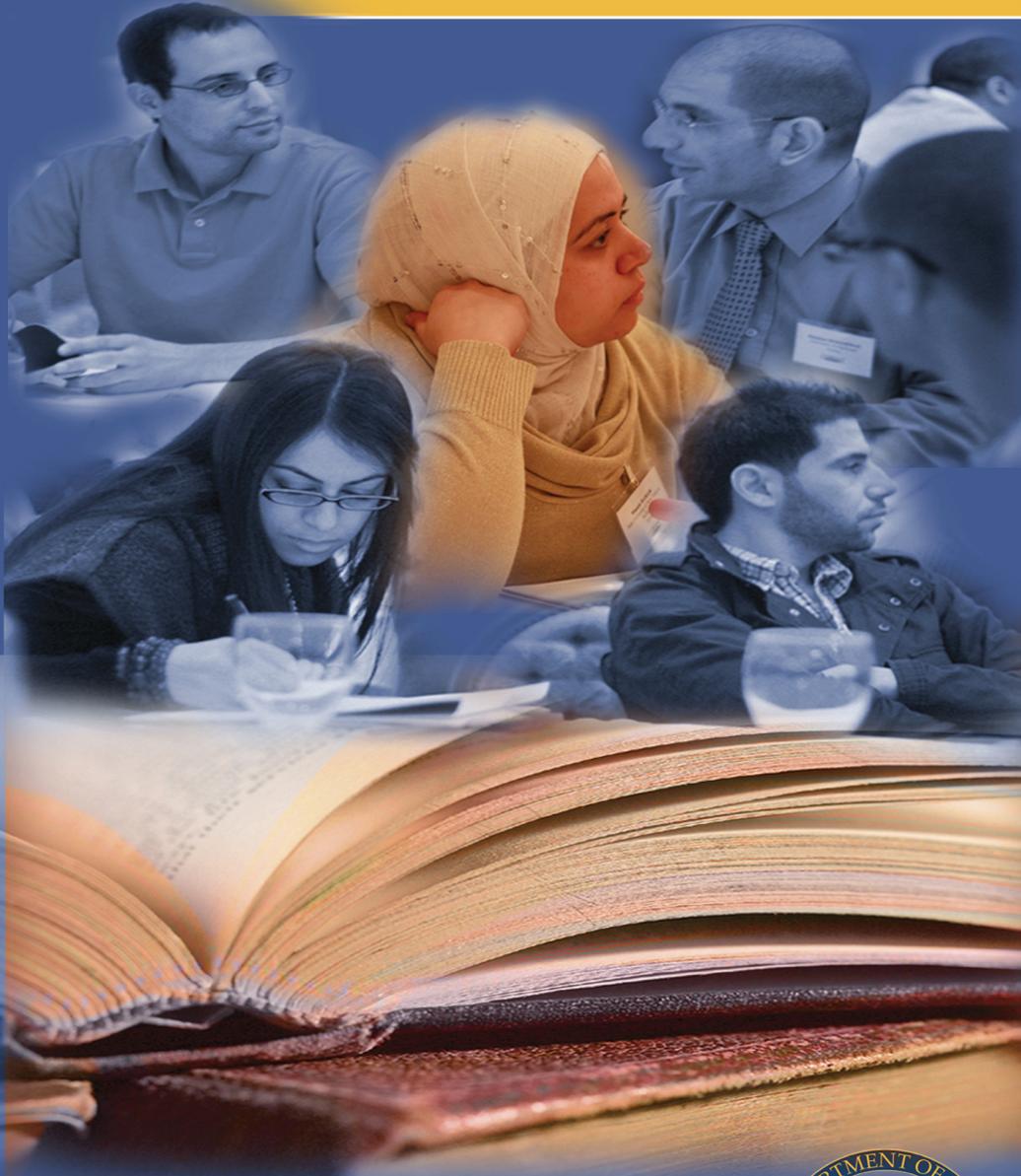


FULBRIGHT



AMIDEAST
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Fulbright Foreign Student Handbook

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AMIDEAST Fulbright Program Assistant

AMIDEAST would like to thank the Institute of International Education (IIE) and the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars (CEIS), who provided us with copies of their grantee handbooks. AMIDEAST used relevant texts from these handbooks for this manual.

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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. Final confirmation of your grant depends 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.

If you are confirmed as a grantee, your Fulbright grant will be sponsored by the United States Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) or a binational Fulbright Commission. As a result of this award, you will become a member of a community of more than 286,000 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. Please read it carefully and refer to it regularly for the duration of your program; it 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. She or he is here to help you.

Welcome to the Fulbright Foreign Student Program!

HISTORY OF 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 the people of other countries.” With this goal as a starting point, the Fulbright Program has provided approximately 300,000 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 was established in 1946 under legislation introduced by former Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas. The Fulbright Program is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State. Since its inception over sixty years ago, approximately 111,000 “Fulbrighters” from the United States and 183,000 from other countries have participated in the Program. The Fulbright Program awards approximately 7,500 new grants annually. Currently, the Fulbright Program operates in over 155 countries worldwide.



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 through cost-sharing and indirect support, such as salary supplements, tuition waivers and university housing. The Congressional appropriation for the Fulbright Program in fiscal year 2010 was \$254 million. Foreign governments, through binational commissions or foundations abroad, contributed an additional \$69 million directly to the Program in fiscal year 2009.

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

- Senior J. William Fulbright

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) and in cooperation with a number of private organizations.

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs develops policies to assure fulfillment of the purposes of the Fulbright Program and administers the Program with the assistance of binational commissions and foundations in 50 countries, U.S. embassies in 100 other 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.

Binational commissions and foundations abroad propose the annual country programs, which establish the numbers and categories of grants based on input from local institutions. In a country without a commission or foundation, the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy develops and supervises the Fulbright Program. Currently, 50 commissions are active, 47 of which are funded jointly by the United States and the respective government of the country where the commission or foundation is based. Each commission or foundation has a board, which is composed of an equal number of Americans and citizens of the participating nation.

Some Fulbright Programs are administered directly by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Others are administered with the assistance of cooperating agencies. A foreign citizen interested in the Fulbright Program should contact the Fulbright Commission or Foundation in his home country or, where no commission exists, the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy.

AMIDEAST

Founded in 1951, AMIDEAST seeks to strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation between Americans and the people of the Middle East and North Africa. AMIDEAST has grown and evolved to address changes the world has witnessed in the past half century. Today, through our offices across this region, we deliver professional skills and English language training programs to people from all walks of life.

Strengthening mutual understanding and

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cooperation between Americans and the

بين الأمريكيين والشعوب

peoples of the Middle East and North Africa

الشعوب في الشرق الأوسط وشمال إفريقيا

Our advising and testing services and our administration of exchange programs help make the benefits of an American-style education more accessible to students and professionals throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Our institutional development programs help public and private organizations more effectively and efficiently carry out their missions and serve their constituents. In the United States, AMIDEAST is expanding its outreach efforts to make the rich histories, cultures, and societies of the Middle East and North Africa within reach to American audiences through the distribution of engaging educational materials and the development of unique study abroad experiences.

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'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

In 2010, AMIDEAST operated 23 field and project offices in 13 countries. We provided over 184,000 individuals with information and materials on U.S. higher education and testing, administered 84,000 computer-, paper-, and Internet-based tests, taught English language and professional skills to more than 60,000 students and professionals from across the Middle East/North Africa, and supported short- and long-term international scholarship and exchange programs for over 2,000 participants.

AMIDEAST has administered Fulbright Foreign Student Program grants for Middle East and North Africa 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.

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)** on the G-1-12218 program designation and will issue from that record 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 first implemented by the U.S. government in January 2003. The system 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 and early terminations.

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 or. When you send in your passport for renewal, keep your original Arrival-Departure Record Form (I-94) and 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.

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. Whenever information that appears 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 study program or the Program End Date in your SEVIS record, as listed on your current DS-2019 form, whichever date comes first.**

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.

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 with your country. 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 aggregate two years before you may apply for U.S. immigration, U.S. permanent residency, or a U.S. non-immigrant work visa. The two-year home residency rule does not prohibit you from applying for most tourist, student, or other exchange visitor visas.

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 explains your responsibilities to the Fulbright Program, AMIDEAST, your home country, and the United States government. When your U.S. academic institution is finalized, you will be given the Terms of Appointment to read and sign. You will become a Fulbright grantee upon signing your Terms of Appointment.

Be certain to read your Terms of Appointment very carefully before you sign it. If you have any questions about the information it contains, please consult AMIDEAST or the agency (U.S. Embassy or binational Fulbright Commission) from which you received notification of your award.

Among other things, your Terms of Appointment will indicate the length of your grant, whether your grant is for a degree program or for non-degree research, your primary funding source (a binational Commission or the United States Department of State), whether your grant provides full or partial funding, and your commitment to return to your home country for a total of two years of residency after completion of the grant. If you are receiving a partial grant, the other sources of your funding (your home university/government, an American university, etc.) will also be indicated. Expenses not mentioned in your Terms of Appointment must be paid from your own resources.

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 last day of the month during which you complete your academic program requirements, or upon reaching your Maximum Funding Date (MFD), **whichever date comes first**. For example, if your MFD is July 31, 2013, but you complete your academic program requirements in May 2013, your Fulbright funding will end on May 31, 2013. On the other hand, if your MFD is July 31, 2013, but a delay in your program does not allow you to complete your academic program requirements until December 2013, your Fulbright funding will still end on July 31, 2013. In this situation, you would have to make your own arrangements to remain at your university from August through December.

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 academic program or the Program End Date in your SEVIS record, whichever date comes first.*

Your MFD is exactly nine, ten, twelve, eighteen, twenty-four, or forty-eight months from the first day of the month in which you begin your academic program. The number of months for which you may be eligible for Fulbright

funding depends on the type of grant you have been awarded.

