A good application is one where students create their own program to do independent research or work. Often, students enroll directly in a program, rather than as a study abroad student.

A PhD candidate application should include a research plan and bibliography. Clearly outline your proposal and include tight research design and methodologies. Demonstrate that you have thought through your research proposal. Include a citation or two that show you know the literature.

A junior-level grad student should demonstrate why it is important for that individual to learn a culture. What courses will you take?

Tell the reader your future academic and career plans. Show how what you are doing and the country you are visiting links to national security and how the service requirement complements your career plans. Let the readers know what type of position or agency you would be interested in working for, especially if your academic area is not a ‘field of emphasis’.

Feasibility is very important—can you accomplish your proposal in the time allotted?

Address the language requirement and how it fits with your career plans. If there is no language component, you need to make one by applying to a school or hiring a tutor. Integrate language learning with your proposal. If you are already fluent, then address how the experience will improve your skills.

Remember, readers will not have access to your resume, so share all of your great experiences!

Make sure your essays clearly and in some detail answer each of the questions presented. When you are finished with your essays, go back, read each question, and see if your essay provides an ample response.

Your application needs to demonstrate an ability to adapt to a different cultural environment.

The scholarship is not need-based—financial need statements in your application do nothing to help you.

Submit the application early to the National and International Scholarships Program to receive our feedback (topscholars@illinois.edu). We’re willing to review multiple drafts, if you give us time.

Nuts and Bolts

The first round of competition includes region-specific committees of academic raters. The second level is conducted nationally, interdisciplinary, and across world regions.

15-20% of recipients go to countries not on the preferred list.

Institutional affiliation is strongly encouraged. Say you are going to work at Y with X. Even if your affiliation is not yet official, you should at least say that it is in process. Ideally, you will obtain a letter of affiliation from an overseas contact.

Unless your workplace is related to your project, recommendations should be from academics. The letters should address your proposal and say that it is important/feasible.

Order transcripts in advance with a delay to include your fall 2014 grades.

Deadline: TBD We would appreciate copies of final applications.