

Frequently Asked Questions

1) I already have completed my advanced degree and heard about the McCain Fellows Program. Can I still apply?

To be eligible, applicants must be recent graduates at the time of application, and must apply within 2 years of advanced degree (Master's degree or above) completion. Applicants expecting to graduate within 6 months at the time of application are also eligible to apply. Applicants must meet all advanced degree requirements, including the completion and/or successful defense of any required thesis or dissertations to be eligible.

2) I am currently pursuing my advanced degree and heard about the McCain Fellows Program. Can I still apply?

Students may apply during their last (graduating) semester as long as they complete their advanced degree and graduate prior to onboarding with their cohort. This includes the completion or successful defense of any required thesis or dissertation. If the applicant fails to graduate or receive their advanced degree prior to onboarding, even if selected, they cannot participate in the program. The McCain Fellows Program is a full time and competitive one-year fellowship program. McCain Fellows must be recent graduates and currently not taking any academic courses at the time of their onboarding and during their fellowship, unless it is part of their approved Individual Development Plan (IDP).

3) I previously applied to the program and did not get selected. Can I apply again for the next cohort?

Eligible applicants can re-apply for the next cohort. Applicants must be recent graduates and must re-submit their complete application packages prior to the deadline. Applicants can submit previous recommendation letters as long as the issued dates are within one year.

4) As a previously selected McCain Fellow, can I re-apply for another cohort?

No. McCain Fellows can only be selected once. They may not re-apply to the McCain Fellows Program for another cohort.

5) How are applicants evaluated?

Applicants are evaluated based on their overall application package, supporting documents (e.g. transcripts, endorsement letters and essays/narratives) and interview outcomes. The program and sponsoring organizations evaluate potential fellows based on academic achievement, technical excellence, professional background, character, work ethic, initiative (self-starter), DoD fit, commitment to public service, and how the applicant matches the overall purpose and defining criteria of a McCain Fellow.

6) What is the GS level, compensation and benefits for McCain Fellows?

McCain Fellows are compensated at a GS-10 level (Washington, DC Metro Locality Pay) and are eligible to receive federal employee benefits during their one-year fellowship.

7) If selected as a McCain Fellow, where do I conduct my rotations?

Candidates will be placed and selected based on their overall package and interviews with the sponsoring organizations (Office of the Under Secretaries of Defense (OUSDs) and Secretaries of a Military Department). During the one year fellowship, McCain Fellows will conduct two rotations in various offices within the same sponsoring organization. Fellows will be placed in rotations that supports the overall mission of the organization. Rotation locations vary as it largely depends on organization needs and mission. Rotation locations can be anywhere in the Washington metro DMV area, but it can also expand to areas where the sponsoring orgs need the Fellows to serve.

8) What is the Mobility/Relocation and Participation Agreement?

This agreement is provided at the time of application to inform applicants of potential relocation requirement based on rotational assignment designation upon selection. This is to inform and prepare the applicants that final rotation locations can be anywhere in the U.S. This agreement also address the Minimum Service Requirement and reimbursement due to DoD if Fellows voluntarily resigns or involuntarily removed for cause, insubordination or poor performance prior to completion of one-year fellowship (graduation).

9) Upon selection, can I request where I'm going to be assigned or rotation preference?

As a Fellow, you can share your rotation preference (function, specialty or location), but there is no guarantee as the main goal of the sponsoring organization is to place Fellows in teams and location that ultimately provides value to the organization and DoD mission.

10) Who are the sponsoring organizations?

There are nine sponsoring organizations under the McCain Fellows Program. They are the Office of the Under Secretaries of Defense (OUSDs) and Secretaries of a Military Department.

- **6 OUSDs:** Policy, Intel, Acquisition and Sustainment (A&S), Research and Engineering (R&E), Personnel and Readiness (P&R) and Comptroller
- **3 Secretaries of a Military Department:** Department of the Army, Department of the Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force and U.S. Space Force

11) I joined the U.S. military after completing my advanced degree. Since my graduation is past the two-year window from the appointment date, am I still eligible to apply?

Under the Recent Graduate hiring authority, veterans are precluded from the two-year window due to their military service obligations. They will have up to 6 years after the completion of the advanced degree to apply. Applicants who may qualify as veterans must have served at least one four-year tour and have separated from the military during that 6 year period.

12) I'm a reservist/active military. Am I eligible for military leave during the Fellowship?

Per OPM guidance, government employees under temporary billets not to exceed (NTE) 1 year must use annual leave or Leave without Pay (LWOP) for military orders. McCain Fellows are temporary billets NTE 1 year and fall under this category.

13) I am currently a government employee. Can I apply to the McCain Fellows Program?

Current government employees may apply to the McCain Fellows Program. However, this is a one-year leadership program in which the appointment ends at 52 weeks. Conversion to a permanent Federal position is not guaranteed.

14) What resume format should be used? Should it be a "Federal Resume"?