- **Non-degree grants** typically last nine (9), ten (10), or twelve (12) months.
- **Master's degree grants** awarded by the United States Department of State Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs (ECA), the Jordanian-American Commission for Educational Exchange (JACEE), the Binational Fulbright Commission Egypt (BFCE), or the Moroccan-American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange (MACECE) last twenty-four (24) months *unless* the academic program is specifically of a shorter duration.
- **PhD grants** awarded by ECA or JACEE last 24 months.
- **PhD grants** awarded by BFCE last 36 months.
- **PhD grants** awarded by MACECE last 48 months.

Please refer to your Terms of Appointment to determine your Maximum Funding Date (MFD).

INITIAL AND RENEWAL GRANTS

Please keep in mind that Fulbright grants are awarded for no more than twelve months at a time even though you may have been awarded a scholarship to participate in an academic program that would require more than twelve months to complete. Your initial grant will be for twelve months or the specified duration of your grant, if shorter, from the benefit start date indicated on your Terms of Appointment. If eligible, a renewal grant will be awarded each academic year up to your Maximum Funding Date (MFD). Academic performance and sufficient budgetary funds are the major factors considered when evaluating a grantee's eligibility for a grant renewal.

If applicable, you will automatically be offered a grant renewal for a second year (and third and fourth years, in the case of Moroccan PhD grantees only) of funding that ends on or before your MFD. AMIDEAST will send notification of your renewal. You do not need to request or submit an application for a renewal grant.

Grantees in master's degree programs funded by ECA, BFCE, JACEE, and MACECE are eligible for only one renewal grant, for a maximum of 24 months of Fulbright grant benefits. This limit also applies to PhD grantees funded by ECA and JACEE. If your program will continue beyond the second year of Fulbright funding, you must arrange to finance your program with university support and personal funding.

PhD grantees whose programs are funded by MACECE or BFCE may be eligible for additional renewal grants, up to the maximum of their Fulbright grant benefits. If your program continues beyond the limit of Fulbright sponsorship, you will have to finance your program with university support and personal funding.

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

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Your Terms of Appointment indicate that your Fulbright grant will cover the basic estimated living expenses that you will incur during your period of study. The expenses estimate on which the grant is based is moderate and does not cover the cost for clothing, car, vacation travel, or any other expenses that may arise.

If you are currently employed in your home country, you should expect to adjust your standard of living to the style of a graduate student in the United States. While in the United States, you will be able to maintain the standard of living of a working professional only if you use personal financial resources. Expenses not specifically covered by your award must be paid from your own funds.

MONTHLY MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS

If you are to receive maintenance payments through AMIDEAST, you should keep in mind the following points:

1. **If at all possible, bring money with you!** Your AMIDEAST grant is not intended to cover all of your expenses, so even if everything runs smoothly during your travel and the first couple weeks of your program, you will still find that your maintenance allowance will be, at most, only adequate for your needs. At the very least, you will need to have some cash for hotels and food while you go through the process of opening a bank account and waiting a few days until your new bank verifies and processes (also known as “clearing”) your first AMIDEAST check.
2. **Inform your AMIDEAST advisor of your physical address as soon as possible.** This information will allow your AMIDEAST advisor to validate your record in the SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) database. **If you do not report your address within 10 days, your SEVIS record will be in jeopardy.**
3. **Make arrangements to receive your first monthly maintenance check.** If you are in a temporary housing situation, ask your international student office if you may use their address for your first check and notify your AMIDEAST advisor accordingly.
4. **Notify your AMIDEAST advisor if your mailing address is different than your housing address** so that he or she can send future checks and other correspondence to you.
5. **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) system.** To enroll in the system, complete the Electronic Funds Transfer Form found online and return it to AMIDEAST by October 5th. Include a blank check with the word

“VOID” written across the front. 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. Currently, only Egypt, Israel, Morocco and Tunisia have tax treaties with the United States. However, citizens from these countries *must still* file a tax return.

Under current tax law, AMIDEAST, on behalf of the United States Department of State, is required to withhold U.S. Federal Income tax on allowances you receive through AMIDEAST. In order to minimize the effect this law may have on your scholarship, AMIDEAST has been authorized to increase your monthly maintenance and other taxable allowances the required amount and then immediately withhold that same amount. Through this arrangement, you will receive allowances equal to the amounts specified in your Terms of Appointment.

Windstar is the tax software service at AMIDEAST used 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. Additionally, 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.

Upon arrival you will receive an email from AMIDEAST with information on how to complete the online FNIS form and submit it electronically. You will be required to send AMIDEAST your signed Immigration Status Data Form which authorizes AMIDEAST to provide your tax forms through the Windstar web-based software. In January, we will request that students review and /or update their FNIS record to reflect current changes.

By March 15th of each year, AMIDEAST will send you several emails with more specific information about filing a tax return, instructions on how to access your tax forms in FNIS, and how to file your tax return using FNTR. It is then your responsibility to complete and mail the forms to the IRS by the appropriate deadline.

The following forms are tax forms you will most likely encounter at some point during your stay in the U.S. and can be found on the IRS website (www.irs.gov).

W-8Ben (Certificate of Foreign Status of Beneficial Owner for United States Tax Withholding)

If you are from a tax treaty country, please complete this form and submit to AMIDEAST. This form confirms that you are a non-resident alien that should be taxed at a reduced rate.

W-7 (Application for IRS Individual Taxpayer Identification Number)

This form is used to apply for an ITIN number. If you are denied the SSN, please complete the W-7 form to obtain an ITIN.

8843 (Statement for Exempt Individuals and Individuals with a Medical Condition)

This form will be generated and provided to you through FNIS and FNTR and must be filed in order to ensure your exempt status for U.S. tax purposes as a J-1 visa holder. Please send this form to the IRS when filing your tax return.

1042-S (Foreign Person's U.S. Source Income Subject to Withholding)

AMIDEAST will generate and send this form to you by March 15th. This form is used to report income paid to a nonresident alien. Scholarships and fellowship grants that are not in exchange for services are reported on this form (excluding tuition, books, required fees and supplies).

W2 (Wage and Tax Statement)

If you are employed in the U.S., your employer will provide this form to you at the end of the year. The W-2 form is used to report your U.S. income from employment and must be sent to the IRS when filing your tax return.

1040NR (U. S. Nonresident Alien Income Tax Return) or 1040NR-EZ (U.S. Income Tax Return for Certain Nonresident Aliens with no Dependents)

If you use the FNTR software to file your taxes, the 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ form will be generated. You will use one of these forms to file your taxes based on whether or not you have dependents to claim. You cannot claim dependents on the 1040NR-EZ form. One of these forms must be sent to the IRS when you file your tax return.

Any refund of the taxes paid by AMIDEAST on the Fulbright grant must be returned to AMIDEAST by the grantee.

Keep in mind that if you receive income from any source **other than your 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 further information on whether you are required to file a state income tax return. If you are required to file a tax return for the state in which you live and study, it is your responsibility to pay any taxes that you may owe to the state.

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. There are tax experts available for assistance at FNTR@windstar.com.

EARNING MONEY IN THE UNITED STATES

You should not expect to be able to earn money in the United States, and you should not depend on your spouse to earn money if s/he accompanies you.

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.

ACCIDENT AND SICKNESS COVERAGE

As a Fulbright grantee, you have health care coverage through the United States Department of State Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE). AMIDEAST will issue you a card for your ASPE health care coverage policy, currently administered by Seven Corners. This policy only covers accidents and illnesses, which means that it will not cover routine checkups or visits to the doctor. Pre-existing conditions are not covered by the policy. You will need to obtain your own health insurance to cover any ongoing or potential medical requirements for pre-existing conditions.

The ASPE policy covers up to US \$100,000 for each accident or illness for a maximum of 52 weeks. Before being treated for any illness, consult the ASPE Health Benefit Guide regarding the benefits of the ASPE health care coverage; a copy of this booklet will be provided to you along with your ASPE health coverage identification card. It is also available on AMIDEAST's web page for Fulbright grantees: <http://www.amideast.org/fulbright/grantee-resources/grantee-resources>

After reviewing the booklet, visit the ChoiceCare Network on the Seven Corners-ASPE website to find a physician or medical facility in your host town or city within the Preferred Provider Organization (a network of physicians, hospitals and clinics that have agreed to offer the U.S. Department of State discounted health care services). Using ChoiceCare saves you money because U.S. Department of State will generally pay 100% of the covered charges when you use a ChoiceCare preferred physician or medical provider. Failure to use a ChoiceCare provider in a network area may result in your being responsible for charges over the usual and customary amount. You may also call customer service for free (if you are calling from within the United States) at 1-800-461-0430 for assistance in locating a provider.

You will need to pay the first \$15 of the treatment of any illness or injury (as mentioned in the ASPE brochure, this first US\$15 is called a "co-pay"). Ask your health care provider whether you will need to pay upon being treated or whether

the provider can bill your Health Benefit Plan directly. In most states, payment will not be required at the time of services (except for the co-pay amount). Please be aware that the policy 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 here with you in the United States. If your university has required that you purchase its medical insurance policy, you must use the university policy first before you use the ASPE Health Benefit Plan. Contact AMIDEAST with any additional questions regarding your health coverage and policy.

The health care coverage you receive does not cover routine eye exams and dental checkups, although some university health plans include access to an on-campus dental clinic. We recommend that you see your optometrist and dentist before leaving your home country, as these types of checkups can be expensive in the United States. If you are interested in purchasing a separate dental coverage policy, the international student office at your host institution may be able to recommend a reputable insurance company.

Prescription Medication

If you are taking a prescription medication, we recommend that you bring a sufficient amount with you to the United States, as well as a copy of your prescription. Many pharmacies will not honor a prescription written in another country, and you may need to obtain a new prescription from a physician in the United States. The visit required to obtain the prescription might not be covered by your health care policy.

