WRITING A STRONG FULBRIGHT
ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANT REFERENCE

Introduction
Fulbright grants for English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) abroad are among the most prestigious and generous national scholarships available to recent graduates of U.S. universities and colleges. The goal of the Fulbright program is to promote mutual understanding among nations through educational and cultural exchange while serving as a catalyst for long-term leadership development. Complete information is available at http://www.us.fulbrightonline.org/

The Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Program
More than 50 countries now offer Fulbright teaching assistantships. Fulbright ETAs are not responsible for designing curricula or teaching full courses. They serve at their placements under supervision and will be expected to develop and carry out a variety of learning activities, make presentations on U.S. culture and society, and/or assist faculty in an English Language Department with their teaching responsibilities, as needed.

In addition, some countries request that applicants describe an academic project or activity that they would pursue concurrent with the ETA assignment. This is a secondary component of the grant and may provide insight to the applicant's interest in the host country, academic or career interests, and/or suitability for the ETA program.

What to Include in a Fulbright ETA Reference
Note that there is a specific on-line form required for a Fulbright ETA reference. Additional letters of recommendation or information in any other format will NOT be considered. You will be e-mailed information directly from Fulbright, with access to the form and instructions for completing it, once the applicant has registered you as their referee.

A strong reference is a critical piece of a successful Fulbright application. In responding to the questions on the ETA reference form, referees should keep in mind that the applicant will be serving as a citizen representing the United States and that personal suitability, as well as academic excellence, are important criteria to be considered.

In responding to the questions on the ETA Reference Form, consider the following general characteristics of Fulbright US Student ETA Programs. Generally, ETA grantees:

- Are placed in elementary or secondary schools or universities outside of capital cities, depending on the country.
- Are assigned various activities designed to improve host country students' abilities in English and knowledge of the United States.
- Are fully integrated into the host community, increasing their own language skills and knowledge of the host country.
- May pursue individual study/research plans in addition to ETA responsibilities.
- Have some background or training in education and/or teaching/tutoring.

You can find a description of particular country requirements at https://us.fulbrightonline.org/thinking_country.html.
Preparing the Reference
Because the online reference feature does not allow you to save and edit the letter text, Fulbright recommends that you complete the letter in a word processing software program (MS Word, Notepad, WordPerfect, etc.) and either paste the text or attach the document to the online referee submission form. Fulbright does not accept letters of reference by fax or email.

Details on Completing the Form
Complete details on preparing and completing the form are found at https://us.fulbrightonline.org/preparing_etareferenceform.html

Formal Reference Expected
Fulbright has seen a marked decrease in the quality of references since moving to the online application process. They attribute that to the electronic effect—just as e-mail communication is often more informal and error prone than a hard-copy letter, so too, are electronic references. Since a hard-copy of the electronic reference is actually forwarded to the host country for review, informality can work to the detriment of the applicant. Fulbright asks that referees be aware of this and take steps to avoid it. Language used in references should be formal; jargon and colloquialisms should be avoided.

Members of the campus Fulbright committee are happy to proof draft copies of references or to answer questions from faculty referees. Rest assured that this is in no way an attempt to persuade faculty members to inflate a reference for a student; it is simply recognition that we are all human, and that a fresh set of eyes may catch a typo or a grammatical error.

Changes to an Fulbright ETA References
Once an ETA Reference Form has been submitted by the referee in the Online System, it cannot be edited. If you wish to make changes after submission, please ask contact:

Email: support@embark.com
Telephone: (415) 615-1805

Submission Deadline
You must submit the online reference by September 15. The campus Fulbright Committee will review applications and interview applicants the following week.

Questions?
Any questions about the Fulbright ETA reference or the campus Fulbright application process can be directed to Dr. Stella Setka, Fellowships Coordinator, at stella.setka@lmu.edu or 310.338.3792.