Applicant's resume should be in a federal resume format and must contain the following at a minimum: applicant name, contact information and email address, educational institution, qualifying degree programs, and work experience. Work experience should include: job title, employer and supervisor name and contact, position status (full-time or part-time position), the number of hours worked per week, annual salary, detailed description of job duties, skills, and accomplishments. If work experience was in a federal position, series and grade as well as clearance level should be included. Additional information about federal resumes can be found on USAJobs and on the McCain Fellows Program website.

15) I am a U.S. Citizen or lawful U.S. permanent resident. Do I need to provide proof of citizenship or permanent residence?

Yes. Applicants must be U.S. Citizens or lawful U.S. permanent residents, and must provide proof of citizenship or permanent residence status, such as U.S. Passport, Birth Certificate, Certificate of Naturalization, or Permanent Resident Card at the time of application.

16) Do I need to submit both my undergraduate and graduate official transcripts?

Yes, you will need to submit both your undergraduate and graduate official transcripts to identify your degrees and issuing academic institutions.

17) Can faculties in graduate programs nominate more than one applicant?

Yes, graduate programs may nominate as many qualified applicants as they wish.

18) Are applicants who are selected as Fellows guaranteed a Federal job?

The McCain Fellowship Program is a one-year leadership program. Fellows selected by a sponsoring organization will serve a 52-week appointment but are not guaranteed a permanent appointment at the end of their fellowship. Conversion to a permanent government employment is dependent on fellow's performance, DoD organization fit, billet availability, funding and sponsoring organization's ability to offer a permanent appointment.

19) The application requirements include "Passing background and security investigations," do I need to have a security clearance when I apply?

A security clearance at the time of application is not required. If selected, Fellows will undergo a security clearance process and must successfully pass and obtain a security clearance to become an official McCain Fellow.

20) What is the "Drug Testing" requirement?

During the one-year fellowship, McCain Fellows are federal government employees and considered "Testing Designated Positions." Upon selection, McCain Fellows must complete and successfully pass pre-employment drug screening prior to onboarding. McCain Fellows will be instructed to complete a drug test for illegal drugs. McCain Fellows who fail to report to the drug testing facility, refuse to undergo the test after appearing at the collection site, or test positive for the presence of illegal drugs will have their employment offer withdrawn. Federal laws apply.

21) What career fields are you accepting applications for?

We're accepting applicants from various career fields: Foreign Affairs, Policy, Intel, Financial Management, Accounting, Finance, Program Management, Business Management, Acquisition, Contracting, Logistics and STEM fields: Science and Technology, Research and Engineering, Information Technology, Cyber, Data Scientists and Data Analytics.

22) Can applicants or finalists request an extension or a deferral for their application?

The McCain Fellowship Program does not allow for extensions or deferrals. All applications must be completed and submitted by the application deadline to be considered.

23) As an applicant, what does the process look like between submitting an application and being selected as a Fellow?

Once the application period close, sponsoring organizations will review application packages of qualified candidates. Semi-finalist will be interviewed via phone. Finalists will be reviewed by an SES Selection Panel for approval and final cohort selection.

24) Do I have to sign the "DoD McCain Strategic Defense Fellows Program Mobility/Relocation and Participation Agreement"?

Yes, applicants/Fellows are required to review, acknowledge, sign, understand and abide by the DoD McCain Strategic Defense Fellows Program Mobility/Relocation and Participation Agreement document. The agreement outlines program requirements, fellows' responsibilities, mobility and relocation requirements, minimum service requirement, and reimbursement due to DoD from fellows. Reimbursement is due to DoD if the fellow voluntarily resigns and fail to serve the required minimum period of time, or the fellow is removed for cause, poor performance, misconduct or insubordination prior to graduation.

25) What is considered an Advanced Degree?

Advanced degree is defined as a professional or graduate degree (e.g., Master's, Ph.D., J.D.).

26) What is a U.S. Accredited Universities or educational institution?

U.S. accredited universities are educational institutions that have been accredited and meets acceptable levels of quality. To determine if your educational institution is U.S. accredited, visit the U.S. Department of Education, and conduct a search under the Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institution and Programs. The website is:
<https://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/home>

27) Does the program accept individuals with disabilities?

Yes. The United States Government does not discriminate in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, political affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, disability and genetic information, age, membership in an employee organization, or other non-merit factor.

28) Do Federal agencies reimburse Fellows for their relocation costs upon appointment?

The McCain Fellowship Program does not offer reimbursement for relocation at this time.

29) How can I find out about the next McCain Fellows application cycle?

Application period and announcements will be posted on the McCain Fellows public website. Application period status and announcements will also be shared through info sessions and posted on school job posting platforms such as Handshake, Symplicity, etc.

30) Are there any additional resources that may help me with the application process?

The McCain Fellowship Program website lists the application requirements, process and provides resources that include the following:

- **McCain Fellows Program Fact Sheet and FAQs**
- **McCain Fellows Positions:** Positions open for applications are listed under this section. Each position listing includes a description of duties and knowledge required.
- **Application Process and Resources:** Tips on how to write a "Federal Resume" is found in this section and may guide you in how to prepare your resume for your application.

For any additional questions, please contact whs.mccainfellows@mail.mil or visit our website at <https://www.whs.mil/McCain-Fellows-Program/>