Immunizations

Most universities require that students receive immunization shots prior or upon arrival to campus. The university will notify students which immunizations are required and it is up to the student to receive them either while still in their home country or upon arriving to the U.S. If immunizations are required by your university and you didn't receive them prior to arriving in the U.S., the following will be covered by ASPE:

Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR), Polio, Varicella, Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Quadrivalent Human Papillomavirus Vaccine (HPV), Hepatitis A Vaccine, Hepatitis B Vaccine, Hepatitis C Vaccine, Meningococcal Tetravalent (Meningitis), Influenza, Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Vaccine, Tuberculosis skin test (PPD) and Tetanus booster—only if booster is required by the University.

Mental Health

It is important that you read and understand how this aspect of your health care coverage works. Keep in mind that 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, just as you would for a physical problem. Most universities have mental health

professionals who can help you.

USE OF FACEBOOK, BLOGS & OTHER INTERNET-BASED MEDIA

With the growth of blogging and social networking sites in recent years, Fulbrighters have had more opportunity than ever to share their experiences with friends, family and the Internet community. This in turn brings positive attention to the Fulbright Program and its impact not only on the Fulbrighter but the host community as well.

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 acknowledging that yours is not an official Department of State website, 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.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE YOUR OWN COUNTRY

THE VISA PROCESS

AMIDEAST will provide the **DS-2019 form** needed to obtain a J-1 visa through the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, binational Commission or AMIDEAST field office in your home country. As soon as you receive your 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:

- Be sure *not* to apply for an F-1 (student) visa, a B (temporary visitor) visa, or an immigrant visa. Applying for any of these visas during your application or grant period may jeopardize your status as a Fulbright grantee.
- Make sure your passport is 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.
- You will only be able to meet with the Consular Officer for a short period of time during your interview. 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.
- As part of the visa interview, a quick ink-free fingerprint scan will be taken, as well as a digital photo.

Please consult with your AMIDEAST advisor or U.S. Embassy official about these matters well in advance of your application date so that you have time to prepare appropriately.

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 Nonimmigrant 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>

What to expect when entering the United States: http://www.ice.gov/sevis/factsheet/100104ent_exchng_fs.htm

PRE-ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

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

Fulbright pre-academic programs are organized and run by the **Institute of International Education (IIE)**, which, like AMIDEAST, is one of the

organizations that assist ECA in the administration of the Fulbright Program.

The summer English language programs can last from six to twelve weeks and may begin as early as May and end as late as September. Final placement in an English language program will depend upon your academic start date and if your grant is finalized early. If your grant is finalized late in the season (after May), it is unlikely that you will be placed in an English language program due to limited spaces in the programs.

If you do not need intensive English language study but would benefit from enrollment in a three-day to six-week program of academic, social and cultural orientation, you may be assigned to a general orientation program. These programs are usually conducted during the last part of July and the first part of August.

If you are placed in a pre-academic program, AMIDEAST expects that you will attend. On behalf of the U.S. Department of State, IIE will pay your tuition and living expenses, as well as provide you with a small stipend for the period between the end of your pre-academic program and the start of your academic program.

Dependents may not accompany you to a pre-academic program. Housing for dependents is not provided at the sites for these programs, and accompanying dependents distract the grantees from full participation in the pre-academic program.

If IIE places you in a pre-academic program, more specific information regarding that program will be forwarded to you in your home country.

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 any immediate family members will accompany you.
- Obtain international **airline tickets**. Find out about any baggage specifications and security clearances for your particular airlines.
- Review **medical coverage** information and purchase additional insurance/coverage for yourself or any accompanying dependents. Before you leave, it is suggested that you take care of any routine check-ups and purchase extra medications or prescriptions, including eyeglasses, to sustain you while in the U.S.
- Make arrangements with your **bank** to transfer funds to a U.S. bank; purchase traveler's checks, and obtain a small amount of U.S. currency.

TRAVEL TO THE U.S.

Unless your Terms of Appointment specifically states otherwise, you will receive your airline ticket to the United States from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, from 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.

AMIDEAST/Washington, D.C. will send arrival information to you in advance of your departure from your home country. This information will concern whether or not you will be met at the airport (if applicable); the location of your temporary housing (if applicable); transportation arrangements to your university or temporary housing site; the name and contact information of the person or office you should contact upon arrival at your university or pre-academic program; and the name and contact information of your AMIDEAST advisors in Washington.

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 on your DS-2019.

TRAVEL TIPS

The United States welcomes international students and wants you to have a positive and productive experience in our country. Recent world events have made travel more difficult for everyone, but we hope that the following information will help ease your arrival into our country. In recent years, more security procedures have been put in place at all U.S. airports. People are asked to remove their shoes during the security-check process, and individuals are randomly selected for more detailed inspections. If this happens, please understand that it is currently a standard part of the search process for anyone traveling to or within the United States. To allow sufficient time for undergoing security procedures, please plan to arrive at the airport 2-3 hours early.

Know where you are going once you reach your final destination (hotel, university, etc.), and have the address and telephone number of that location with you. 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 do arise, please be sure to travel with an adequate supply of U.S. dollars in case of an emergency and your AMIDEAST advisor's contact information.

Special Meals

If you have any special dietary restrictions (any special food you can or cannot eat), you should request a special meal at least three days prior to traveling. This request can usually be done by contacting your travel agent, or you may need to contact the airline directly. Standard special request meals include vegetarian, Halal, and diabetic meals.

Local Transportation

If prior arrangements were not made for you to be met at the airport, you can find out what options are available for getting to your hotel or other accommodations at the baggage claim area of the airport. Most airports have an information desk that can help you find the best way to get where you are going. Also, if the hotel has a “courtesy shuttle service” (free hotel bus service), the telephones to call for pick-up will usually be located at the baggage claim area. Common means of transportation from the airport are “courtesy hotel shuttles” (free hotel bus services), taxis, buses, and subways.

PACKING TIPS

Airline and transportation companies can provide you with information on what not to carry in your luggage. Below are a few logistical guidelines to assist you as you prepare to pack:

1. Allow enough time before or between flights for random searches, which are conducted at all airports and for all flights. All travelers, including U.S. citizens, are subject to these searches. Both checked and carry-on luggage may be opened and checked.
2. Carry-on luggage should be kept to a minimum. Most airlines now allow only one carry-on bag and one personal item (such as a briefcase, handbag or laptop).
3. Check the airline’s policy on allowable number and size or weight of baggage, as well as fees charged. Many airlines are now charging fees upon check-in for each piece of checked luggage.
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 case your baggage is lost or your flight is unexpectedly delayed.
5. **Keep all important papers and documents (immigration papers, original transcripts, travelers’ checks, medical documents, medications, etc.), as well as arrival information, with you in the carry-on bag. Place copies of these documents inside your checked luggage. Leave another copy with a friend or relative in your home country.**
6. Be prepared to open and turn on all electronic devices (such as laptop computers or iPods) that you plan to bring with you.
7. 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.

8. 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.

9. There are many items that are **prohibited** in carry-on luggage:

- Liquids in containers *larger* than 3 oz (~85g)
- Cigarette lighters
- Knives of any size
- Razor-type blades
- Fingernail clippers with files attached
- Beard or mustache trimmers

Liquids in aerosol cans such as deodorant, hair care products, and perfume, etc.

Shaving creams

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

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>

WHAT TO BRING

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

- This handbook
- Your passport, DS-2019 form, and all other immigration documents
- The original diplomas and transcripts you received from all the post-secondary academic institutions you have attended
- Medical and dental records for you and any dependents traveling with you, 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)
- 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 one to three years if you plan to purchase automobile insurance in the U.S.
- Your U.S. Social Security Number if you were issued one during a previous visit to the United States
- An official document stating the date of your birth if it is not shown on your passport (proof of your date of birth is required to get a Social Security number)
- 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 traveler’s 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:

- Personal items;
- 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 anything else 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. The reservation can be made for two or three nights and, if necessary, can be held with an AMIDEAST credit card. If a hotel or other temporary housing arrangement is made for you, you will receive the name, address and telephone number of the hotel before you leave your home country.

Even though AMIDEAST may hold your reservation with a credit card, you will be responsible for paying for the room charge at the time you check in. Please do not allow the hotel to charge your room to the AMIDEAST credit card. Phone calls made from a hotel room can be very expensive, and you will also have to pay for those phone calls at the time you check out. Although prices vary according to the location of and services provided by the hotel, you should expect to pay between \$60 and \$125 for each night you stay.

Note: If your travel plans change while you are in transit, and you do not think that you will be able to use your reservation, please remember that you are 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

AT THE AIRPORT, ON THE AIRPLANE

Before your flight arrives in the United States, the flight attendants will distribute a Customs Declaration Form and the Arrival Departure Record Form (I-94). The I-94 card is a record of your legal entrance into the United States. It will be stamped and stapled into your passport when you are admitted to the United States. You should make sure that you are marked as a J-1 visa holder and that your end date is "D/S," which stands for "duration of status." This end date means that the official viewing this form should refer to your DS-2019 to see the end date of your status.

Keep your I-94 card in your passport because when you leave the United States, even if it is for a short trip, you will have to return your I-94 card to a United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) official before your departure. You will complete a new card when you return to the U.S.

THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS

At your port of entry in the U.S., proceed to the terminal area for arriving passengers. You should be ready to present your passport, the DS-2019 form, the I-94 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. Also, as part of the new US-VISIT program, you will have two fingerprints scanned and a digital photograph taken. The United States Customs and Border Protection (USCBP) officer will stamp your DS-2019 form and staple the I-94 card in your passport. For a useful description of this process, visit: <http://www.educationusa.info/pages/students/travel.php> .

You may also be asked to participate in a second interview, which would be held in private. This interview is nothing to worry about! It simply means that the immigration officer wants more details on the purpose of your visit. Again, be truthful with your answers but do not offer any unsolicited information. Please note that anyone could be subject to additional scrutiny, and persons are selected at random for this program.

