

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: When is the application deadline?

A: Applications for the 2020-2021 fellowship competition must be submitted online by 11:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, October 1, 2019.

Q: Where can I find the online application?

A: <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/fellowshipapplication/>

Q: What happens if I receive an error when applying online?

A: Please contact us at fellowships@wilsoncenter.org so that you may successfully submit your application.

Q: How will I know that you have received my application online?

A: You will receive an email stating that you have successfully submitted your application.

Q: When will I know if I have received a fellowship?

A: Decisions on appointment will be made in March 2020.

Q: Who is eligible to apply?

A: Scholars, practitioners, journalists, and public intellectuals with project proposals on global issues are invited to apply. Topics and scholarship should relate to key public policy challenges. Academic applicants must have a doctorate or JD. For other applicants, an equivalent level of professional achievement is expected.

Q: I am not a U.S. citizen. May I apply?

A: Yes. The Center welcomes applications from citizens or permanent residents from any country. Important: Applicants from countries outside the United States must hold a valid passport and be able to obtain a J1 visa even if they are currently in the United States. Please contact the Center if you have any questions about your eligibility to obtain a J1 visa.

Q: What do you mean by topics and scholarship should relate to key public policy challenges?

A: The Center aims to unite the world of ideas to the world of policy by supporting preeminent scholarship and linking that scholarship to issues of concern to officials in Washington. The Center distinguishes itself from policy institutions in its consideration of issues in a broader and more reflective manner beyond a narrow analysis of current crises and policy options. Applicants should think in terms of what they have to say to policymakers in Washington and how they can inform policy decisions through their work.

Q: I have completed all requirements for my Ph.D. except for my dissertation. May I apply for a fellowship?

A: No. Academics must be at the post-doctoral level and have published a book or monograph beyond the Ph.D. dissertation. Applicants outside of academia should have an equivalent level of professional achievement.

Q: I have received my Ph.D. and would like to come to the Center to continue working toward publication of my dissertation topic. May I apply?

A: No. Your project must be an entirely separate project from your dissertation. Your application should be new research.

Q: I have a Ph.D. but have not published a book yet. Is it worth applying?

A: For most academic candidates, a book or monograph is required. Unless you are in a field like law where publications are usually comprised of articles, we advise waiting to apply until you have published a book.

Q: I am retired, and do not have an institutional affiliation. May I apply?

A: Yes, you do not need an institutional affiliation to apply.

Q: Are there age limits for eligibility?

A: No. However, all applicants should present evidence of their ability to carry out the proposed project, such as publications and other relevant experience.

Q: I was a fellow at the Center five years ago. May I apply again?

A: Yes. The Center asks that applicants who have previously held a Wilson Center fellowship wait at least five years before applying again, and they must apply with a new project.

Q: Can fellowships be deferred?

A: No. If you are selected for a fellowship and cannot or do not accept, you must apply again in the next competition.

Q: What is the selection process?

A: Applications that satisfy the eligibility requirements are entered into a multistage review process involving both internal evaluations by Wilson Center experts and external evaluations by a panel of specialists with relevant experience. Final decisions about fellowship awards are contingent on the approval of the Center's Fellowship Committee of the Board of Trustees and subject to available funding.

Q: What are the residency requirements?

A: Each fellow is assigned an office available around the clock. Fellows must devote full time to the fellowship and may not accept a teaching assignment, another residential fellowship, or undertake any other major activities that require absence from the Center during the tenure of their fellowship. Fellows must devote a proportionate amount of time to the daily life of the Center. Absences of more than one week should be discussed with the Scholars and Academic Relations Office Director.

Q: What are the Center's expectations of its Fellows?

A: Fellows are expected to work from their offices at the Center and to participate in appropriate meetings organized by the Center. Fellows are required to give a Work-in-Progress presentation and to attend presentations by other fellows, internal meetings at which fellows can speak about their work, share ideas, and receive feedback from their peers. Fellows are encouraged to make a more formal presentation to the public such as a colloquium, seminar, workshop, or other form of meeting. The Center expects fellows to seek ways to share their expertise with the Washington policy community. A major benefit of being a fellow is having the time to do research, write, and reflect, and to interact and share ideas with colleagues from many different disciplines.

