

Koç University School of Medicine (KUSOM)  
Committee for Careers in Medicine (CCIM)

How to apply for an international fellowship or a research position?

A “How To” document for undergraduate medical students

Your undergraduate years are a great opportunity to discover your interests for now and the future. On your path to becoming an MD, you will have enough time to explore and discover yourself, your fields of interest, and meet your peers at national and international levels. You will have the chance to experience, compare and progress. Applying to international fellowships or research positions should not be considered as mandatory, but highly recommended and encouraged that you give it a try.

At the end of such fellowship or clerkship programs, you will highly probably clarify which path you would choose or not, where you want to or not live and work. Fellowships are the great occasions to discover yourself, the experiences that will reflect your enthusiasm to different medical specialties, which will impact your future job position applications.

### When?

There is no definite limitation, however it is well known that the more knowledge you have, the more you will get out of any fellowship. The first two years will be quite early for any clinical fellowship. Do not rush. Plan wisely. You can benefit of any time during your summer holidays, which is mostly the case.

Internship is an exception when you are allowed to be out of KUH, for a limited period. You can go abroad or to another appropriate hospital in Turkey for your “elective internship” at the 2<sup>nd</sup> clinical year (5<sup>th</sup>-year). Please refer to the Dean’s Office for exact rules.

The very popular places may need to be applied at least one year before your anticipated fellowship/internship/clerkship period. Remember that many medical students around the world are walking the same path.

### What?

What are you interested in? What draws your enthusiasm? You are the only one to decide and choose the specialty. You may even consider your social, behavioral, and esthetical etc. skills to experience.

### Where?

There are a few options:

1. You may apply to a clinic or a lab that your peers have already experienced. Discuss with them their experiences and organizational tips.
2. You may discuss with your mentor/advisor or with a clinician or a researcher faculty member who is working at the same field.
3. You may search on the internet, basically the well-known research centers or university hospitals. Many of them might already made available online their contact information, open positions, and application rules.

## Budget

It is your own responsibility to cover all your expenses. Plan and organize your accommodation and other facilities before you finalize your plan. The Dean's Office may have limited fund only for selected outstanding students. Contact the Dean's Office for more information.

**Do not forget** that you will have to pass your block exams, so that you will not have any make-up exams during your planned travel period.

## Technically

There are three main focuses of a fellowship: Person, Project, and Place. This means to be competitive; you need to be able to demonstrate that:

1. You are the right person for that specific fellowship,
2. The project is timely, ambitious, and realistic,
3. The institution where you want to work offers the right environment for you to complete your research and to become an independent research leader.

However, this does not mean that you need to get vast amounts of evidence and experience before you apply. Fellowships are designed for you to develop yourself, so it is more about demonstrating your potential as a future research leader.

## How to start?

1. Application is the first step to introduce yourself.
2. You should carefully consider the application process, and always fill out all the requested forms appropriately.
3. Consider the deadline date and send the application in advance.
4. Application represents your first impression. At the first site, the application must look more aesthetically pleasing and is significantly clear. Most applications have instructions which are crucial to the organization. Please follow their application instructions carefully.
5. Make no mistakes such as:
  - a. Sending more or fewer references / recommendations than asked for,
  - b. Enclosing a CV or resume instead of filling out the application form(s),
  - c. Not having transcripts prepared officially by SOM,
  - d. Not including standardized test scores etc.
6. Personal Statement: Most institutions will generally ask for a personal statement. A "Personal Statement" allows the institution to review your interests and determine your motivation for applying for the fellowship/internship. Also, it is the institution's first look at your writing skills, therefore, it should be written with excellent grammar, clarity, and spelling. A personal/goal statement should be clear and easy to read. The institution should be able to evaluate a synopsis of your background and a vision of where you wish to be in the future. This essay is not the time to tell your life story but to highlight the relevant career, academic, and civic accomplishments. Don't tell them what they can do for you. Don't spend a lot of time writing about what the fellowship/internship will do for you, instead, show how you can contribute to the institution and/or the field of study. The

personal/goal statement is your opportunity to sell your skills and abilities to take advantage of the opportunity.

#### Remember to:

- Include your future goals and relevant research interests.
- Answer the question: 'Why you should be accepted to the fellowship/internship program'?
- Highlight only your relevant skills and accomplishments.
- Follow instructions with regards to the length of the personal/goal statement.

#### Remember NOT to:

- Include personal discriminating information (such as marital status, sexual orientation, etc.), unless it is specifically asked for,
- Use long sentences,
- Overuse technical jargon,
- Brag or fabricate,
- Make mistakes with grammar and/or spelling.

#### Networking

Calling or meeting people from the organization can increase your chances of being accepted to the fellowship/internship program. Remember, most people want to hire someone with whom they are familiar.

#### Additional Information

Sometimes supplemental information can increase your chances of being accepted for a fellowship/internship. Some additional information that you may wish to include Resume/CV and/or publications if appropriate.

#### Conclusion

Many websites are just under your fingertips!! Start your search today with curiosity and enthusiasm!