Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowships
Frequently Asked Questions

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If you have further questions or suggestions for additions to this list, please contact the FLAS coordinator, Lydia Brosnahan, at lbrosnah@umn.edu or 612-626-3950.

Eligibility

Who is eligible to receive a FLAS fellowship?

Graduate and undergraduate students who are US citizens or permanent residents and who are enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a University of Minnesota degree program that combines modern foreign language training with international, Asian and/or African area studies, or with international aspects of professional or other field of study.

NOTE: Undergraduates are only eligible for study of a language at the intermediate (2nd year) level or beyond; they are NOT eligible for beginning (1st year) courses.

May I apply for a FLAS if I am an incoming student?

Yes, if you are in the process of applying to a UMN-Twin Cities degree program. Incoming undergraduate and graduate students will have to be fully matriculated and in residence at the start of the award, typically the beginning of fall semester.

May I apply if I am not a UMN-Twin Cities student?

No, non-UMN students are not eligible to apply for UMN FLAS fellowships.

Is there a limit on the number of FLAS fellowships I can receive?

While you may hold only one FLAS fellowship at a time, there is no limit on the number of sequential FLAS awards one person may receive.

Application process

What information is required for the application process?

Make sure to fill in all the categories in the Application Form. In addition to the completed application form, you will have to submit:

- an up-to-date transcript (unofficial is OK);
- a statement of purpose
- a letter of recommendation by a faculty member, who can comment meaningfully on your academic potential and promise;
- if you are applying for an intermediate or advanced level of language instruction, a certification by an appropriate language instructor that you are qualified for that level of instruction.
Can I apply to more than one area?

No. You will have to select either the African Studies, the Asian Studies, or the International Studies competition. Your selection will be based on the language you propose to study and your academic area of study. For example, if you are interested in learning Arabic and you are studying the Middle East, select the Asian or International competition. If, on the other hand, you need Arabic to pursue your interests in North Africa, select the African competition.

Can I apply for a summer and an academic year FLAS fellowship at the same time?

Yes, simply mark the appropriate boxes on the Application Form. Summer and Academic Year FLAS fellowships are separate and distinct awards and the selection for each will be a distinct and separate process. We will simply enter you in two competitions with one application form.

What happens after I submit my application?

Recipients, alternates, and non-recipients will receive notification approximately six weeks after the application deadline. Award letters will contain more information about payment processes, registration, reports, etc.

Who will review my application and decide the awards?

Each area will have a Selection Committee comprised of faculty members from the social sciences, the languages and professional schools who are adept at reading across the disciplines. This means that your specific academic field of study might not be represented on the Selection Committee. Keep that in mind as you write your Statement of Purpose. Do not use obscure or hyper-specialized vocabulary or references. The best statements are clear and written in plain English, show seriousness and purpose, and are true to the challenges in your field and to your current state of schooling. Selection Committee members understand that beginning graduate students may have less specific plans, while more advanced graduate students should have more concrete and detailed research projects. Similarly, they understand that statements from professional school students will read quite differently from graduate students pursuing MAs or PhDs. Write to your specific situation; don’t try to be someone you are not.

Additionally, there are separate and distinct competitions for undergraduate and graduate students.

What selection criteria will the committee use?

Candidates are ranked on the basis of the following criteria:

- Evidence that language training is needed to further the applicant’s study of African, Asian or International Studies;
- The extent to which the applicant’s current or planned academic program is focused on African, Asian or International issues and problems;
- The applicant’s academic performance to date;
- The persuasiveness of the applicant’s letter of recommendation;

Applicants who are pursuing master’s degrees and who may be more likely to pursue government service receive competitive priority. In addition, proposed language study at the advanced level and study of a critical less-commonly-taught language (LCTL) receives competitive priority. Applicants with documented financial need also receive competitive priority.
What are priority or critical languages?

The following languages offered at the University of Minnesota are designated by the US Department of Education as critical to the national interest of the United States: Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Somali, and Swahili.

FLAS Usage

Is a FLAS fellow allowed to work during the award period?

In limited cases, yes. FLAS awards require recipients to be engaged in full-time foreign language and area or international studies coursework during the academic year and, in the summer, in intensive language study. The work may not interfere with this requirement or hinder the recipient from fulfilling it.

Can I receive both a FLAS and another fellowship during the same period?

In general, no. FLAS regulations prohibit double-dipping. In limited cases, it might be possible to have more than one award, for example if the second or third award is complementary and covers expenses that FLAS does not cover.