Q: When could I start my Fellowship?

A: If awarded a fellowship, the earliest you can begin your tenure is Tuesday, September 7, 2020. Most fellows are in residence for the entire U.S. academic year, but fellowships are occasionally awarded for shorter periods, with a minimum of four months.

Q: You require two reference letters. May I send three?

A: The Center requires two letters of reference. If more than two letters are sent we will accept the first two letters we receive.

Q: How do I know the Center has received my reference letters?

A: It is up to the applicant to follow up with their referees to confirm that they have sent their letters to the Center through the online system.

Q: I applied for a fellowship last year and didn't get one. If I reapply this year with the same proposal, can I use the same references?

A: Yes. The Center can use the same references from last year for your current application. However, we prefer that you ask your referees to resend the letter to us with a current date on it. If you have completed substantial new work on your project during the year, you may want to ask those same referees to read your revised proposal and send updated reference letters. You may also choose to send two different references. You may contact the Center and we will be happy to work with you on the best course of action.

Q: How are stipends awarded?

A: Money for stipends comes from allocated federal funds. The Center offers a stipend of \$90,000 for a nine-month fellowship. A sabbatical salary or other non-federal funding can be used to supplement this stipend.

Q: Does the Center offer health insurance?

A: No. Fellows are responsible for their own health insurance. Please note that Fellows in the U.S. under a J1 visa must have health insurance. The Center can assist the Fellow in ensuring the health insurance they choose is J1 visa compliant.

Q: Does the Center pay for fellows' travel?

A: No. You will need enough personal funds to cover travel for you and any family members who accompany you to Washington. The Center does not pay for short-term research trips a fellow may wish to take during his/her tenure.

Q: Is the Center looking for particular topics this year?

A: The Center does not have a quota for any particular topic in a given year. Priority is given to proposals which align with the programmatic work of the Center. Please visit www.wilsoncenter.org/wcprograms to learn more about each of the Center's programs in more detail. It is very important to explain how your work aligns with the Center's programmatic work and the relevance of your project to contemporary policy issues. Reviewers look for original, fresh research.

Q: Can Center staff look over my proposal before I submit it?

A: No. Unfortunately Center staff are not able to read or comment on draft proposals. It is important to maintain a fair and impartial process. Please see our section on Helpful Hints and you may also link to the Social Science Research Council's "The Art of Writing Proposals." The Center recommends that you show your proposal to colleagues who are knowledgeable in your field so that they may make constructive comments.

Q: May I ask to see an example of an awarded proposal?

A: The Center does not provide examples of awarded proposals because each application is reviewed on an individual basis according to the criteria for selection in the application guidelines. Please see Helpful Hints.

Q: If I am in the D.C. area, may I come in for an interview?

A: No. In fairness to applicants who live outside the area/outside the U.S., the Center does not conduct fellowship interviews.

Q: Do fellows get research help?

A: Yes. The Center offers each fellow a part-time research assistant during his/her time in residence. These assistants are usually advanced undergraduate or graduate students, who work approximately 15-20 hours per week over a four- to-nine-month period. To the extent possible, the Center matches the goals and interests of the research assistants with those of the scholar to whom they are assigned. The Center's Internship Coordinator consults with incoming fellows and assigns them a research assistant.

Q: What kind of access does the Center have to the Library of Congress?

A: The Wilson Center enjoys generous loan privileges with the Library of Congress. Through the Wilson Center Library, fellows may request material as needed from the general collections and keep it for up to six weeks. Center librarians also provide access to university and special libraries in the area, and other research facilities.

Q: I would need to move to Washington, D.C. from out of state. Does the Center help to find housing for its Fellows?

A: To help with finding housing in the area, the Center sends each incoming out-of-town fellow a comprehensive packet of housing materials. The Center does not sign leases, but tries to help the incoming fellow find appropriate housing. Information on schools and daycare centers for fellows with children is also available.