Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships Administration

**PURPOSE**

The Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships Program awards fellowships, through institutions of higher education, to students who are:

a) Enrolled for undergraduate or graduate training in a Center or program approved by the Secretary; and

b) Undergoing performance-based modern foreign language training or training in a program for which performance-based language instruction is being developed, in combination with area studies, international studies, or the international aspects of professional studies.

Reference: §657.1 FLAS regulations.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENTS**

**Institution Eligibility**

(a) The Department of Education awards an allocation of fellowships to an institution of higher education or a consortium of institutions of higher education that—

   (1) Operates a Center or Program approved by ED;

   (2) Teaches modern foreign languages under a program described in paragraph (b) of this section;

   (3) In combination with the teaching described in (a)(2) of this section—

      (i) Provides instruction in the disciplines needed for a full understanding of the areas, regions, or countries in which the foreign languages are commonly used; or

      (ii) Conducts training and research in international studies, the international aspects of professional and other fields of study, or issues in world affairs that concern one or more countries.

(b) In teaching those modern foreign languages for which an allocation of fellowships is made available, the institution must be either using a program of performance-based training or developing a performance-based training program.

(c) The Department uses the criteria in §657.21 both to approve Centers and programs for the purpose of receiving an allocation of fellowships and to evaluate applications for an allocation of fellowships.

(d) An institution does not need to receive a grant under the National Resource Centers Program (34 CFR part 656) to receive an allocation of fellowships under this part (34 CFR part 657).
Student Eligibility

According to the FLAS regulations (§657.3), a student is eligible to receive a fellowship if the student –

(a) Is a citizen or national of the United States or is a permanent resident of the United States;

(b) Is accepted for enrollment or is enrolled in an institution receiving an allocation of fellowships and in a program that combines modern foreign language training with—

(i) Area or international studies; or

(ii) Research and training in the international aspects of professional and other fields of study;

(c) Shows potential for high academic achievement based on such indices as grade point average, class ranking, or similar measures that the institution may determine;

(d) Is enrolled in a program of modern foreign language training for a language for which the institution has developed or is developing performance-based instruction;

(e) In case of an undergraduate student, is in the intermediate or advanced study of a less commonly taught language; or

(f) In the case of a graduate student, is engaged in—

(i) Predissertation level study;

(ii) Preparation for dissertation research;

(iii) Dissertation research abroad; or

(iv) Dissertation writing at the home institution

Competitive Preference Priorities

FLAS Competitive Preference Priority 1

“Applications that propose to give preference when awarding fellowships to undergraduate students, graduate students, or both, to students who demonstrate financial need as indicated by the students’ expected family contribution, as determined under part F of title IV of the HEA. This need determination will be based on the students’ financial circumstances and not on other aid. The applicant must describe how it will ensure that all fellows who receive such preference show potential for high academic achievement based on such indices as grade point average, class ranking, or similar measures that the institution may determine. For grants awarded with fiscal year 2014 funds, the preference applies to fellowships awarded for study during academic years 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18.”
**Implementation of Competitive Preference Priority 1:**

- FLAS selection committees shall take a student’s “demonstrated financial need” into consideration in addition to the merit-based eligibility requirements in §657.3, **not instead of**. This requirement is intended to provide more students access to FLAS fellowships, but it is not intended to give students with financial need an absolute priority over the other FLAS applicants.

- This competitive preference priority neither supersedes nor negates the student eligibility requirements stipulated in the program legislation and regulations. First and foremost, the FLAS fellowship is a merit-based fellowship. Section 657.3(c) of the regulations is explicit: “Shows potential for high academic achievement based on indices as grade point average, class ranking, or similar measures that the institution may determine.”

**FLAS Competitive Preference Priority 2**

Applications that propose to make 25 percent or more of academic year FLAS fellowships in any of the 78 priority languages selected from the U.S. Department of Education’s list of less commonly taught languages (LCTLS).