Can I get a single semester award during the academic year?

No.

Can I enroll in courses Pass/Fail?

No. All language and area studies classes have to be taken for credit and A/F.

Can I use my FLAS for a reading knowledge course?

No. FLAS requires language training in all four modalities: speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Can I use my FLAS award to study abroad?

Academic year: In very limited cases, the academic year FLAS award can be used to study abroad, but all other requirements have to be met, including the requirement that the recipient remain enrolled and receive credit at her or his home institution. All study abroad must be approved by the US Department of Education prior to departure. Contact the FLAS coordinator for specific requirements.

Summer: Yes, summer awards may be used for intensive language study abroad if 1) the level of language study is intermediate or advanced and 2), for graduate students, beginning level instruction in the target language is not available in the US. All summer study abroad must also be approved by the US Department of Education prior to departure. Contact the FLAS coordinator for specific requirements.

All FLAS fellows who go abroad must adhere to UMN regulations for student travel. For more information, please refer to the GPS Alliance website at http://global.umn.edu/students/abroad.html.
ACADEMIC YEAR awards

What does an academic year FLAS fellow receive?

Award benefits include a living stipend and a tuition/fee allocation. Graduate students receive a living stipend of $15,000 and a tuition/fee allowance of up to $18,000. Undergraduate student recipients receive a living stipend of $5,000 and a tuition/fee allowance of up to $10,000. 

Recipients are responsible for any tuition and fee expenses that are not covered by the tuition/fee allocation.

Does the academic year FLAS award cover health insurance?

If needed, yes. If you are not covered by another source (parents, spouses, etc.), the health insurance fee is a mandatory UMN fee and will be covered by FLAS as long as the total tuition and fee payment is less than the maximum allowance. 

NOTE: The academic year FLAS fellowship covers fall and spring semester. It does NOT cover health insurance during the summer term.

Do I have to take specific classes?

FLAS recipients must take at least one language class and one area or international study class each semester.

How many credits do I need to take?

FLAS recipients must engage in full-time study during the award period. At UMN-TC, this means that typically graduate students must enrolled in at least 6 credits per semester and undergraduate students 12 credits per semester. Keep in mind that recipients must be enrolled in one language class and one area or international studies class each semester.

Beyond course work, are there other requirements?

All fellows are required to fill out award reports for the US Department of Education and will be surveyed periodically in the years following their award. FLAS recipients are also required to have their instructors fill out pre- and post-award language proficiency evaluations.

SUMMER awards

What does a Summer FLAS fellow receive?

Award benefits include a living stipend and a tuition/fee allocation. Graduate and undergraduate students receive a living stipend of $2,500 and a tuition/fee allowance of up to $5,000. Recipients are responsible for any tuition and fee expenses that are not covered by the tuition/fee allocation.

Does a summer FLAS include a travel award?

Summer FLAS fellows who plan to travel to a domestic or foreign intensive language program are eligible for an additional travel award of up to $1,000 or the actual travel, whichever is less. Travel awards will be made by the Selection Committee if funding allows. You do not need to apply for the additional travel award. If you plan to study off site, you will be automatically entered in the travel award competition.
If you were granted a travel award, you will have to abide by the Fly America Act which stipulates that all travel funded by the American government has to be with an American carrier, even if that is more expensive.

What are the FLAS requirements of an intensive summer language program?

Summer FLAS recipients are required to enroll in an intensive language program that offers them the equivalent of a year’s worth of college-level language study. An “intensive” language program is defined as a program that offers a minimum of 140 contact (in class) hours at the beginning and intermediate level and 120 contact (in class) hours at the advanced level and is at least six weeks in length.

Summer FLAS fellows may enroll in a formal domestic intensive program at the beginning (graduate students only!), intermediate or advanced level; OR a formal overseas intensive program at the intermediate or advanced level; OR for graduate students, a formal overseas intensive program at the beginning level if such a program is not available in the US.

May I switch proposed programs after I submit my application?

Yes, if the program originally proposed is not available, does not offer the proposed level of instruction or isn’t deemed intensive. Contact the FLAS coordinator if this is the case, as you will need special approval for this. Applicants as part of their preparation must thoroughly research available programs.

Beyond course work, are there other requirements?

All fellows are required to fill out pre- and post-award reports for the US Department of Education and will be surveyed periodically in the years following their award. All fellows are also required to take pre- and post-award proficiency assessments.