

# UNC African Studies Center

## FLAS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Eligibility

**Q: I am a student who will be graduating this spring. Am I eligible to apply for a FLAS?**

Recipients must be enrolled students to implement their FLAS fellowship. If you are graduating and will *not* be enrolling in another program, you are *not* eligible. If you are graduating and enrolling in a graduate program the following fall semester, you are eligible. An award will be contingent on acceptance and enrollment in the graduate program.

**Q: I am an in-coming graduate student, can I apply for a FLAS?** Yes. If you are selected for a FLAS fellowship, your award will be contingent on acceptance and enrollment in the program.

**Q: I was accepted last year to a graduate and/or professional school program but I deferred entrance until this upcoming year, can I apply for a FLAS?** Yes. If you are selected for a FLAS fellowship, your award will be contingent on acceptance and enrollment in the program.

**Q: I am an undergraduate, can I apply for a FLAS?** Yes. Undergraduates can only apply for intermediate and advanced level of language study (2<sup>nd</sup> year and above), not beginning level. Also, undergraduate FLAS awards differ in amount from graduate awards. If you are an undergraduate who will be a graduate student next year, you are eligible for a graduate award.

**Q: I am a student from another university, am I eligible to apply for a FLAS fellowship through your program?** Possibly. The ASC prioritizes UNC students, however.

**Q: I currently have a FLAS fellowship, may I re-apply?** Yes.

### Application

**Q: When is the FLAS application deadline?** Typically, late January. Check our website, [africa.unc.edu](http://africa.unc.edu), for details.

**Q: Where do I find the application for a FLAS fellowship?**

At <http://africa.unc.edu/students/flas/flas.asp>

*Remember: your program of study may have other applications or forms that need to be filled out. These are your responsibility and separate from the funding process.*

**Q: Do I need to complete a separate application with the U.S. Department of Education?**  
No.

**Q: Which languages are prioritized?** The ASC gives priority to applicants studying the following languages: Arabic, Kiswahili, Lingala, and Wolof. Students interested in other languages of Africa should consult with the FLAS coordinator. The ASC can request approval to fund other languages (such as Zulu) for summer programs. Please be aware that for languages not taught at UNC, you will need to indicate in your application how you intend to continue your study past the introductory level. Remember that the purpose of FLAS is to bring students to an advanced level of proficiency. For example, your application might indicate that you intend to apply for another FLAS or a different award in a subsequent summer to study at a program abroad for next level.

**Q: I am taking SWAH 406 this semester. Can I apply for a FLAS for Swahili for next year?** Currently, UNC does not offer SWAH past the 406 level, WOLO past the 404 level, or LING past the 404 level. If you are already at that level, you can apply for a summer FLAS and continue your study at an external program. Your application for an academic year FLAS in that language would not have priority because you would not be able to take UNC courses to continue your language study.

**Q: I would like to apply to study Arabic. Do I apply through the Middle East Center or the ASC?** You will want to think through what countries you are particularly interested in, and what your specific research focus is, when deciding which center to apply through. In fact, if the focus of your research is Arabic speaking immigrants in Europe, you would even want to consider applying through the Center for European Studies. The centers do sometimes share applications for languages which overlap regions.

**Q: I am applying for a beginning level language FLAS. Do I still need to submit a language evaluation?** No.

**Q: Is there a form for the recommenders to fill out?** You will enter your recommenders name and contact information into the online application, and the system will email them with the options of completing an online form or sending in a letter.

**Q: Who should I pick for my recommender?** It is advisable to pick recommenders who are not graduate students. Faculty members with a focus on Africa, and faculty members with whom you have worked closely and are familiar with your work are particularly recommended. It is not recommended to have recommenders who are language faculty, unless your focus is linguistics/languages or you have worked closely with the language faculty member. The recommendations should be from people who can speak to your overall academic and career goals, and they should not focus solely on your language proficiency. One recommender who is a faculty member and one who is a supervisor, such as someone you've worked with in Peace Corps or an NGO is also often a good choice.