Until recently, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) maintained a watch list based on country of birth, citizenship, and/or field of study. Individuals meeting specific criteria were subject to special registration in the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS). These countries included Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. As of April 28, 2011, NSEERS is no longer in effect.

Please note that you may still be chosen for inspection, including secondary

inspection, but the difference is that citizens of the above countries are no longer automatically referred for secondary inspection.

The notice put out by U.S. Customs and Border Protection which announces, more clearly, the DHS elimination of special registration through NSEERS is here: [https://help.cbp.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/1214/~/-/special-registration-\(nseers\)](https://help.cbp.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/1214/~/-/special-registration-(nseers)). This may be useful for you to read, print and keep a copy just in case you encounter any transportation officials who are unaware of the changes.

In general, please *allow several hours between connecting flights* to pass through immigration.

United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology (US-VISIT)

All nonimmigrant visa holders must participate in the US-VISIT program, a biometric system that tracks entries to and exits from the United States. In many cases, US-VISIT begins when you apply for your visa and consular officials collect digital fingerprints, digital photographs, 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. It is kept on file for future comparison, such as when exiting the United States. More information on the US-VISIT system can be found at http://www.dhs.gov/xtrvlsec/programs/content_multi_image_0006.shtm

ARRIVAL AT YOUR ACADEMIC INSTITUTION

Although it is generally best to arrive a day or two before the university's official registration date, for grantees who need to look for housing, we suggest you arrive at least a week ahead of time. There is little advantage in arriving too early, however, and you should follow whatever instructions you have received from the university or from AMIDEAST.

As soon as you know where you will be living during the academic year, you must again notify your AMIDEAST advisor in Washington, DC, of both your mailing address and your residential address, if different. Any time that your address, phone number, or email changes, you must notify AMIDEAST within ten days of that change.

If you are a **degree-seeking** grantee and have not received instructions about a specific person or office to report to upon arrival, you should visit the international student office as soon as you are settled. The staff there will be able to give you helpful information about what you should do next. If you have any questions, please contact your AMIDEAST advisor in Washington.

If you are a **non-degree** grantee and have not received instructions about a specific person or office to report to upon arrival, you should visit your new academic department as soon as you are settled. Do not be surprised if some offices at your university do not have any record of you. Non-degree student

arrangements are often made directly with the department, and sometimes the university administration will be unaware of your arrival and/or your connection with the institution.

After you arrive at your academic institution, you should use the following checklist to prioritize some of the things that need to be taken care of immediately:

1. Contact your AMIDEAST advisor in Washington, D.C.;
2. Check in with the International Student Office on your campus; inquire about any orientations programs that have been planned by the international student office and/or your academic department, and any welcoming activities for spouses and/or children;
3. Locate permanent housing;
4. Open a bank account with your first MMA check from AMIDEAST;
5. Complete and return all AMIDEAST forms within 15 days of registering for classes;
6. Identify a hospital in case of an emergency;
7. 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;
8. If you plan to, purchase an automobile, obtain a driver's license – even if you have a driver's license from your home country, you need to obtain one for the U.S. – register the car, and purchase car insurance;
9. Investigate schooling for any accompanying children;
10. Look for cultural enrichment or volunteer opportunities on your campus or in the local community.

The first thing you should do when you arrive at your university or pre-academic program is to call your AMIDEAST advisor in Washington, DC, to let him/her know that you have arrived safely and to provide your local address. AMIDEAST is responsible for validating your Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) database record and updating your address. If you cannot call your AMIDEAST advisor directly, our toll-free office number is 1-800-368-5720 (“toll-free” means that you can call from anywhere in the United States for free).

Failure to notify AMIDEAST of your arrival within ten days of your entry into the United States will automatically invalidate your SEVIS record and will seriously impact your ability to stay in the United States to begin your program.

MAIL

Until you reach your academic institution, your mail may be sent in care of (c/o) your AMIDEAST advisor in Washington or in care of your pre-academic program director. *You should inform your family, friends, and U.S. university of your new address as soon as you locate permanent housing.* We will forward mail to you for a limited time, but you will receive your mail much faster if it is sent to you directly.

Whenever you move you must report your new address to your AMIDEAST advisor within ten days of the move. You should complete a change-of-address form at your local United States Post Office, so that mail can be forwarded from your old address to your new address. You can also do this online at the US Post Office website: <https://moversguide.usps.com/?referral=USPS>. Also, inform your university and leave your forwarding address with the manager of your current place of residence.

HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

You are responsible for making your own housing arrangements for the academic year. AMIDEAST cannot make housing arrangements for you. Grantees select their own housing because the needs of each person differ, as does the situation on each campus. As soon as you know at which university you have been finalized, we encourage you to begin investigating housing opportunities on campus. AMIDEAST/Washington, D.C. will forward any information received about housing to you through the field office, U.S. Embassy, or Commission in your home country.

Finding suitable housing accommodations at many universities can be challenging and stressful. In most places, dormitory space and inexpensive off-campus rooms and apartments are in short supply. However, most universities have special on- and off-campus housing offices that will provide you with lists of available places and varying degrees of assistance in securing them. Please note that most graduate students are living in shared accommodations, as apartments for singles tend to be significantly more expensive.

If you decide to accept **on-campus housing**, you will be responsible for completing all required application forms. Some universities ask for a deposit. Other universities will ask you to pay a large portion, if not the full semester's balance, of your on-campus housing fee at or before the time of registration. Be sure to find out how much your on-campus housing will cost, when payment must be received, and how you are going to arrange for payment. If necessary, 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 over a three or four month period, or some adequate arrangement will be agreed upon between you and your AMIDEAST advisor. Please keep in mind that these deductions may significantly reduce, or even eliminate, your monthly maintenance payment. Please ask your AMIDEAST advisor for assistance if you find yourself in this situation.

Although **housing rates** can vary widely, you should expect to spend about half of your monthly maintenance allowance on rent. Please note that on-campus housing contracts and off-campus rental leases are legally binding, so pay special attention to deadlines and length of commitment to your housing lease.

AMIDEAST recommends that you purchase **renter's insurance**. Renter's insurance is a policy that provides protection and compensation for your personal property if it is destroyed or stolen. Renter's insurance covers personal property that is damaged by fire, smoke, vandalism, water, hail, and windstorms. Additionally, renter's insurance protects you from monetary accountability if an accident occurs in your home. If an emergency requires you to vacate your home, the renter's insurance may cover expenses incurred for temporary housing.

GUIDE TO FINDING HOUSING

(Adapted from a handbook produced by Boston University)

Familiarize & Prioritize:

- Take some time to fully explore the many housing options available to you.
- Familiarize yourself with your city and its surrounding communities.
- Identify a few key items that are important to you in your search for housing, and then rate those items in order of importance.
- Be prepared to make trade-offs; it is important to know what you want, yet be willing to make compromises if you discover that you have set unrealistic goals.

Take into consideration:

- Cost: Estimate how much you are able to afford on a monthly basis for rent, utilities, food, transportation, parking, and personal expenses.
- Location: Familiarize yourself with the many neighborhoods of your city. What is the maximum amount of time you are willing to spend commuting on a daily basis? Do you prefer an urban or suburban living environment?
- Transportation: Learn what type of public transportation is available to and from various neighborhoods.
- Roommates: In most cases, sharing an apartment with one or more roommates offers an economical alternative to the high cost of living alone. It is a common practice for individuals at a university to share apartments. You should decide whether or not this is an option you are willing to consider.
- Safety: Always determine your personal level of comfort in an area in which you are considering living. Try visiting the area at night to see what it is like. Ask others living in the neighborhood how they feel about the location.
- Style of Housing: Consider what type of apartment living will make you feel most at home. Does the idea of living in a large apartment community appeal to you? Are you willing to pay more for the amenities normally associated with that type of living? Would you prefer to live in a smaller apartment community? How about a single- or multi-family home?

Use Various Search Methods:

- Contact the appropriate office on your university campus.
- Investigate local apartment communities. Some of these may be the same listings you will encounter when working with a real estate agent. Any time

you are able to make direct contact with a landlord or with a management company, you avoid having to pay a finder's fee, which can equal up to one month's rent.

- Search for apartments online. Numerous web sites enable apartment hunters to conduct searches online throughout the United States. For example, Craigslist.com and local on-line newspapers often contain many local listings.
- Contact a local real estate agent. Working with a real estate agent is often one of the best options for those with little time to dedicate to the search. A realtor can take you to view multiple apartments, alleviating the need for you to contact individuals and set up appointments ahead of time. In return for their services, realtors often charge a finder's fee, which can equal up to one month's rent.

Reevaluate:

After having viewed several apartments, it is always a good idea to reevaluate the original parameters you had set for your apartment search. Have the apartments you have viewed so far met your expectations? Do your goals seem realistic and attainable? Have you tried more than one search method?

The process of searching for an apartment generally requires a great deal of time and effort. If you find an apartment you like, be prepared to act quickly.

What to Take with You on Your Housing Search:

It is best to be prepared to make an offer at all times. If you find an apartment you like, it is generally wise to act quickly on your decision. The sooner you are able to make your decision, the better your chances are of securing the apartment of your choice. Remember to bring the following items with you in order to expedite the application process:

- Checkbook
- Official Form of Identification
- Letter of Acceptance (or enrollment verification)
- Name and contact information of current and former landlord (if applicable)
- Name and contact information of personal and credit reference
- Name and contact information of current and former employer (AMIDEAST may verify your monthly stipend)
- Bank checking and savings account information
- Guarantor contact information

Timeline for Conducting Your Housing Search:

The earlier you can start familiarizing yourself with the area and get a sense of what you are looking for, the better. In most cases, if you like what you see, you can submit an application well in advance of when you plan to move in. Most large apartment communities know that they will have vacancies in August and September, and so as a result, they generate waiting lists for available units.