The list includes the following: Akan (Twi-Fante), Albanian, Amharic, Arabic (all dialects), Armenian, Azeri (Azerbaijani), Balochi, Bamanakan (Bamana, Bambara, Mandikan, Mandigo, Maninka, Dyula), Belarusian, Bengali (Bangla), Berber (all languages), Bosnian, Bulgarian, Burmese, Cebuano (Visayan), Chechen, Chinese (Cantonese), Chinese (Gan), Chinese (Mandarin), Chinese (Min), Chinese (Wu), Croatian, Dari, Dinka, Georgian, Gujarati, Hausa, Hebrew (Modern), Hindi, Igbo, Indonesian, Japanese, Javanese, Kannada, Kashmiri, Kazakh, Khmer (Cambodian), Kirghiz, Korean, Kurdish (Kurmanji), Kurdish (Sorani), Lao, Malay (Bahasa Melayu or Malaysian), Malayalam, Marathi, Mongolian, Nepali, Oromo, Panjabi, Pashto, Persian (Farsi), Polish, Portuguese (all varieties), Quechua, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Sinhala (Sinhalese), Somali, Swahili, Tagalog, Tajik, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tibetan, Tigrigna, Turkish, Turkmen, Ukrainian, Urdu, Uyghur/Uigur, Uzbek, Vietnamese, Wolof, Xhosa, Yoruba, and Zulu.

**FLAS Invitational Priority**

Applications that propose to award academic year fellowships in any of the priority languages used in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.

**FLAS Fellowships: Definition, Types, Duration, Amounts**

**Definition**

A fellowship is the payment a fellow receives. Each fellowship includes an institutional payment and a subsistence allowance determined by the U.S. Department of Education. (References: §§ 657.5 (c) and 657.31(a) (2))
Types
An allocation of fellowships may include academic year (AY) graduate fellowships, AY undergraduate fellowships, and Summer (S) fellowships.

Duration
An institution may award a fellowship to a student for one academic year to complete coursework in language and area studies; or for the summer, if the summer session provides the fellow with the equivalent of one academic year of intensive modern foreign language study.

FLAS Fellowship Amounts
The fellowship amount depends on the fellowship type. The table below indicates the institutional payment and the subsistence allowance for each fellowship type.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payment Type</th>
<th>Academic Year Fellowship GRADUATE</th>
<th>Academic Year Fellowship UNDERGRADUATE</th>
<th>Summer Fellowship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Payment (Tuition)</td>
<td>$18,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence Allowance (Stipend)</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Fellowship Amount</td>
<td>$33,000</td>
<td>$15,000</td>
<td>$7,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FLAS Student Application and Selection Process

Student Applications
A student shall apply for a fellowship directly to an institution of higher education that has received an allocation of fellowships. The student provides information to enable the institution to determine whether he or she is eligible to receive a fellowship and whether he or she should be selected to receive a fellowship. (Reference: §657.11)

To be considered for a fellowship, an undergraduate student must be at the intermediate or advanced study of a less commonly taught language.

Selection Process
Section 657.21 (a) of the FLAS program regulations outlines standards for a high-quality plan for selecting FLAS fellows. At the minimum, the plan must:
• explain how fellowship opportunities will be advertised
• provide clear guidance to fellowship applicants about the application process
• be transparent about the criteria that the FLAS committee will use to make its selections
• indicate who will serve on the selection committee
• provide a timeline for all activities in the FLAS selection process
• explain how the FLAS selection process fulfills the requirements for any pertinent FLAS competitive priorities

When selecting students for FLAS fellowships, institutions must take the Competitive Preference Priorities 1 and 2 into consideration (see above).

**COURSEWORK TO FULFILL FLAS REQUIREMENTS**

**Academic Year (AY) Fellowship Requirements**

• An AY fellowship may be used to enroll in a domestic or and overseas program of study.
• AY courses, whether taken at the home institution or at an overseas institution, or both, must be in compliance with the student’s home institution area studies and language training requirements, in addition to meeting the FLAS program requirements.
• AY courses work supported by a FLAS fellowship must include at least one language course and one area studies course during each academic quarter, semester, or trimester.
• AY fellowship for dissertation research. Dissertation FLAS fellowships must be used to conduct research abroad. Only students at the advanced level of the language are eligible to receive an AY fellowship to conduct dissertation research.
• Using the language in conducting the dissertation research project must provide the FLAS fellow the intensive training that a full academic year of formal classroom instruction would provide.

