

The Fulbright Scholar Program funds up to 12 months of lectureship, post-doctoral research, or a combination of the two at a U.S. college or university with one fully covered dependent. Fulbright scholars are expected to make a significant contribution to Pakistan's development and share their U.S. experiences with students, colleagues and community groups in Pakistan. For further information click here <https://www.usefpakistan.org/Programs/FulbrightScholar.cfm?Tab=Programs>

Dr. Nazish Shahid, Associate Professor of Mathematics at FCCU, availed Fulbright Scholar Award in 2016 and conducted research at Princeton University. Following are a few factors suggested by Dr. Nazish that an applicant should be paying attention to while preparing for Fulbright Scholar Award application:

1) Research Proposal

The single most important thing perhaps is your research proposal if you are applying for research position. It should be on an innovative topic and should be written in a way that a general scientist (not from your particular research area) can understand of what you want to work on. The proposal should clearly identify the objective goals you want to achieve and why working on this particular problem will contribute to something new in the field? Why do you think that you are capable of working on this problem? Have you already worked on some problems related to this topic? Your previous work on/or related to current proposal will definitely work in your favor. Your proposal should be divided in sections such as

- Ø Background (What's done before and what's missing that your work will help fill in?)
- Ø Objectives (Quantitative objectives that could be achieved in a real time frame)
- Ø Methodology (Do mention if you shall be working on samples that need to be brought from Pakistan or you will have to look for samples in USA)

(It is very important that while you are writing methods to solve your problem, you connect it with methods you have already used in your work so far. It goes on to say that you have command on your subject and you know what you are talking about)

- Ø Sustainable Development Goals (If your project is contributing in this regard, that would be a plus!)

- Ø Your plans to make use of your award upon your return to Pakistan (How others could benefit from your experience?) (Evaluation)

- Ø Why do you think your work on this project has to be done in USA? Why not here or anywhere else?

- Ø Duration of your project

Lastly, be creative and explicit while you are writing your proposal. On one side, if your proposal should reflect on the strength of the problem you want to work on but on another side it should also be written in simple language!

2) Selection of university and advisor The selection of department/lab where you shall be conducting your research is equally important. Your research proposal should be on same lines as the work done by your advisor or somehow close to the research being done in your choice of department. Though, it is preferred that you should be bringing something new in that lab but it should also be understandable to the researchers there on some level. If your topic is far away from your advisor's team's field of research, it might harm your chances of being selected at that place. The selection board contacts the department and inquires about you being a suitable addition to the group or not. Other important things are:

- Ø You have to write names of three universities of your choice where you want to conduct research but be clear on why these places are suitable for you and who do you specifically want to work with?

Ø Though, it is not mandatory to retrieve the letter of support from your advisor at the time of application submission but your chances of selection can be improved if you are able to secure the support letter and attach it with your application (securing letter at the time of application submission worked for me!).

Ø Please don't pick best ranking universities just because it will add worth to your name by being associated to that place! Your work should be related or close to that university's research direction/program/field. I was in contact with a couple of researchers in US for over a year and had already discussed with them about what I wanted to work on. I mentioned three universities in my application where research was being done on topics similar to mine or was of interdisciplinary nature.

3) Personal Statement This is the second most important part of this application. Please don't write long stories or anything that is already mentioned on your CV. Remember that they have tons of application to sort through. Keep it short (1 page max.) and sort of interesting. Tell them why you should be picked for this prestigious fellowship and how this opportunity can help you to grow as a person and advance in your field as well. Tell them about how you have reached to become who you are and what are your plans down the road. Keep it simple, real and objective.

4) Academic Qualification If your previous academic record is excellent, you got some more points than others. But if it is of average standing, it does not mean that you don't have chances to be selected. It just means the other parts of your application need to be stronger.

5) Other than Academic Qualification Do mention in your personal statement anything that stands you out from others in terms of any talent, award, sports, your efforts to bring good to society and leadership qualities, etc.

6) Reference Reports Three reference reports have to be attached with application. These reports have to be prepared thoroughly, covering things from your research background to your personal strengths and weaknesses. Your research advisor in PhD, for one, will be a good choice. Someone who knows about your work in industry or academia and can write about significance of your work along with your capability to take up this job might be another option. Generic reference reports will carry no stature!

These are the few things that I believe will help you in putting up a good application. Just know that it's a highly competitive program and acceptance rate is around 20%. Work on your proposal meticulously, paying attention to each part separately so that you can present a strong case from your side. If you think that you are not prepared yet, don't make a rough or half-hearted attempt. Apply next year! Best of Luck