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# Focus on Your Essays

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Essays are a critical part of your application. Strong, well-written, focused essays are needed to pass the panel review stage (learn more about the selection process in “Fulbright Selection and Placement – How Does it Work?”). Remember that your essays are what sets you apart from the next applicant. Make your essay stand out!

- Spending time on your essays is the # 1 way to improve your application!
- Start early and give yourself plenty of time. You should plan to write and revise at least three drafts of each essay.
- You must submit two different essays; the Personal Statement and Study Research Objectives.
- Read the essay questions carefully.
- Be sure to answer all parts of the essay questions.
- Essay process:
  - Start by brainstorming for each essay to generate ideas
    - For more information visit:  
<http://homeworktips.about.com/od/homeworkhelp/a/brainstorming.htm>
  - Write an outline
    - For more information visit:  
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/2/53/>
  - Use your outline to develop a first draft.
  - Ask a friend, coworker, professor, or family member to review your essay. Do they think your essay is excellent? Does it have the “wow” factor? If not, you might need to go back to the brainstorming phase.
  - Write your second draft. Ask someone you trust to read it and provide honest feedback.
  - Write a third draft. Ask a native English speaker to proofread your essay. Revise, if needed.
- **No spelling errors or grammatical mistakes!**

## Tips for the Personal Statement:

- The story of what makes YOU unique!
- Get PERSONAL in this essay
- What specific challenges have you overcome? How have you demonstrated that you are a community leader? What motivated you to apply? Why are you interested in studying this topic?
- How did you become interested in the field? Was there a specific moment when you KNEW this field of study was exactly what you wanted to do for the rest of your life?
- Do NOT list your life story. (“I am an Afghan girl, I went to high school and won three awards, then I went to college and now I am applying for this scholarship” is not acceptable). Use examples or relate an important story to show who you are and why you are a good fit for the Fulbright scholarship. What sets you apart from the next candidate? Keep in mind that we are looking for community leaders, not just individuals with a strong academic background.
- You are writing for an American reader. The American reader may not have any idea what it was like to be a refugee in Pakistan or to attend school in secret during the Taliban regime. Don’t be afraid to talk about the hardships you have overcome, but keep in mind that this should be your personal story and not a general statement (i.e. not “I’m an Afghan boy and my parents moved to Pakistan and I went to school there and then I came back and now I’m applying for this scholarship.” Instead, talk about your personal and specific experience).
- **Remember:** Personal statement is PERSONAL! What makes YOU unique!

## **Tips for the Study Research Objectives:**

- Describe your academic JOURNEY
- Tie your academic background, professional experiences, and qualifications to personal and professional goals
- Explain what you want to study in detail:
  - Be specific!!!!
  - For example, rather than stating that you want to study public health, explain that your research interests are in maternal prenatal care for low-income populations, for example.
- Show how the degree will impact your personal and professional future goals
- How will your participation in Fulbright contribute to Afghanistan's future?
- How will receiving a Fulbright degree uniquely position you to return to Afghanistan and fill a gap in Afghanistan's workforce?
- Do not list every certificate and award you have ever received. Highlight only the REALLY important accomplishments and tie them into the essay to support what you've written.
- You are writing for an American reader. Be sure to briefly justify why your field of study is important and to explain how this degree will help you contribute to Afghanistan's future.