**Q: To whom should my recommendation letters be addressed?** Letters should be addressed to the FLAS coordinator, or recommenders can fill out an online form.

**Q: What should recommenders discuss?** Recommenders should attest to the applicants experience/interest in the applicant's world area, the level of commitment to learning the language, relevance of the language and area studies to the applicants academic research and how the language and area studies is relevant for the applicant's future plans.

**Q: How should I submit the letters of recommendation?** Letters of recommendation should be submitted in individually signed, sealed envelopes and sent to the FLAS Coordinator, Stacey Sewall, OR recommenders can fill in the online form which will be emailed to them.

**Q: My references are on file at Career Services and they are not allowed to send the letters directly to me. Can the letter be sent directly to your office?** Yes. Please be aware that letters that are on file may not speak directly to the specific strengths that qualify you for a FLAS fellowship. You may want to talk to your recommenders to request updated letters that address the relevance of language study to your degree and career objectives.

**Q: Do my letters of recommendation need to come from the UNC faculty?** We strongly encourage that you choose recommenders who are familiar with your current work. In choosing a recommender, you should consider someone (whether at UNC or elsewhere) who is most familiar with your work, degree objectives, and career goals. The recommender should be able to speak about your overall academic qualifications and the relevance of language training to your specific goals.

**Q: I am an incoming graduate student, do both of my recommenders need to be UNC faculty?** Not necessarily. See above.

**Q: Can I apply for both summer and academic year FLAS fellowships?** Yes. It is possible to receive both a summer and academic year awards. For example, a student may apply to attend a summer intensive language program at the beginning level followed by an academic year FLAS for intermediate level language.

**Q: Is it possible to apply for two different languages?** Yes. It could potentially place your application in a weaker position, however. Please be aware that we seek to identify students committed to developing intermediate to advanced proficiency. The review committee may inquire about the applicant's need and commitment to learning both languages. Please ensure that your statement addresses this question.

**Q: Is it possible to apply to two different area centers for two different languages?** Yes. It could potentially place your application in a weaker position, however. You must notify the FLAS coordinators of your intent to apply to both centers. Two separate, complete applications are required.

**Q: How do I identify a language evaluator?** If you are at UNC, the FLAS coordinator can assist you in finding someone, or, of course your current language instructor would be a very good choice. If you are not currently at UNC, contact faculty at your home institution (or near-by universities) that teach your target language.

**Q: Is a graduate teaching assistant an acceptable language evaluator?** Yes, in the event that your home institution (or near-by universities) do not employ a qualified faculty in your target language. In this case, your FLAS coordinator may ask for further information on the individual's qualifications to conduct the language evaluation.

**Q: Is a native speaker an acceptable language evaluator?** Yes, in the event that your home institution (or near-by universities) do not employ a qualified faculty in your target language. In this case, your FLAS coordinator may ask for further information on the individual's qualifications to conduct the language evaluation.

**Q: Can my language evaluation be conducted by my previous language instructor even if I took the language outside of UNC?** Yes.

**Q: The language evaluator requested a fee for the evaluation. Can the area center pay for this service?** Unfortunately, we do not have funds available for this purpose.

**Q: Do I need to identify a language program on my *summer* FLAS application?** Yes. For courses taught at UNC please indicate the course title and number. For programs outside of UNC, please describe the summer program in detail. If awarded, you will need to provide evidence that the language program meets the following requirements:  
a) Beginning or intermediate levels: 140 contact hours of instruction, for a minimum of six (6) weeks. b) Advanced level: 120 contact hours of instruction, for a minimum of six (6) weeks. c) Program website or other information that will allow us to verify requirements. \*Please note that currently if the program exceeds the tuition allowance, you are allowed to consider the program, however, you will be responsible for paying the cost difference.