**Summer (S) Fellowship Requirements**

• A summer fellowship is awarded only for intensive language study.
• A summer fellowship may be used at a domestic program, an overseas program, or both.
• A summer session (domestic or overseas) qualifies as an intensive language program if—
  o it is at least six weeks in duration and offers at least 120 contact hours of instruction for students at the advanced level.
it is at least six weeks in duration and offers at least 140 contact hours for students at the beginning or intermediate level of the language.  

Note: Field trips and excursions cannot be used to fulfill contact hour requirements.

A student may meet the required number of weeks and contact hours by attending one program, attending more than one program, or supplementing hours with private tutoring, as long as the required total number of weeks and contact hours is obtained. If a student’s plan of study includes private tutoring, the FLAS coordinator must submit a syllabus for the tutoring and the instructor’s CV.

**Intensive language instruction**

Intensive language instruction means instruction of at least five contact hours per week during the academic year or the equivalent of a full academic year of language instruction during the summer.

**Ancient and classical languages**

Institutions shall not award fellowships for the study of ancient and classical languages because these languages are inconsistent with the purpose of the FLAS program. The eligibility requirements in §657.3 explicitly state that students enrolled in modern foreign language training are eligible to receive fellowships.

**Proficiency Level Requirements**

Fellowships may not be awarded for the study of the first 12 semester hours or the equivalent (i.e., the beginning level) of a commonly taught language (Spanish, French, and German).

HEA section 602(b)(1)(B)(i) is unequivocal that undergraduate students must be in the intermediate or advanced study of a less commonly taught language to receive a fellowship.

Graduate students may also not receive fellowships for the beginning level of a language study. See section 602(b)(1)(B)(ii) (U.S. Department of Education, Office of the General Counsel). An exception might be made for the beginning level of a less commonly taught language if a graduate student has achieved advanced proficiency in another language of the world area of specialization, and if learning a second language of that world area is required for the student’s overall training and expertise.

**Grades and Credits for FLAS Courses**

Students should receive grades and credits for the area studies courses and language courses supported by a FLAS fellowship. This requirement is consistent with the institution being awarded an allocation of fellowships based on its performance-based instructional programs.
However, should the institution's policies not require grades for certain courses, the institution must provide an explanation in the comments section of its FLAS performance reports.

**Approval of an Independent Study to Fulfill FLAS Requirements**

An independent study or a directed reading may be used to fulfill the area studies course requirement or the language course requirement of an academic year fellowship. To request approval, the institution must submit the following to the IFLE program officer:

- Syllabus for the independent study or directed reading that describes:
  - the content and context of the independent study
  - course objectives
  - course requirements
  - standards for evaluating the student
  - schedule for the assignments and deliverables
  - bibliography
- The instructor’s curriculum vitae
- An explanation for why an independent study is necessary

**Distance Education Courses and FLAS Fellowships**

Distance education courses may be approved to fulfill FLAS requirements, as long as the courses are “face-to-face” with the instructors. Grantees are required to follow the approval process described in the “Independent Study” section to obtain approval to use a newly-proposed distance education course to fulfill a FLAS course requirement. If the distance education course is an established course with an approved course number and curriculum, prior approval of the course itself is not required. You are required, however, to notify your program officer that the course is being used as a FLAS course.

**Internships During a Fellowship Period**

The program regulations are explicit in defining the duration and use fellowships. Academic year FLAS fellowships must be used for either for area studies and language courses or for dissertation research abroad during the academic year. Summer fellowships must be used for intensive language training equivalent to a full academic year of language study.

