

APPLICANT FAQ (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS)

JUNIOR FACULTY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (JFDP)

GENERAL INFORMATION

What is the JFDP?

The JFDP is a non-degree fellowship program which places professors from Eurasia and Southeast Europe at U.S. universities and provides university instructors with opportunities to engage in curriculum development and explore alternative teaching methodologies, expand their knowledge in their fields of study and gather new teaching materials and resources. Participants in the JFDP are also encouraged to forge relationships between U.S. universities and their home universities, in order to support ongoing contact and collaboration. JFDP Fellows work closely with faculty mentors from host universities in the United States to develop their knowledge in their fields of study, gather new academic materials and resources, garner new educational perspectives, and enlighten U.S. faculty and students on education and life in their home countries. The JFDP is not a research program but research directly related to the above goals is permitted.

What activities would I undertake during the JFDP Fellowship?

For the majority of your fellowship, you will observe graduate and/or undergraduate classes. You may observe classes within your academic field as outlined in the Statement of Purpose section of your JFDP application. Your Host University and American Councils in Washington, D.C must approve your course selection. JFDP Fellows observe classes to examine the content and structure of courses, and to acquire new perspectives and approaches to teaching your academic field. You will be expected to actively work on developing new educational materials or academic programs based on the goals outlined in your Statement of Purpose.

Is the JFDP related to the Fulbright program?

While both the JFDP and the Fulbright program are programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, they are distinct programs. Traditionally, the Fulbright program supports individual research while the JFDP supports professional development work for university professors as described above.

I'm not teaching full-time. Can I apply?

NO. You must be a full-time teacher (generally twenty hours or more) to be eligible to apply. Exceptions are made for the fields of Arts Management and Library and Archival Sciences.

My area of specialization is a hard science (math, chemistry, etc.). Can I apply?

NO. The JFDP only accepts applications from scholars in the humanities and social sciences. If your background is in hard sciences, but you apply to a general field such as Educational Administration or Environmental Studies, you will be evaluated within the field to which you applied. If selected for a JFDP Fellowship, your program activities must be based on the field to which you applied.

I work for a private company. Can I apply?

NO. The program does not accept applications from individuals employed full-time in the private sector. Applicants from private universities may apply; however, individuals employed full-time at private language centers are not eligible for the program. If you have questions, contact the American Councils staff.

What is an "open competition"?

"Open" refers to the fact that the process of accepting applications and determining award recipients is a transparent process with clear and open criteria. The application procedure and requirements are identical for all potential applicants and not based on personal connections. All individuals who meet the eligibility requirements may apply and all valid applications are considered. There are no nominations or "in-house" candidates. As this is a merit-based competition, each applicant is judged individually based on his or her own merits; there is no weight given to whom the applicant knows or who is interested in recommending him or her.

May I apply to JFDP and to another U.S. Government program at the same time?

YES, if you are eligible for both. If you are chosen as a finalist for both, you must make a choice. You may NOT accept awards from both programs.

How do I apply?

Visit your local American Councils office to receive a printed application, or visit the JFDP website www.jfdp.org to download an application, or apply online. All applications should be submitted to your local American Councils representative office. The office in Washington, DC does NOT accept applications.

I applied to the program in the past but wasn't chosen. Why?

Some possible reasons are:

- Proposal poorly written or unclear aims and objectives for participating in JFDP.
- No plausible reason given for needing to pursue a fellowship in the U.S.
- Proposal failed to demonstrate need for professional development or new scholarship.
- Application received after the deadline or was incomplete.
- Academic field not eligible.
- Did not meet all the eligibility requirements.
- Determined that applicant lied or misrepresented information in the application.
- Applicant made weak impression on interviewing committee.
- Applicant's English skills were insufficient to pursue academic work at a U.S. university.

Can I apply again?

Provided that you did not lie or misrepresent information in your previous application, or (in the event you were ineligible) your status has changed so that you meet the eligibility requirements, you may reapply. To reapply, you MUST submit a new application with all new accompanying documents, including recommendation letters. Applications change every year, and NO application materials are kept on file or returned to the applicant.

I'm from a major city, does that help or hinder my chances?

Geography plays a limited role in determining whether or not an individual is chosen as a participant. The JFDP does not discriminate on the basis of race, nationality, creed, gender or city of residence. Individuals are chosen based on the strength of their applications and ability to impact their academic and local communities upon completion of their Fellowship.

Does applying under a particular academic field help or hinder my chances?

As with geography, academic discipline plays a limited role. The JFDP intends to support the broadest cross-section of disciplines possible. All other considerations being equal, an application in an underrepresented discipline will merit more attention than one of the more common academic disciplines.

What level of English do I need?