While it is not required that you show evidence that the program meets the above requirements at the time of application, you will need to show evidence after an award is made. However, the more the review committee knows about the program the better. There will be an opportunity to change to a new program when the award is made if necessary (for example, program originally indicated no longer meets requirements or you were not admitted).

**Q: Does the summer Intensive Swahili course offered at UNC meet the FLAS requirements?** Not at this time.

**Q: Do I have to list the courses that I plan to take next year on the application? How do I know which courses will be offered next year?** For an academic year FLAS, list the two *language* and *area studies* courses you *intend* to enroll in for each semester. At the time of application it is not necessary to list actual courses for next year. You may list potential courses based on courses offered in the past. The goal is to provide review committees with a sense of your area studies concentration.

**Q: Can I include additional information with the application (i.e., published papers)?** No. Only provide information that demonstrates your eligibility. For example, an in-coming graduate student, may include a copy of the acceptance letter to the department or school.

### Program Eligibility:

**Q: Do the programs have to be at UNC?**

#### *Academic Year:*

Typically, students are expected to enroll at UNC. Study Abroad programs through UNC are allowed for undergraduate students. Students may take a course at other Triangle universities in some cases.

#### *Summer:*

If you are applying for a summer FLAS to learn a language at the **beginning** level you can apply for a FLAS fellowship to attend another college or university in the United States. If the language is not offered anywhere in the United States, you can apply to study at an institution abroad. Undergraduates are not eligible for beginning level study. Graduate students applying for beginning level must speak another language of the region to proficiency. For questions about this new requirement, including eligible languages, please contact the FLAS coordinator. If you are applying for a summer FLAS to learn a language at the **intermediate or advanced** levels, you may apply to study in the United States or abroad.

**Q: How do I find an eligible language program?** We expect you to identify the language of study that best fits your academic needs and FLAS requirements. A list of programs is available from the FLAS coordinator. This list should serve only as a guide. We do not endorse any of these programs. You may also want to consult with language faculty or with previous FLAS fellows.

**Q: What makes a summer program FLAS eligible?** Each summer intensive language program needs to be approved on a case by case basis by the FLAS Coordinator. In general, a summer intensive language program may be FLAS eligible if it meets the following criteria: 1) 140 contact hours over a period of at least 6 weeks, and 2) the program must be a structured, credit granting program. Please note that the program may include the room and board fees in their cost listed online. If so, they may be able to break that down for you so that the tuition and fees portion of the cost is within the FLAS limit, by separating out the room and board cost and sending documentation of that breakdown.

**Q: Does it need to be a structured program or can I study with a tutor?** Summer programs must be structured. A private tutor will not be considered a FLAS eligible program. In some cases, for advanced learners, for credit independent study with a language instructor may be considered.

**Q: What is a contact hour?** A contact hour is one hour of structured instruction.

### Studying Abroad:

**Q: Can I study at the elementary (beginning) level outside the United States?** Only if the language is not offered in the United States.

**Q: Can I use my academic year FLAS fellowship outside of the United States?** For Graduate students, we prioritize academic year applicants who will be completing their full-time program of study on campus. Graduate students wanting research funding are advised to apply instead to the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Program. For Undergraduate students, you may enroll in Study Abroad for one or both semesters provided that the program offers the required language and area studies courses. In this case, the program abroad must be pre-approved by the Department of Education. Contact the FLAS Coordinator regarding your specific situation.

**Q: I am enrolling in a program abroad. Why do you need information about my travel plans at least six weeks before my departure?** We are required by the U.S. Department of Education to request travel approval for all FLAS awardees traveling abroad. Requests submitted after this deadline might not be approved, in which case they can not be supported with FLAS funds. Travelers are advised not to make *irrevocable* travel arrangements prior to receiving the official approval.

**Q: What specific information do you need in order to process my travel approval request?** We will need date of departure, city and country of departure, date of arrival, city and country of arrival, air carrier(s) and flight numbers. We need detailed travel information about all legs of your trip (including connecting flights and cities). If you are receiving a travel award from us your travel must comply with the Fly America Act (<http://www.ogc.doc.gov/ogc/fl/fald/itl/itlv14.pdf>). If you are flying on an airline that has partnership arrangements with a foreign carrier, please make sure that your ticket is booked on the U.S. carrier and that the flight number listed is the U.S. carrier number.