The Title VI legislation, FLAS program regulations, and the IFLE programs’ appropriations language all currently prohibit internships during a FLAS fellowship period. (U.S. Department of Education, Budget Service Office)

When the Higher Education Act is up for reauthorization, this will be an opportunity for program changes to be taken into consideration such as allowing the use of FLAS fellows for internships. (U.S. Department of Education, Budget Service Office)
**Employment During a Fellowship Period**

A student is allowed to work and hold a FLAS fellowship at the same time. The most common practice of employment during the FLAS period is awarding FLAS fellowships to Teaching Assistants or Graduate Assistants.

**FLAS Award Disbursement & Other Issues**

**Fellowship Definition**

A fellowship means the payment a fellow receives. Each fellowship includes an institutional payment and a subsistence allowance amount determined by the U.S. Department of Education. (References: §§ 657.5 (c) and 657.31(a) (2))

**Institutional Payment Limitations (Reference: 657.31 (a) (3))**

1. If the announced institutional payment amount is greater than the tuition and fees charged by the institution, the institutional payment portion of the fellowship is limited to actual tuition and fees. The difference between actual tuition and fees and the announced institutional payment shall be used by the institution to fund additional fellowships (institutional payments) to the extent that funds are available to give the fellow a full subsistence allowance.

2. If the institution’s actual tuition and fees exceed the announced institutional payment, the institution **is not required to cover the excess**. Neither the HEA or program regulations address the issue of what happens when a fellowship does not cover tuition. As a result, ED cannot require that the institution cover that cost. The institution could chose to cover the cost, of course, but it may also hold the student responsible for the remainder, which the student could pay in cash, with other grants, with student loans. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of the General Counsel)

It is unallowable, however, to use FLAS funds to cover excess tuition and fees.

**Subsistence Allowances (Reference: §657.32 (a), (b))**

1. An institution shall pay a fellow his or her subsistence allowance in installments during the term of the fellowship.

2. An institution shall only pay a fellow who is in good standing and who is making satisfactory progress.

**Travel Awards (applicable to summer fellowships only)**

A summer FLAS student may receive a travel award in the amount of $1,000 or the actual cost of the travel – whichever is less – to attend a domestic or an overseas language program. Travel awards may not be issued to students whose air travel is not in compliance with the Fly America Act or an Open Skies Agreement. Travel awards may cover the costs of travel via air, car, rail, or bus. FLAS coordinators must submit a travel approval request (TAR) in IRIS for each student receiving a FLAS travel award.
**FLAS Fellowships and Other Funding for the Same Award Period**

When determining fellowship packages for students, FLAS institutions should advise students to accept either the FLAS fellowship or another offer of support to ensure that the limited number of FLAS fellowships is used efficiently and benefits the greatest number of eligible students.

That said, if a FLAS student receives another offer of support, he or she is allowed to accept the additional funding as long as it does not duplicate what is covered by the FLAS fellowship. For example, if the other source of funding covers tuition and fees, the student should not receive a FLAS institutional (tuition) payment.

**Partial Awards (Academic Year FLAS Fellowships)**

Academic year fellowships may be awarded to FLAS fellows for a single semester/trimester/quarter under certain conditions including, but not limited to, the following:

- the FLAS competition is conducted later than usual; therefore, the fellowships cannot be awarded for the entire award period
- a FLAS fellow graduates at the end of the fall semester, leaving an unused partial fellowship available for an eligible alternate
- a FLAS fellow forfeits his or her AY fellowship before the fellowship period ends

In the case of a partial award, the fellowship amount should be pro-rated accordingly.

**Forfeited, Terminated, or Withdrawn Fellowships**

**Forfeited Fellowships**

If a fellow vacates a fellowship before the end of an award period, the grantee institution may award the balance of the fellowship to another student if:

1. The student meets the eligibility requirements in §657.3; and
2. The remaining fellowship period comprises at least one full academic quarter, semester, trimester, or summer session. (Reference: §657.30(b)(1)(2).)