Typical Move-In Costs:

In many cases, first month's rent, last month's rent, and a security deposit are required upon move-in. In addition to these costs, if you find your apartment through a realtor you may also be required to pay a finder's fee of up to one month's rent. Keep in mind that ONLY a licensed real estate broker or salesperson can charge you a fee for the purpose of finding an apartment.

Apartment Hunting Questions:

- How much is rent?
- Is a security deposit required? If so, how much is it and when is it due?
- Is last month's rent required up front?
- What utilities are included in the rent, i.e. heat, electricity, hot water, gas?
- What is the average cost of utilities per month?
- On what date is the apartment available for move-in?
- What length of time does the lease period cover?
- Is subletting allowed?
- How far away is the nearest form of public transportation? Where does it go?
- Is there an additional fee for private parking? How difficult is it to find on-street parking?
- What are the safety features of the unit/building?
- What are the best/worst attributes of the neighborhood?
- Where is the nearest grocery store? Laundromat? Bank?
- Does the apartment have air-conditioning?
- Is there additional storage space available?
- Are pets allowed?

Legal Issues Involved with Co-Tenancy:

When two or more people simultaneously sign the same rental agreement, they become co-tenants and share the same legal rights and responsibilities for their shared housing unit. This arrangement can have some serious implications, especially in the event that one tenant stops paying their share of the rent. Co-tenants may decide to split the rent equally or unequally, depending on their own personal wishes. How the rent is divided up amongst tenants has no impact on the landlord. Each co-tenant is independently liable to the landlord for the entirety of rent. What this means is that if one tenant cannot pay a share of the rent in a particular month, or simply moves out, the other tenant(s) must still pay the full rent. A landlord can legally hold all co-tenants responsible for the negative actions of just one and terminate everyone's tenancy with the appropriate notice. It is also important to remember that only a judge can evict tenants through an eviction suit filed by a landlord. In other words, you do not have the legal power to evict your roommate by filing an eviction action.

Good communication is one of the keys to a successful roommate relationship. The more you can anticipate possible problems from the start, the better prepared you will be to handle any disputes that may arise. In some cases it may be helpful to create a written roommate agreement. At the very least, all financial agreements should be in writing.

Tenant Rights:

In any housing situation, it is important to know your rights and responsibilities as a tenant. Students requiring legal advice should contact a qualified attorney.

Types of Leases:

Tenant with a Lease: a tenant signs a lease to rent a particular apartment for a specified period of time. Under the tenancy, the landlord cannot increase your rent until the end of the lease and cannot attempt to evict you before the end of your lease, unless you violate the lease agreement. You are legally obligated to pay your rent until the end of the lease. However, if you need to move out before the end of the lease, the landlord has a duty to help reduce damages by looking for another tenant to replace you in most circumstances. **ALWAYS READ YOUR LEASE BEFORE SIGNING!** Any verbal agreements or amendments to the lease must be initialed by both you and your landlord. Your landlord is legally obligated to provide you with a copy of your lease within 30 days of signing it.

Tenant at-Will: a tenant is living in an apartment without a written lease and has the permission of the landlord. This type of tenancy is also commonly referred to as a month-to-month lease. An agreement for a tenancy at-will may be either written or verbal. Either you or the landlord may terminate this arrangement at any time by giving written notice 30 days or one full rental period in advance, whichever is longer. No reason is required in order to terminate the agreement by either party.

Security Deposits & Last Month's Rent:

A security deposit is a deposit of the money given to the landlord to ensure that rent will be paid and other responsibilities will be performed (i.e. paying for damage caused by the tenant). Last month's rent is the prepayment given to the landlord for the last month of tenancy. Neither payment may be greater than the amount of one month's rent. Upon receiving the last month's rent and/or security deposit, the landlord must give you a receipt for each payment. The landlord is required to pay you interest on both the security deposit and the last month's rent. Interest is payable to you each year on the anniversary date of your tenancy. The landlord must send you a statement of interest owed and must either include the payment of interest or allow you to deduct the amount from your next rental payment. Once you terminate your tenancy, any interest owed to you must be paid within 30 days of termination.

Statement of Condition:

If you are required to pay a security deposit, you have the right to a written statement of condition from the landlord within 10 days of them receiving your deposit. His or her statement of condition must include a comprehensive list of any existing damage to the premises. Once you receive this statement, you have 15 days to either agree with the conditions or write your own list of damages and return the statement to your landlord. If you fail to return the statement within 15 days, then you are agreeing with the landlord's statement and could be held

responsible for damages that occurred before you moved in. If the landlord does not give you a statement of condition, then you should write one yourself, sign and date it, and give a copy to your landlord.

Unlawful Entry:

As a tenant, you have the right to lawful and exclusive possession of your apartment. Your landlord must give you reasonable notice before entering your apartment. Generally, this means 24 hours notice to determine a mutually convenient time. A landlord that unreasonably enters your apartment may be guilty of criminal trespassing. By law, you are required to provide a landlord with reasonable access to your apartment for the following reasons:

- To inspect the premises
- To make repairs
- To show the apartment to prospective purchasers or tenants
- In accordance with a court order
- If the premises appears to have been abandoned
- To inspect the premises within the last 30 days of tenancy if you have paid a security deposit in order to determine the amount of damage

Rent Increases:

A rental increase may be any amount the landlord wishes to charge. Rent for a tenant with a lease can be increased only when the lease term expires. Tenants at will may face a rent increase at any time, as long as notice is received at least one full rental period, but not less than 30 days, before it becomes effective.

You do not have to accept an increase in rent. As long as you continue to pay the old rent, you cannot be evicted for non-payment of rent. The landlord can still take you to court on this issue but not for non-payment. If you are unhappy with a proposed rent increase but would like to stay in your apartment, you should try to negotiate with the landlord rather than battle it out in court. The landlord may be willing to accept a smaller increase or agree to do repairs or make improvements in the apartment. Once you work out an acceptable agreement, ask the landlord to put it in writing to be signed.

Eviction:

The only person who can evict you from your apartment is a judge. All landlords must go to court and obtain permission from a judge in order to evict you. Eviction is a long and expensive process. If there is a chance that mediation can solve the problem before it has to go to court, we recommend that you strongly consider this option.

If you have a lease, you cannot be evicted unless:

- Your lease has expired;
- You are not paying your rent;

- You are in violation of your lease, and the lease states that such violations may be cause for eviction;
- You use the apartment for illegal purpose.

Habitability Rights:

All tenants are entitled to a safe and habitable living environment through their entire tenancy. The State Sanitary Code protects the health, safety, and well-being of tenants and the general public.

Remedies:

If you feel conditions exist that may violate the State Sanitation Code, call your landlord, advise him/her of the problem, and request repair. In addition, put your request in writing so that you have documented evidence of your request. If the landlord does not take action to fix repairs in violation of code, consider the following:

- Report violations – Call your local Board of Health or Housing Inspection Department and request an inspection. Be sure the inspector gives you a copy of the report before leaving your apartment. A few days later, you should receive another copy of the report and a repair order in the mail stating that the landlord has been notified of the code violations and must fix them within a specific period of time.
- Withhold Rent – If repairs are not fixed within a reasonable amount of time, you may withhold a portion of your rent as a means of forcing repairs. Withholding rent is a serious step and should be dealt with carefully. You may want to get some legal advice before proceeding since the landlord may try and evict you for non-payment of rent.
- Repair and Deduct – To repair and deduct may be another option. In this case, you would make emergency repairs and be entitled to deduct up to four months future rent to pay for the work. At this stage of remedy, if you qualify under “repair and deduct,” you may also choose to treat the lease as broken, and move rather than undertake the necessary repairs. It is wise to seek legal council before proceeding with this type of action.

Renter’s Insurance:

Renter’s insurance covers the cost of replacing personal property in the event of a fire, water damage, robbery, or other unexpected peril. A typical policy also covers the loss of property when it occurs away from your apartment. In the case of a vehicle break in, for instance, the loss of your CD collection would, in most cases, be covered by your renter’s insurance policy. Many people believe that their personal items are covered under their landlord’s property insurance. Landlords have insurance, but only for their property, not yours. If the water pipes burst in your apartment, the landlord will fix any damage done to the building, but will not cover damage to any of your personal items. To obtain quotes from multiple insurers try www.netquote.com. Here you can submit information about your residence and receive quotes from multiple insurance agencies. You may also want to try doing a search on www.moving.com to locate area insurance providers, or simply refer to the yellow pages phone book.

AUTOMOBILES

While Fulbright regulations do not forbid grantees from owning cars, AMIDEAST strongly discourages grantees from owning automobiles unless one is necessary to carry out academic assignments. An automobile is expensive to maintain, and ownership of a car carries with it certain liabilities and responsibilities. Some sponsors prohibit students from owning automobiles altogether.

If you find it necessary to purchase an automobile or other motor vehicle, you must abide by state and university regulations, and purchase adequate automobile insurance coverage. This insurance coverage is extremely important since AMIDEAST, ECA, and your binational Fulbright Commission (if applicable) will not assume any responsibility in case of accident or loss. You should seek the advice of your international student advisor about finding adequate insurance coverage and inform yourself of the liability insurance laws of the state in which your academic institution is located.

Before purchasing a car, be sure to obtain a valid driver's license from your state. Once you have purchased a car, you need to be sure that it is properly registered as required in your area. All states require your car to be registered with the state government, and you may also need to register your car with your city. Many states require that your car pass a safety and emissions inspection before it may be registered. Certain states charge a personal property tax for owning a car. The total amount is usually based upon the model and age of your car.