**Q: Is there travel money available for summer FLAS?** In some cases if funds are available, plane fare up to \$1,000 may be awarded if the applicant abides by the Fly America Act. Information on the Fly America Act can be viewed here: <http://www.ogc.doc.gov/ogc/fl/fald/itl/itlv14.pdf>. Your FLAS Coordinator will discuss the possibility of providing funds to cover plane fare with FLAS Fellows after awardees are notified.

### Implementation

**Q: What are the award amounts for summer FLAS fellowships?** Summer fellows receive a \$2,500 stipend (including room and board) and up to \$5,000 for tuition and fees. Programs that charge tuition and fees over \$5,000 will be considered if the fellow is willing to pay the difference or has other funding that can pay the difference. Housing and subsistence costs are not

covered from the \$5,000 in tuition and fees. If a recipient's summer program lumps housing costs into the total amount of tuition and fees, recipients will need to contact the program to get a breakdown of costs. *Note: These award amounts may be adjusted by the Department of Education.*

**Q: What are the award amounts for academic year FLAS fellowships?** Academic year **graduate** fellows receive a \$15,000 stipend and full payment of tuition, fees and health insurance. Tuition for out of state students is covered in full, but we do encourage recipients to apply for residency. Academic year **undergraduate** fellows receive a \$5,000 stipend and \$10,000 toward the cost of tuition and fees. *Note: These award amounts may be adjusted by the Department of Education*

**Q: Is a FLAS fellow allowed to work during the fellowship award period?** FLAS fellows are allowed to work during the award period but cannot be required to work in exchange for the FLAS fellowship. Regardless of work status, all FLAS fellows are required to be engaged in full-time foreign language and area/international studies course work or dissertation research during the academic year and in intensive language study during the summer award period.

**Q: Do we receive UNC credit for the course?** In the academic year, yes. In the summer, this depends. Please contact the FLAS coordinator with regard to transferring in summer language study credit.

**Q: How do I know which courses fulfill the FLAS requirements?** Academic Year Fellowship recipients are required to take one language course and one area studies course each semester for a total of 4 courses during the academic year. Area studies courses must be approved by your FLAS coordinator each semester. Area studies courses may be taken in the recipient's academic department if the course has an appropriate level of area content in the curriculum. The course list on our web site lists courses we have already approved. If you would like to request another course be approved, the instructor of the course will need to indicate to the FLAS coordinator via email that the course is at least 25% Africa content, or that it can be at least 25% Africa content for an individual student based on their particular work/research in the course. Research methods courses, in which the content of the course is on methods, rather than world area content, cannot be counted as area studies courses.

**Q: Is my FLAS fellowship taxable?** FLAS fellowships are considered taxable income, but you will not receive a form from the university. It is up to you to declare it. Recipients should consult the IRS tax code or consult with a tax professional for further information.

## Reporting

**Q: What are the reporting requirements?** At the end of your fellowship (August-September for summer fellows and May-June for academic year fellows) you will receive a link via email to IRIS, an online reporting system administered by the U.S. Department of Education. This final report is short and asks various questions about your future plans and your level of language attainment. **This report is mandatory for all fellows.**

**Note:**

Awardees will be contacted by the IEPS IRIS reporting system of the U.S. Department of Education. The IRIS system will provide instructions and a password to fill out important follow up documents titled:

[Foreign Language Self-Evaluation](#)

[Fellowship Evaluation](#)

[Education, Courses and Post-Fellowship Activities](#)

As part of the Education, Courses and Post-Fellowship Activities report, you will need to list the Course Title, Semester/ Quarter, Grade and No. of Credits. Students cannot register for Audit credit. Please be sure to list the actual grade received.