**Vacancy for Reasons of Withdrawal**

The institution is required to use funds not used by one recipient for reasons of withdrawal to support an alternate recipient to the extent that funds are available for a full subsistence allowance. (Reference: §657.32(d))

**Tuition Repayment for Students Who Withdraw in Extenuating Circumstances**

Repayment decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. FLAS Coordinators are advised to contact their IFLE program officer for guidance when these situations arise.
**Fellowship Termination**

An institution shall terminate a fellowship if:

- The fellow is not making satisfactory progress, is no longer enrolled, or is no longer in good standing at the institution; or

- The fellow fails to follow the course of study – including modern foreign language study – for which he or she applied, unless a revised course of study is otherwise approvable under the FLAS regulations. (Reference: 657.34 (a)(b))

**Options for Expending Unused FLAS Funds**

Below is a list of allowable options for institutions to expend excess FLAS funds. The Department strongly encourages grantees to expend their entire FLAS allocation during the budget period for which the fellowships were allocated, to the extent possible. This mitigates the risk of accruing large unobligated balances at the end of the grant cycle (August 14, 2018).

**Unused Academic Year Fellowship Funds**

1. Award fellowship(s) to alternate(s) selected from the approved pool of academic year FLAS candidates.

2. Time and resources permitting, convene a FLAS selection committee and conduct another competition to select additional candidates, if there are no available alternates.

3. Notify the other FLAS grantee center(s) on campus that you have academic year fellowships available.

4. Notify all other FLAS grantee centers nationwide that you have academic fellowships available. FLAS funds may be transferred to other FLAS institution, regardless of their world area focus.

    Note: When contributing funds to another FLAS grantee, the institution that covers the greater portion of a student’s fellowship, is the institution that is responsible for that fellow in terms of IRIS reporting.

5. Change the targeted applicant pool. For example, if the unused academic year fellowships were initially requested for graduate students, run another competition to select eligible undergraduate recipients. Notify your IFLE program officer of the revised allocation.

6. Use excess funds to make additional summer fellowships and/or summer travel awards.

7. Make arrangements with domestic summer language institutes to offer fellowships to eligible students enrolled at the institutes.

8. Obtain approval to carry the excess academic year fellowships into the next budget period and use the funds to award additional academic year awards.
Unused Summer Fellowship Funds

1. Select alternate(s) from the list of approved summer FLAS candidates.
2. Time and resources permitting, convene a FLAS selection committee and conduct another competition to select additional candidates, if there are no available alternates.
3. Notify the other FLAS grantee center(s) on campus that you have summer fellowships available.
4. Notify other FLAS grantee centers nationwide that you have summer fellowships available.
5. Notify the domestic summer intensive language institutes that you have summer fellowships available.
6. Make additional summer fellowships and/or summer travel awards.

Note: Grantees should make every effort to expend summer fellowships for the period for which they were allocated. Carry-over of summer fellowships is more “problematic” in terms of the FLAS program budget periods; therefore, IFLE program officers are unlikely to approve such requests.

OVERSEAS PROGRAM REQUESTS (OPRs)

Purpose
An OPR is required to request the IFLE program officer’s approval of:

1. Overseas area studies and language programs during the academic year,
2. Overseas language programs during the summer.

Submitting an OPR into IRIS
The FLAS Coordinator submits a student’s OPR into IRIS at least 30 days prior to the student’s travel date.

The OPR must include following:

- FLAS grant PR award number:
- Institution: (home institution)
- World area:
- Report: (indicate which FLAS session applies to the student, e.g., Summer 15 or AY 15-16)
- Fellow Name:
- Language:
- Level:
- Total number of weeks:
- Total number of hours:
- Country:
- Additional countries:
• Departure date:
• Return date:
• Program start date:
• Program end date:
• Program Web site:
• Justification:
• Submit date:

The IFLE program officer will review the OPR to ensure that the justification clearly describes how the overseas program is relevant to the student’s training. The program officer will also ensure that the program is of high quality and meets the FLAS program requirements. Once program completes the review and submits the approved or disapproved OPR, IRIS sends a notification to the FLAS Coordinator.

**Errors to Avoid When Completing an OPR**

FLAS Coordinators are urged to avoid making the following most frequent errors that hinder the OPR review/approval process:

- An incorrect fellowship period is entered in the “Report” field. For example, the fellow is a recipient of an AY 14-15 fellowship, but the “Report” field shows AY 13-14.

