imperative that you monitor the operating status of your host university up until your date of entry into the United States.

Each Fulbrighter must take individual responsibility for monitoring the status of their universities and corresponding with their faculty hosts to ensure the opening status of their program up until the date of travel/entry into the United States. You must immediately report any changes affecting your program to Fulbright Greece. When planning, we strongly advise you to review and bookmark:

- Your host institution's Covid 19 webpage;
- The official Covid 19 Health and Travel advisories for the State in which your host institution(s) is (are) located;
- Fulbrighters will also have to confirm, plan for, and cover the costs of any required quarantines upon arrival.

Should conditions allow for in-person participation, you should plan for program start as early as January 1, 2021, and no later than July 31, 2021, and conclude to the greatest extent possible by December 31, 2021. The factors that need to be taken into consideration are listed below.

- Overall university operating status must be in-person or hybrid (blend of in-person and online) and NOT online-only.
- University resources required for your research project must be sufficiently available to carry out the program, including the availability of:
 - Regular in-person meetings with your Faculty Host and/or departmental community.
 - In-person access to required labs, libraries, or university buildings needed to successfully conduct research and/or teaching, as applicable.
- Home country U.S. Embassy must be open and issuing visas.
- Border restrictions in home country and in the United States must allow for international travel.
- Commercial airline travel must be available between your home country and the United States.

Letters of Invitation: The U.S. university Letter of Invitation is a critical document particularly in the current environment. Please share the checklist of document requirements below with the host institution when requesting updated letters of invitation. In order for a DS-2019 to be issued, letters of invitation must include all of the following required components:

- Exact program start and end dates (e.g., March 13, 2021-August 13, 2021, not March-August 2021).
- Description of research and/or teaching activity to be undertaken during the grant period, noting the status of in-person engagement with the Faculty Host and associated faculty, staff, or students.
- Details of the U.S. host school, academic department, and/or program.
- Details and contact information for your U.S. Faculty Host.
- Any conditions that must be met or clauses needed – related to the public health situation, overall U.S. university operating status, or resource availability – for the affiliation to begin.
 - For example, *“This good faith letter of invitation may be rescinded due to changes in our campus community’s public health situation, overall university operating status, or other resource limitation due to the coronavirus pandemic.”*
- Signature of the U.S. Faculty Host or associated authority figure in the Faculty Host’s department/school/university.

Please also note that if your program dates change between now and July 31, 2021, you will need to take the following steps to adjust your program:

- Notify Fulbright Greece of the change.
- Procure a revised Letter of Invitation from your host institution reflecting the new grant dates.
- Resubmit any accompanying documents in support of DS-2019 issuance (i.e. medical forms, funding verifications, visas, etc.) that may need dates adjusted.

Dependents: In a typical year, many Fulbright Researchers embark on their Fulbright experience with their families. This year Fulbrighters must be aware and well-informed of the additional

challenges they may face if traveling with dependents to their U.S. host communities. Many U.S. K-12 school systems are operating fully online, and those that are in-person may change their operating status suddenly depending on public health developments. Childcare options are also severely limited at this time. Participants should plan for these situations and be prepared to shorten their exchange in order to accommodate any family needs. The U.S. Department of State reserves the right to adjust Fulbright Program policies for dependents in response to the public health crisis.

Important Considerations

Deferral to the 2021-2022 Academic Year

If in-person participation beginning in spring/summer 2021 is not possible because the required factors are not in place, you can be offered the opportunity to defer your grant to the 2021-2022 academic year. Deferral decisions must be finalized by March 1, 2021.

Withdrawal

If you are not able to manage the degree of uncertainty we are faced with or be able to be flexible to meet changing dates, you may decide to withdraw your candidacy and reapply in a future year.

FAQ

If I have already requested a new letter of invitation with new dates, should I request a third one which will spell out the fulfillment of conditions for arrival (hybrid, in-person meeting with hosts, access to library and building) or can I show email communication about these topics?

You should receive a letter that represents the most accurate information and spells out the conditions of their studies in details- for example, university is closed but you will have lab access and will meet weekly with your advisor, etc.

If the deadline for deferrals is March 1, and my plan was to leave after March but my host university status changes before my departure, can I still ask for later deferral?

No, the idea is to stick with the March 1 deadline. ECA presumes that hosts will have finalized plans for the spring/summer semester by March 1.

What will be the status if I do not want to defer (by March 1) but then am unable to travel because the university closed. Can I defer later? Can I apply for 22/23?

You will not be able to defer after the deadline but you can reapply.

If I delay the start of the program to July 2021 but I have a grant for more than 6 months, can I still start the program and just shorten it until December 2021? Can I just say no and ask for a deferral because I am unable to start and finish the whole program within 2021?

You can delay the start until the summer and go until December if Fulbright and the host institution agree. You cannot ask for a deferral because you prefer one. If the institution offers you a shorter grant, you must take it or decline.

Is the deadline for possible delay to July 31, 2021 strict or can I start in September 2021, if I am given such opportunity? If the university announced already that it will not host any foreign visitors sooner than September 2021, does that mean automatically offering

the option of deferral to such scholar who cannot start in July? Will delays later than July still be accepted?

If the program offers a start in Spring/Summer of 2021, the grantee should accept that. If the program says they cannot offer until the Fall of 2021, that would be considered a deferral.

I am a graduate student who started courses remotely from home country. What do I do if my host institution does not switch back to in-person teaching in January? Will I be allowed to complete my program virtually?

If you cannot start in person due to travel restrictions or an online program, you can continue remotely, if your host institution and Fulbright agree. While not ideal, some participants already know that they will be virtual from their home country for their entire program.

What if my U.S. host institution changes status from hybrid to online only while I am already in the U.S.?

All grantees should do their best to remain in the U.S. for the entirety of their program to avoid getting stuck overseas. You cannot continue your grant remotely from your home country if you had the opportunity to come to the United States.

What if I decide to interrupt my grant period and depart to Greece before the official end date?

With your departure, your Fulbright grant period will be considered completed. Your grant amount may be adjusted to reflect the time spent in the U.S., for instance your second instalment may be revoked. Fulbright Greece will look into flexible flight tickets that allow for a change in return date or may pay the penalty fee / change of ticket from the balance of your grant amount.

Guidance states that I may travel for my exchange beginning on January 1, 2021. Does this mean that I can only arrive in the U.S. on January 1, 2021 at the earliest or is the regular visa grace period still valid where grantees can arrive in the U.S. up to 30 days before their program begins? (e.g. beginning of December)

The usual rules apply with regard to the visa grace period, but your program cannot start until after January 1, 2021.

If, as a doctoral student, I finish my PhD in the meanwhile, am I still eligible for the Program?

No because you would move to postdoctoral status which would require a new proposal and so on. In order to remain in the Program you would need to defer your PhD degree until after your U.S. grant period.

If I withdraw now, can I apply for 21/22 right away?

You can reapply if the system is still open for applications.