You will also need to purchase car insurance. Car insurance coverage will help to protect you if you are involved in an accident. In addition, many states require you to show proof of insurance coverage before they will register your car. There are many insurance companies and several types of insurance. Be sure to look at several policies and companies before you decide which is best for you. Never sign a policy without reading it. If there is something in your policy that you do not understand, ask a friend, professor or your international student advisor. **AMIDEAST strongly recommends that you buy both collision and liability insurance for your automobile, regardless of the minimum requirements of the state in which you live.**

Generally, traffic laws are the same throughout the United States. You are responsible, however, for knowing all the local laws wherever you drive. Although most states allow you to drive 65 miles per hour on interstate highways, this speed limit does not apply in all states. Parking regulations also vary greatly from city to city.

BANKING AND FINANCE

Banks are the safest place to keep your money. **Do not keep large amounts of cash in your home or on you.** You will need to open a bank account as soon as possible upon your arrival at your academic institution. Once your bank account is open, you will need to complete the AMIDEAST Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) form. AMIDEAST will use this information to set up a system so that

your Fulbright allowances are deposited directly into your bank account. Your international students' office should be able to provide information on banking in your area.

Banks may offer different types of accounts, but the two types that are of interest to you will be a checking account and a savings account. You will need a checking account to pay bills like rent and utilities. You may be required to maintain a minimum balance in order to avoid fees, or the bank may charge you a standard fee each month so that you do not have to keep a set amount of money. Be sure to have the bank staff explain all of the options to you.

Although credit cards prove to be very useful, beware that debt can accumulate with high interest rates. When applying for a credit card, you will need to ask for the best possible interest rate and if there are any penalties for not paying the entire balance of the credit card each month. We recommend that you do not make any purchases on a credit card that you do not have the actual funds to cover.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER OR INDIVIDUAL TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

Every person who receives income in the United States is identified by either a Social Security Number (SSN) or an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). These numbers are unique personal identifiers widely used in the U.S. So that AMIDEAST can properly report tax information to the IRS, you are required to obtain a 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 and Social Security card. You will need this number to file federal and state taxes and also to use if you engage in any employment (with prior AMIDEAST approval) while in the United States. However, it is not always easy to obtain this number. Therefore, to make the application process as easy as possible, you can do the following:

1. Contact AMIDEAST upon arrival in the United States. AMIDEAST must "validate" your SEVIS record before you are allowed to apply for the Social Security card. Additionally, you must have been validated for *at least* 48 hours before you may apply.
2. You must have been in the United States for *more than ten days* before you may apply for the Social Security number.
3. Bring proper documentation with you, including the following:
 - Your passport;
 - Your I-94 card;
 - Your DS-2019 form;
 - Your AMIDEAST-issued Social Security letter.

If possible, and if in English, you should also bring your birth certificate.

Please note that 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, please remind them that AMIDEAST serves as your sponsoring agency and is responsible for any employment authorization. Only AMIDEAST can issue you a letter regarding your need to obtain a Social Security number. If you encounter problems applying for the Social Security number, please contact your AMIDEAST advisor and your university's international office.

Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)

If you do not have or are not able to obtain a Social Security Number, then you will need an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN). The ITIN is a tax processing number issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). It is a nine-digit number that always begins with the number 9 and has a 7 or 8 in the fourth digit, for example 9XX-7X-XXXX. The IRS issues ITINs to foreign nationals and others who have federal tax reporting or filing requirements and do not have or are not eligible to obtain a Social Security Number (SSN). To apply for an ITIN, you should go to the nearest IRS office and complete Form W-7. For the location of a local IRS office and further information on ITINs, please contact the international student office on your campus.

WAIVING UNIVERSITY HEALTH INSURANCE

Your university may automatically enroll you in its own health insurance policy unless you “waive” this enrollment. 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 very important that you waive any optional university health insurance before you arrive or upon arrival. Your Fulbright grant will not pay for this coverage. **Any expenses for non-mandatory university insurance will be billed directly to you.**

If you are not sure about your university's health insurance policy or waiver procedures, please talk to your international student advisor or other appropriate individual. It is your responsibility to obtain and act upon accurate information regarding university health insurance.

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 an advisor who will be your primary contact person at AMIDEAST. Throughout the year, AMIDEAST 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. **It is very important that you provide us with an e-mail address at the university, as well as your personal email, since accounts such as yahoo, hotmail, etc. might move AMIDEAST group messages to your spam filter.** You can expect to hear from your Program Officer and Program Assistant periodically. If you have not received an email from AMIDEAST at least 3 times a semester, be sure to check in. For information about academic and campus matters, consult the advisors assigned to you by your academic institution (i.e., 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 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 problems;
- The arrival of any dependents in the United States;
- Any international travel;
- Plans for departure from the United States.

REPORTING TO AMIDEAST

The United States government has mandated that an internet-based system be implemented to enable schools and the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to exchange information on the immigration and academic status of international students, scholars, and their dependents nationwide. This program, called the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is also used by the U.S. government to track arrivals and departures of international exchange visitors, as well as current local address, continued enrollment, academic training, on-campus employment, and other important related activities. AMIDEAST is responsible for creating, maintaining and updating your SEVIS record in compliance with SEVIS and J-1 exchange visitor regulations. **It is therefore imperative that you comply with the AMIDEAST requirements outlined here.**

All the forms that AMIDEAST will ask you to complete can be found on our website. The AMIDEAST address for the Fulbright Program is: <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, then your SEVIS record is automatically noted as invalid. This will seriously impact your ability to stay in the United States and begin your program.*

WITHIN THE FIRST WEEKS: AMIDEAST will be requesting several forms from you over the course of the first weeks of your academic program. These forms can be found on the website: http://www.amideast.org/fulbright/grantee_resources/default.shtm
These forms include:

- Academic Program Outline
- Information Release Form
- Electronic Funds Transfer Form (to be submitted with 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)

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

Beginning with your second term, AMIDEAST will ask you to complete a Progress Report at the start of each new term. 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 us 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.

If you are a **non-degree student**, you are required to submit a Progress Report. If you officially registered for coursework during the term, you must also submit a university-issued grade report.

SUMMER PLANS: In April of each year, AMIDEAST will request that you and your academic advisor complete a Summer Plans Form, and return it to AMIDEAST by a specified date. This form will tell us what you plan to do during the summer and let us know what allowances you should 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. A "full-time summer load" is determined by your university.

If there are no courses offered by your university during the summer, or if none are appropriate for you, you should investigate your options to 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 are 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.**

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. More details are found in the subsequent section, entitled **Concluding Your Fulbright Program**.

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.*

During the period of your Fulbright grant, you will also receive notices from AMIDEAST requesting that you complete other required forms and documents. Although you may get tired of seeing them, each and every one is important and must be returned to us by the date indicated! We truly appreciate your patience and cooperation with this matter.

In addition, you should tell your AMIDEAST advisor about any important academic problems, as well as changes in your personal circumstances (i.e., health problems, marriage, divorce, plans for departure from or arrival to the United States, or births of any dependents).

PRIOR APPROVAL: You must obtain *advance approval* 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;
- Reduced course load (less than full-time).

Employment and Academic Training policies are discussed in the corresponding sections 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: 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 approximately one week 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. Please be prepared to plan accordingly.

Book Allowance: Your Fulbright grant provides funds for books as long as you are engaged in academic work in the United States. Unless otherwise specified through your Commission, installments will be paid to you with your September maintenance as a Fall Book Allowance, and in January as a Spring Book Allowance. You will receive another book allowance in June as a Summer Book Allowance if you are enrolled in classes during the summer term.

Equipment Allowance: As a Fulbright grantee, you are eligible for a reimbursement or advance of up to \$500 towards required equipment, such as a computer. This allowance is issued once during the duration of 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*. You will be required to show receipts. This allowance is for one-time only during the duration of your grant.

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 expected 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 a degree-seeking student, you are expected to be a full-time student and to 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 grade of "Incomplete" more than one term. You must arrange to have a university-issued grade report sent to AMIDEAST at the end of each academic term. Official transcripts are also required at the conclusion of your Fulbright Program. 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.

Plagiarism

The higher education system in the United States can be competitive, and each student is evaluated by the work he or she accomplishes. As an international student you may not be familiar with some rules that pertain to academia in the U.S. One particular rule that international students may not be aware of is the proper use of citations. 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, not to mention a writer's loss of credibility and professional standing.

Online Courses

When planning your course schedule, it is important to note that enrollment in on-line courses are not authorized. However, if an on-line course is a requirement for your degree completion, contact your AMIDEAST advisor to seek approval prior to enrolling.

Study in a Third Country

Study trips or internships in 3rd countries (not the U.S.) will not be permitted. 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 not required for your academic program. Any charges that your academic institution makes to you, such as library fines, parking violations, housing payments, or any other optional charges incurred by you are 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 (i.e. UPS, FedEx) to AMIDEAST to get required travel validation signature.

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

- A valid passport;
- A valid DS-2019 form;
- A valid J-1 visa (in most cases).

Passport

If your passport or other travel document will expire before you return to the United States, you must contact your Embassy or nearest Consulate before you depart from the United States for information about renewing these documents. Although AMIDEAST may be able to provide you with an address and telephone number for your Embassy, we can give you very little additional information. 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 contact your AMIDEAST advisor immediately so that AMIDEAST can sign the Travel Validation section of your current DS-2019 before you leave the U.S. A travel validation signature is valid for one year. No one but an authorized AMIDEAST representative may sign your DS-2019. Allow up to two weeks for return of your signed DS-2019.

If your current DS-2019 form will expire before you plan to return to the United States, you must obtain a renewal 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 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. 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.

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 re-enter 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. The immigration officer will issue you a new I-94 card. Please keep your DS-2019 and the small, white I-94 card stapled in your passport, and send AMIDEAST a photocopy of your new I-94 card.