- A weak explanation in the “Justification” section to explain the relevance of the overseas program to the student’s training, academic trajectory, and career goals.

- Not providing details on which area studies courses and language courses the student proposes to take during the academic year overseas, if the OPR is requesting approval of an academic year program of study.

- A broken link to the program information.

**LANGUAGE APPROVAL REQUESTS (LARs)**

**Purpose**

The Web-based LAR is submitted in IRIS to request approval to add a FLAS-eligible language for:

- An academic year only
- A summer only
- The remainder of the grant cycle.

**Submit Process**

The FLAS Coordinator must submit the LAR at least two weeks in advance. The information requested in the LAR is similar to the OPR, but the main focus is the language and justification narrative accompanied by supporting documents.
Review Process

The IFLE program officer will review the LAR to ensure that the justification clearly describes how the additional language will be sustained and its relevance to the student’s training. Once the review is complete, the program officer will approve (or disapprove) the LAR and return it to the grantee with comments. If the LAR is approved, the requested language automatically updates in IRIS and is added to the grantee’s existing list of FLAS-eligible languages.

Dissertation Approval Requests (DARs)

Purpose

The Web-based DAR is submitted in IRIS to request approval for a student to conduct dissertation research abroad during the academic year.

Submit Process

The FLAS Coordinator must submit the DAR at least 30 days prior to the travel date. The DAR asks for the following information:

- Student information
- Organization affiliation(s)
- Institutional affiliation(s)
- Adviser name
- Dissertation research topic
- Methodology
- Research dates
- Visa status, Visa date
- Research permission status, Research permission date

Review Process

The IFLE program officer will review the DAR to ensure that the justification and methodology clearly describe the research activities that the student will conduct and why the project is important. Once the review is complete, the program officer will approve (or disapprove) the request and return it to the grantee with comments. The most frequent error on the DAR is a weak description of methodology.

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service from the Department of State that allows U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. In case of an emergency, the embassy can contact the traveler to provide important safety and security information or support during a crisis. IFLE strongly recommends that FLAS coordinators enroll all of their FLAS fellows attending overseas programs at the STEP Web site for the safety of the students.
**Travel Warnings**

IFLE will not approve FLAS students to travel to countries where the State Department has strongly urged private American citizens to depart immediately for reasons of personal security (i.e., “ordered departure”) or suspended its Fulbright program for the same reason. IFLE will not approve travel to countries under an “authorized departure” where the ambassador has specifically requested Fulbright project participants to leave for security reasons. For up-to-date information on travel warnings, consult the [Department of State travel warnings and consular information sheets online](#).

**Tips for Building and Fostering Community Among FLAS Fellows**

Building and fostering a sense of community among FLAS fellows contributes to a successful FLAS program. FLAS Coordinators are encouraged to provide networking opportunities and professional development for FLAS students through the following activities:

- Host monthly meet-and-greets for all FLAS fellows
- Engage fellows in outreach activities and events
- Establish mentorships among the FLAS fellows
- Organize regular sessions to get “highlight” stories about what the fellows are doing.

**FLAS Tracking Survey**

**Biennial Survey Authorized**

Section 601(d) of Title VI stipulates that grantees shall administer a survey to FLAS students who have completed programs to determine postgraduate employment, education or training. All grantees, where applicable, shall administer such survey once every two years and report survey results to the Secretary.

The survey asks questions to determine FLAS alumni’s utilization of their foreign language and area studies training, such as—

1. Have their jobs required them to use their language they studied as a fellow? What about their area studies training?
2. Is speaking a foreign language/knowledge of a world area a requirement for their job?
3. How often do they use their foreign language/world area expertise in their job?
4. How has the FLAS fellowship been useful for their careers?

An additional set of questions is designed to collect data, including—

1. Number of FLAS fellowships received
2. Academic year vs summer, domestic vs overseas
3. Language, academic discipline, degree
4. Gender, age, race/ethnicity, location, years of employment.