Your English language skills should be sufficient to enable you to participate fully in all activities, academic or otherwise, which will be part of your fellowship. You will need to understand lectures, be able to take notes, and interact with colleagues in English. You will need to have an adequate command of English and public speaking skills to be able to deliver a lecture or presentation. Your written skills should also allow you to write papers and abstracts, and communicate professionally by e-mail.

How will my English level be determined?

If your application is selected to advance to the second round, you will be required to take an Institutional TOEFL exam at the time of the interview. While there is no "cut-off" in terms of a minimum score, lower TOEFL scores may be considered a handicap to the applicant. If selected, individuals with low TOEFL scores (550 or lower) may be asked to attend a mandatory, month-long, English language training in December prior to beginning of the academic term.

If my application is selected to proceed to the second round, will the expenses for travel to the interview location be reimbursed?

YES. The Program will pay for your round-trip ticket (airline tickets are provided for trips that take longer than 20 hours by train), one night in a hotel chosen by the program (a second night will be reimbursed if travel schedules warrant it) and the cost of the TOEFL test.

If I am selected as a Finalist, can I start my program whenever I want?

NO. ECA and American Councils set the definitive start date of the program for all JFDP Fellows. If chosen, you will be required to first attend a mandatory orientation program in the U.S. at the University of Kansas. The orientation program at the University of Kansas is scheduled for the second week of January 2012. Participants will fly to their host universities directly from the University of Kansas.

If I am selected as a Finalist, can I be placed wherever I request?

Not necessarily. Prior relationships with U.S. universities or faculty members are taken seriously. If you have a prior relationship to a particular U.S. university where you would like to be hosted, please describe this professional tie in detail in your application. Applicants invited to the interview stage will be asked to complete a formal placement request. American Councils will attempt to meet all reasonable requests for placement but there are no guarantees that a finalist will be placed at a university where he or she has professional ties. American Councils reserves the right to make final placement decisions, which may differ from your request.

What support will I receive while on the program?

While on the program, you will receive: round-trip international and domestic transportation to and from your home city and your host university, accident/illness insurance, a monthly stipend to cover living expenses, and a professional development fund. In addition to the monetary support you receive, you will also be provided with a host coordinator to help with adjustments to campus life and an American Councils coordinator to assist you with program-related issues.

Why is there a two-year home residency requirement?

The two-year home residency requirement was established by the U.S. Department of State for recipients of J-1 Visas on U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs. The requirement was put in place to ensure that exchange program participants fulfil the goal of returning home to share information and experience acquired during the exchange program.

Can I take my family with me when I leave to begin the program?

NO. The program policy as set by ECA and American Councils, is for JFDP Fellows to arrive in the U.S. alone. However, following an initial “settling in” period after your arrival at your host university, you may apply to have family members (spouses and unmarried children under 21) join you in the U.S. Fellows receive **NO FINANCIAL SUPPORT** for family members, and the monthly stipend issued to them by the program is intended to support **only** the Fellow. Fellows must have the financial means (including funds for mandatory accident/illness insurance) to support family members before applying to have them visit. ***Please note that while American Councils provides visa support documents, decisions on visa issuance are solely made by the U.S. Embassy in your country.***

Can my family work or attend school while they are in the US with me?

YES. Holders of J-2 visas (qualified dependants of exchange visitors) may apply to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration (formerly INS) for permission to work. It is a long and cumbersome process and the applicant may ultimately be denied. Children may be enrolled in public schools or in private schools at the grantee's expense. Certain conditions for enrolment must be met. These will vary depending on the school district. With a one-semester program, there may not be enough time to have family members work or attend school. These factors should be taken into consideration, when deciding whether or not to invite dependents to join you in the U.S.

Can I work while I am on the program?

NO. The “job” of the JFDP Fellow is to fulfil program goals, namely: observing graduate and/or undergraduate classes, updating teaching methodologies, expanding your professional networking pool and actively working on curriculum development. For this reason the J-1 visa does NOT give the holder authorization to work in the US. Employment opportunities related to your program goals may be approved by American Councils if they fit set criteria.

If I am selected as a Finalist, but can't go for some reason (health, etc.) this year, can my participation be postponed?

NO. If you are unable to participate for any reason, you must withdraw from the program and reapply, if you wish, during the next competition.

What are my chances of being chosen as a Finalist?

If you meet the eligibility requirements, have completed all sections of the application in a thorough and thoughtful manner, are genuinely dedicated to education, classroom instruction and broadening your knowledge of your academic field, you have a good chance of being selected.

Is it worth my while to even try?

Yes. If you would benefit from 5 months of professional development training and academic pursuits at a U.S. university, would be able to make a significant contribution to the future of education in your country and your academic field, and are interested in sharing your knowledge and expertise with the U.S. academic community, then there is every reason for you to apply.

Where can I find more information?

Contact your local American Councils office or go to the JFDP website at www.jfdp.org.