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

EMPLOYMENT

As a J-1 Exchange Visitor, you are legally eligible to work only if your program sponsor authorizes you to do so in advance. Please discuss your interest in paid employment with your AMIDEAST Advisor before accepting an offer of employment. During your program, there are two types of employment for which you may be eligible:

- Student (On-Campus) Employment
- Academic Training (during and after program)

Student Employment

Employment required by a university scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship qualifies as “student employment.” This kind of work usually occurs on campus, with the university as the employer. In certain circumstances, however, this type of work may be done for a different employer. For example, you might work in a government or private research laboratory if your thesis advisor has a joint appointment there and would be supervising you in work toward your degree and/or your research.

Students may not accept employment at any time without prior approval through AMIDEAST. Permission to accept employment is granted only for on-campus teaching or positions directly related to your field of study. 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 its decision and any terms and conditions attached to it.

How to apply for work authorization for student employment:

Please refer to the Employment section on the Fulbright Grantee Resources webpage for information on how to apply for work authorization:

<http://www.amideast.org/fulbright/grantee-resources/supplemental-information>

Social Security and other taxes

- **Social Security taxes.** In general, as a J-1 student, you will be exempt from Social Security (F.I.C.A.) taxes for your first five years in the United States, as long as you continue to declare non-resident status for tax purposes.
- **Federal, state and local taxes.** Unless you qualify under a tax treaty between the United States and your home government, your earnings as a J-1 visa holder will be subject to applicable federal, state and local taxes. Employers are required by law to withhold these taxes from your paychecks. By April 15th, you must file a federal income tax return and a “Required Statement” covering the prior calendar year to determine whether you owe more taxes or have a tax refund coming. If you did not work in the United States during the tax year, you have until June 15th to file your tax forms.

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. Remember that before you start any kind of employment, you must first consult AMIDEAST whose written approval is necessary *in advance*.

SHORT-TERM ACADEMIC TRAINING DURING YOUR PROGRAM

As a U.S. Department of State sponsored student in J-1 status, you may be eligible to be considered for *Academic Training (AT) during your academic program*. Academic Training is employment authorized for a specific period of time so that students may gain practical experience in their fields. Often, this comes in the form of internships during the summer or during the academic year. An AT

opportunity must complement a student's academic activities and supplement the stated program objectives. Students may participate in part-time AT while taking classes, or they may participate in full-time academic training in the summer/winter break.

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.* 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.

- **The maximum length of participation in training activities is 18 months.**
- Some grantees are eligible to participate in Academic Training *both during and after* they have completed their academic program. Please check with your AMIDEAST advisor on your eligibility. Eligible students may refer to the **Concluding Your Fulbright Program** section for more details on conditions and limitations.
- **If you are pursuing Academic Training for a period during your academic program**, any salary earnings above \$500 will be deducted from your monthly maintenance allowance.
- You may not participate in Academic Training during your academic program if such participation will delay the completion of your academic program requirements.

For specific information on how to apply for Academic Training, please refer to the Fulbright Grantee Resources webpage.

A Note about Internships

Both paid and unpaid internships are considered Academic Training opportunities and are therefore subject to the rules and policies listed in the Academic Training section above. If an internship is required for your degree, and/or if you are receiving credit, you still must receive prior approval.

CHANGING FIELD OF STUDY

You may not change your major field of study 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 in advance of 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, AMIDEAST must also receive confirmation from that institution that you may change your field of study.

TRANSFERRING TO A DIFFERENT INSTITUTION

If you feel that the program of study at your current academic institution is unsatisfactory, and you wish to consider a transfer to another institution, 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.

Transfers are strongly discouraged because there is almost inevitably some loss in time and academic benefit—very few universities will apply all the credits you have earned from your current institution. It is your responsibility to find out which credits will be applied to your new degree, and how long the transfer will delay completion of your program. It is unlikely that your transfer request will be approved if transferring will result in a delay of the completion of your academic program. If your university transfer results in an unanticipated delay of the completion of your academic program, your Fulbright grant will not be extended. If the completion date of your academic program will occur after your Fulbright Maximum Funding Date (MFD), you will have to find other means of support for the remaining period.

If you are awarded financial assistance from your original academic institution in the United States, it is essential that you obtain a release from any obligations you may have to that institution. You should also bear in mind that you may have to obtain a financial aid award from any institution to which you wish to transfer.

If AMIDEAST approves your request to pursue a transfer, it will be your responsibility to research appropriate programs. After you have chosen the one or two programs to which you would like to apply, please inform your AMIDEAST advisor of your choices in writing.

Once your AMIDEAST advisor has evaluated and approved your desired schools, you may begin the actual application process. You will be responsible for obtaining and fully completing the university applications, paying the application fees, writing a statement of purpose, obtaining new letters of recommendation, and requesting all standardized test scores.

Upon written request, AMIDEAST will provide the universities to which you are applying certified copies of the transcripts, diplomas, and standardized test scores that were included in your Fulbright dossier. AMIDEAST will also provide an appropriate cover letter outlining the nature of your Fulbright grant.

Your AMIDEAST advisor will work with you throughout the transfer approval

process. **Before you may transfer to a different university, your binational Fulbright Commission (if applicable), and the United States Department of State must approve your request.** To make this request, AMIDEAST will submit these items to your binational Fulbright Commission (if applicable) and the United States Department of State:

- A photocopy of the university's letter offering you admission;
- A photocopy of the university's letter offering you tuition assistance (if applicable);
- A letter from you requesting permission to transfer and justifying your request;
- A letter from your proposed academic advisor at the new institution supporting your request.

AMIDEAST will notify you as to whether your Fulbright Commission and/or the State Department have approved your request. If your request is approved, AMIDEAST will issue you a new DS-2019 when you transfer to your new university. *All costs associated with relocating to your new university (such as airfare, temporary housing, etc.) are your responsibility.*

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Should you find it necessary to interrupt your studies in the US 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 US 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 three- to-four-day seminars every year, during the spring semester, for first-year Fulbright students. Each seminar brings together approximately 150 Fulbrighters in various cities across the U.S. in an open and interactive forum to discuss and learn more about a chosen 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. As space is limited, IIE will assign applicants to a seminar site based on several criteria – topic preference, distribution of grantees from various countries at each seminar, distribution of fields, and U.S. host institution representation, as well as costs related to air travel. 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.
- **Metro International:** Through Metro International programs, Fulbright

grantees in New York and New Jersey 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.metrointl.org for more information.

- **Fulbright Association:** The Fulbright Association has a national network of chapters run by alumni volunteers to offer, among other activities, current Fulbrighters from abroad educational and cultural programs to enrich their experience. Please visit www.fulbrightalumni.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. For more information, contact your international student advisor or visit <http://iew.state.gov/>.

CONCLUDING 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 last day of the month you graduate 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 will be responsible for your own expenses from the end of your grant period until your departure from the United States.

Not all grantees are eligible for Academic Training, so please check with your AMIDEAST advisor to verify your eligibility.

ACADEMIC TRAINING

As a U.S. Department of State sponsored student in J-1 status, you *may* be eligible to be considered for Academic Training (AT) upon completion of your program. Please be advised that *authorization for Academic Training is not guaranteed, but rather, it 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 four weeks** before the start of the training opportunity. Remember, Academic Training will not be granted automatically. *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.*

Eligibility:

- Check with your AMIDEAST advisor on your eligibility.
- Academic training conducted after completion of the academic program CANNOT exceed 12 months.
- Any Academic Training you engaged in during your studies is counted against the total 18 month limit.
- If you are enrolled in a degree or non-degree program less than 12 months in length, AT upon completion of academic program requirements CANNOT exceed the length of your academic program.

Conditions:

- 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 employment 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 from AMIDEAST, your binational Fulbright Commission, or the U.S. Department of State. Your academic training after degree completion must involve *paid* employment, or, you must demonstrate proof of financial support equivalent to the minimum monthly maintenance rate (after taxes) of the respective 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 visa requirements, you must purchase supplemental coverage for your dependents.

If your request is approved:

- You will receive written authorization from your AMIDEAST advisor.
- You will retain your immigration status upon receipt of an updated DS-2019 form from AMIDEAST.
- Your ASPE coverage will continue.
- Your return travel benefits will be provided upon completion of your training, if your original grant makes you eligible.
- You will be responsible for any additional expenses related to an AT opportunity, such as costs for relocating to another city.

Social Security Taxes & Federal, State and Local Taxes:

Please refer to the “Employment” section of this handbook for more information.

A Note of Caution:

As a Fulbright student you are eligible for a variety of work opportunities in the U.S., but employment without proper authorization is a serious violation of your J-1 status, as well as Fulbright policies. Remember, before you begin seeking any type of employment, you must first consult your AMIDEAST adviser, whose written approval is necessary *in advance*.

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 and able to provide you with a DS-2019, the university will ask you to indicate the source of your proposed funding (from your home government, from university financial assistance, or from your personal resources). Once the university is satisfied that you have sufficient funding, the institution will request that AMIDEAST enter a Release Date into your SEVIS record. AMIDEAST will enter a Release Date after you have submitted the required materials, and if your request to transfer sponsorship is approved by the U.S. Department of State and/or your binational Commission.

To request a transfer of sponsorship, you must submit several documents. Please refer to the Grantee Resources website for detailed information.

Notes:

- A transfer of sponsorship may only be requested if university sponsorship will begin no later than the day immediately after 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

Funds for return travel are only available to grantees from certain countries. Please refer to your Terms of Appointment to determine if you are eligible for return travel paid by ECA 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 Egypt and Morocco should contact their binational Fulbright Commission to make return travel arrangements.

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 point of departure in the United States to the furthest point available on the route. This option usually means flying with a U.S. airline at least as far as a transfer point in Europe;
- The ticket will be a one-way, non-penalty ticket, and can be amended if necessary. AMIDEAST will be responsible for any itinerary or price changes for a ticket as long as the departure date is no more than thirty (30) days after your Fulbright Program end date;
- The ticket will be the least expensive non-penalty 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. If another itinerary is significantly less expensive than the one you have requested (more than \$75), we are required to choose the less expensive one;
- If you are transferring sponsorship and are issued a return ticket with a departure date more than thirty days after your Fulbright sponsorship

ends, you will be responsible for maintaining the validity of that ticket by arranging and paying for any changes to your ticket;

- 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 two years before you may apply for U.S. immigration, U.S. permanent residency, or a U.S. non-immigrant work visa. The two-year home residency rule does not prohibit you from applying for most tourist, student, or other exchange visitor visas.

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 transcript before you leave the United States. Once you have finished your academic program and submitted these forms, you will have officially become a Fulbright alumnus/alumna!

Here are some ways you can stay involved with Fulbright after the termination of your academic program:

- **Alumni Grants:** In an effort to support the professional development of Fulbright Alumni from the Middle East and North African (MENA) region, AMIDEAST, in cooperation with the United States Department of State, offers the Fulbright Alumni Development Grant. 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: <http://www.amideast.org/fulbright/alumni-information/alumni-development-grants>

- **Alumni Associations:** Please get 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.
- **Newsletter:** Quarterly, AMIDEAST/Washington, D.C. publishes a joint newsletter for alumni and current grantees called *The Fulbrighter*. Please keep in touch with us so we can highlight your latest and greatest achievements in *The Fulbrighter*.
- **Your Contact Information:** Please keep AMIDEAST up-to-date on any changes in your contact information by visiting the website: http://www.amideast.org/programs_services/exchange_programs/fulbright/alumni_affairs.htm
- **U.S. Department of State Alumni Website:** Stay connected with your exchange experience, and explore the various opportunities available to you by joining State 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!

MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR YOUR FAMILY

If you are eligible to bring your family to the United States, you may be thinking about having them join you. The cost of living for a family in the United States can be very expensive; therefore, read the following information carefully **before** you make your decision.

Your Fulbright monthly living allowance (what we call your “maintenance”) will not be adequate to cover your family’s expenses. Your maintenance is intended to cover food and rent for you alone. It is not intended to buy things, such as a car, clothing, furnishings, etc., for you, and it is not intended to support more than one person. **If you try to support your family on your Fulbright funds, you will find it extremely difficult, if not impossible.** All financial support for your family will have to be paid from your personal funds.

You should not plan on sending any portion of your grant funds home for your family’s support. The cost of living in the United States is high, and your monthly maintenance allowance will only minimally cover your own expenses during the period of your Fulbright grant.

If you plan to have your family join you in the United States, AMIDEAST recommends that you arrange for your family to arrive only after you have completed your first semester at your new university. This time period will give you time to locate appropriate housing and to get used to your new schedule and environment.

If your family plans to join you after your arrival in the United States, you must do the following in order for you to receive the proper documents for their visas:

- Notify AMIDEAST in Washington, D.C./binational Fulbright Commission in your home country and the international student advisor at your American institution.
- Provide proof to AMIDEAST that you have purchased or will purchase adequate health insurance for your family during their stay in the United States.
- Show proof to AMIDEAST that you have made sufficient financial arrangements to support your family in the United States.

This financial proof must consist of bank statements for at least the two consecutive months prior to your request for a DS-2019 form for your dependents. You must be able to indicate that you can provide \$475 per month for your spouse and \$300 per month per child for the length of time remaining on your Fulbright Program.

However, if you plan to have your family travel with you to the United States before applying for your family’s visas, you will be asked to:

- Notify the AMIDEAST office or binational Fulbright Commission in your country of this decision.
- Provide proof to AMIDEAST/Fulbright Commission and the U.S. Consulate that you have purchased or will purchase adequate health insurance for your family during their stay in the United States.
- Show proof to AMIDEAST/Fulbright Commission that you have made sufficient financial arrangements to support your family in the United States, consisting of bank statements for at least the two months prior to your request for a DS-2019 form for your dependents. You must be able to indicate that you can provide \$475 per month for your spouse and \$300 per month per child for the length of time remaining on your Fulbright Program.

Example: A grantee funded for a two-year program who wishes to bring a spouse and two children must show proof of savings of at least \$25,800.00.

1 spouse x \$475 x 24 months	=	\$11,400.00
2 children x \$300 x 24 months	=	\$14,400.00
TOTAL	=	\$25,800.00

If any of your dependents plan to attend school in the United States, you must bring their academic records, birth certificates (or other proof of age), and medical immunization records with you.

Please note that if you have been assigned to a summer English-language or other pre-academic program, dependents may **not** accompany you since lodging is not available, and it is a time intended for you to begin settling into the United States.

Your Family's Visas and J-2 Immigration Status

Spouses and unmarried children under the age of 21 are eligible to apply for J-2 dependent visas. There is no guarantee, however, that the U.S. Consulate will grant J-2 visas to your dependents.

To obtain J-2 visas for your dependents, you must prove that you have made all the necessary financial arrangements to support them in the United States, including obtaining medical insurance for them.

If you need J-2 visas for dependents who will be traveling to the United States with you, ask your AMIDEAST advisor in your home country for a J-2 Dependent DS-2019. This DS-2019 will list your dependents' names, relationships to you, dates and places of birth, and nationalities. You should attach these DS-2019 forms to your DS-2019 when you submit it to the U.S. Consulate in your home country for processing.

If you need J-2 visas for dependents who will be traveling to the United States separately from you, ask your AMIDEAST advisor in Washington, D.C., for a J-2 Dependent DS-2019 after you are settled in the United States. The J-2 Dependent DS-2019 will list your dependents' names, relationships to you, dates and places of birth, and nationalities. Your dependents should present the DS-2019 when they submit it to the U.S. Consulate in your home country for processing.

Once J-2 dependents are in the United States, they may apply to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for permission to work. However, jobs are difficult to secure, and obtaining USCIS permission is becoming more difficult. You should not count on your dependents being able to support themselves from their earnings.

- **Submit copies of your J-2 dependents' DS-2019, I-94 and passports to AMIDEAST after they arrive in the U.S.**
- **As holders of J-2 visas, your dependents are obligated to fulfill the same two-year home residency requirement upon the completion of your program.**

Your Family's Accident and Sickness Coverage

As an Exchange Visitor in the United States, you must carry accident and sickness coverage for yourself and your J-2 dependents for the full duration of your Exchange Visitor program. Your Fulbright grant provides you with coverage through the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges [ASPE] policy, but your dependents **cannot** be covered by this policy. You will need to send AMIDEAST proof that your dependents have adequate medical insurance coverage that will take effect as soon as they arrive in the United States. Their coverage must meet the same levels that the U.S. government has established for your own coverage as outlined below. **U.S. government regulations stipulate that if you willfully fail to carry health insurance for yourself and your dependents, AMIDEAST must terminate your program and report the termination to the United States Department of State.**

These regulations are in effect because it is dangerous to be in the United States without adequate health insurance. While many foreign governments bear the expense of health care for their citizens and sometimes even for visitors, individuals and families in the United States are responsible for these costs themselves. Since a single day of hospitalization and medical treatment can cost thousands of dollars, many hospitals and doctors refuse to treat uninsured patients except in life-threatening emergencies. Insurance gives you access to better and more timely health care, and provides the only protection against the enormous costs of health care in this country.

[The paragraphs above were adapted from a brochure written by NAFSA: The Association of International Educators.]

Although prices for different insurance plans can vary widely, you should expect to pay at least an additional \$100 per month for **each** dependent you insure. Many insurance programs will require you, in addition to your dependents, to enroll in order to gain coverage for your dependents. If this arrangement is required, the insurance you purchase yourself becomes your primary insurance policy, and the ASPE policy becomes your secondary policy.

Please contact your AMIDEAST advisor and/or the international student advisor at your university for information regarding insurance policies that you can purchase for your dependents. It is strongly encouraged that male grantees seek an insurance policy that includes maternity coverage for their wives. If you have any questions about this regulation, please contact your AMIDEAST advisor.

Health Insurance Requirements for J Visa Holders

As a Fulbright grantee, you will be covered by the Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE). For your J-2 dependents, however, you must maintain coverage that meets the federal government requirements. If you choose to purchase health insurance coverage through your university, you must make sure that the insurance meets the minimum requirements listed below, including maternity, repatriation, and medical evacuation. If the university-provided health insurance does not meet all the requirements, you will have to purchase supplemental insurance from an agency that provides insurance for international visitors and their dependents. The information below outlines the minimum provisions for health insurance coverage as required by the J visa regulations:

Reliability: The company providing the insurance must meet minimum requirements established by the U.S. Department of State: A.M. Best rating of "A-" or above, Insurance Solvency International, Ltd. (ISI) rating of "A-i" or above, Standard & Poor's Claims-paying Ability rating of "A-" or above, or Weiss Research, Inc. rating of "B-" or above.

Specific Limits/Lifetime vs. Per-occurrence Maximums: The policy must provide medical benefits of at least \$50,000 for each accident or illness (i.e., the maximum set cannot be lower than \$50,000).

Deductibles: J regulations limit the deductible (your part of the cost of health

expenses) to a maximum of \$500 per accident or illness.

Co-insurance: The insurance company is required to pay at least 75% of covered medical expenses.

Benefit Period: The policy may establish a waiting period before it covers pre-existing conditions (health problems you had before you bought the insurance), as long as the waiting period is reasonable by current standards in the insurance industry. The waiting period for coverage of pre-existing conditions is usually one year.

Exclusions: Most insurance policies exclude coverage for certain conditions. The J regulations require that if a particular activity is part of your program, your insurance must cover injuries resulting from your participation in that activity.

Repatriation: If you should die in the United States, the policy must provide at least \$7,500 in benefits to send your remains to your home country for burial.

Medical Evacuation: If, because of a serious illness or injury, you must be sent home on the advice of a doctor, the policy must pay up to \$10,000 for the expenses of your travel.



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Fulbright Foreign Student Program

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