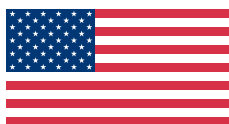




NON-COMPETITIVE ELIGIBILITY GUIDE FOR CLS PROGRAM ALUMNI



**CRITICAL LANGUAGE
SCHOLARSHIP**

OVERVIEW OF NCE

If your goal is to become an employee in the federal civil service, Non-Competitive Eligibility status is a valuable benefit from your exchange experience.

NON-COMPETITIVE ELIGIBILITY

Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program alumni are eligible for Non-Competitive Eligibility hiring status for civil service jobs in the federal government. In 2016, Executive Order 13750 established this status for alumni of the CLS Program, as well as the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program and the Fulbright U.S. Student Program.

The Executive Order recognizes the valuable skills and competencies attained by scholars who participate in these programs and provides a pathway to employment with the U.S. federal government for qualified applicants. CLS alumni have developed language skills and cultural expertise in regions that are critical to the United States with regards to its diplomatic and economic interests. Given the federal government's investment in scholars on such programs, it is in the interest of the federal government to further draw on the expertise and services of alumni of these programs.

Competitive Eligibility status following the successful completion of their program. Read on to learn more about this status and for information on how to use it to drive your future career in the U.S. government.

Non-Competitive Eligibility, often shortened as NCE, is a status conferred upon alumni of the CLS Program and other U.S. government programs that permits federal agencies to hire individuals who meet minimum eligibility requirements into civil service positions without going through the same formal hiring process as other candidates. NCE status allows you to become a federal employee more easily, if that is your goal.

Federal hiring is often a complicated and time-consuming process, and most positions must be broadly advertised and competed. NCE status indicates to federal agencies that you, as someone who has already succeeded in a competitive merit-based selection process and developed skills that are of value to the federal government, may be fast-tracked through this process. It gives hiring agencies the flexibility to fill high-need

positions quickly with well qualified candidates, which makes you a much more compelling applicant.

NCE status also benefits applicants, as it helps to set you apart from the general pool of external applicants for competitive civil service positions. NCE status gives you the ability to apply for certain federal positions that are not open to the public at large.

NCE status does not guarantee or entitle you to a position in the federal government. You must still meet all qualifications and any additional requirements of a position, such as a background investigation or security clearance, and the hiring decision is always at the discretion of the hiring agency.

ELIGIBILITY FOR NCE STATUS

Alumni who have successfully completed the CLS Program have NCE status for 12 months following the end of the program. After successful completion of all program requirements, including post-program surveys and tests, alumni will receive a Certificate of Achievement signed by an official at the U.S. Department of State confirming their NCE status. This certificate is generally included in the completion packet with other program-related certificates [see sample

certificate in appendix.] In order to demonstrate your NCE status, you should include a copy of this certificate with your application materials when applying for civil service positions.

EXTENDING ELIGIBILITY

As stated in the Executive Order, hiring agencies have the option of extending the NCE eligibility of CLS Program alumni for two additional years, up to a maximum of 36 months. In order to qualify for extended NCE status, you must have been involved in one of the following activities after completing the CLS Program:

- Served in the military
- Studied at a recognized institution of higher education
- Were involved in another activity, which in the agency’s view warrants an extension

All decisions about extending NCE status are at the discretion of the hiring agency. Extensions are not granted by the CLS Program and there is no additional letter or certificate that you need. When you submit an application, be sure to note the clause from Executive Order 13750 that grants extensions of status and provide any supporting documentation, such as your school transcript.

EDUCATIONAL IMPACT OF THE CLS PROGRAM

Alumni use knowledge of their host country’s culture and language in their academic pursuits.



- 88%** Alumni use knowledge of their host countries in their studies
- 78%** Alumni use their language skills in courses and extracurricular activities
- 44%** of alumni have participated in at least one other U.S. government scholarship

“I am doing my dissertation research on language policy in Kenya and Tanzania, and I use Kiswahili every day, both in my daily activities and in my research itself.”

USING NCE STATUS

WHERE DOES NCE STATUS APPLY?

NCE status applies to employment in civil service positions within the federal government. The federal civil service is the civilian workforce employed by the U.S. federal government's departments and agencies—non-elected and non-military. This includes positions in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal government. NCE status does not apply to foreign service positions, which have a different hiring procedure (refer to careers.state.gov for more information on joining the foreign service).

Opportunities with the federal government are available in every location, in every state and territory, as well as in foreign countries, and offer a broad range of different career paths. The federal government employs historians, engineers, emergency room nurses, information technologists, and law enforcement officers, as well as diplomats and administrators. No matter what career you are pursuing, we recommend you consider federal employment and see if there is an opportunity that matches your passion and experience.

USING NCE STATUS TO APPLY FOR JOBS

NCE status can potentially apply to any position in the federal civil service. Positions on USAJobs.gov that are marked with a purple Peace Corps and AmeriCorps Vista seal (🌐) have already been designated as open to NCE candidates. This is also an indicator that the agency in question is familiar with NCE, so it may require less explanation in your application materials. However, you do not need to limit your search to those positions. As long as the position for which you are applying is in the federal civil service, your NCE status can be honored by the hiring agency.

FINDING FEDERAL JOBS

The best way to find open positions is by visiting USAJobs.gov, where you can search for jobs across the federal government. On that website, you can create a profile, develop a federal resume, and begin applying to positions. You will find information about federal career paths and hiring events there as well.

In addition, you can find information about employment with specific federal agencies by visiting their websites, such as careers.state.gov (Department of State), energy.gov/jobs (Department of Energy), or epa.gov/careers (the Environmental Protection Agency), to name a few.

You can also learn about federal job opportunities by participating in International Exchange Alumni communities, by setting up a profile at alumni.state.gov. You can also join the CLS Program's alumni Facebook and LinkedIn groups, where federal positions with agencies looking to hire alumni with NCE status are sometimes shared.

Finally, you can find NCE positions through the Peace Corps website for Returned Peace Corps Volunteers. Peace Corps Volunteers also receive NCE status, and the Peace Corps website maintains many relevant career resources, including a listing of NCE-eligible jobs. You can access that resource at peacecorps.gov/returned-volunteers/careers/career-link/

While many hiring managers actively seek candidates with NCE status, others are less familiar with the concept. All vacancy announcements on [USAJobs.gov](https://www.usajobs.gov) list the name of an agency contact at the bottom of the position announcement who can be contacted throughout the hiring process.

If you apply for a position that is not already designated for NCE candidates, you should reach out to the agency contact for that position, and provide them with information about your eligibility. They may consider utilizing your NCE status to fill the position if it means they will be able to do so more easily with a highly-qualified candidate.

Whether the position has already been designated for NCE or not, it is recommended that you reach out to the agency contact to provide them with your NCE letter, a copy of Executive Order 13750 and an explanation of your NCE status. This will help to ensure that your status is taken into account during the hiring process. Note that many hiring officials in the federal government are not familiar with NCE, so you may need to provide them with information about NCE and follow up to answer any questions or concerns they have about the process.

NCE APPLICATION TIPS

Some positions require that applicants provide a grade and series when demonstrating their NCE status in the application process. Because your NCE status is granted due to your status as an alumna/us of an exchange program, and not because you were previously a federal employee, you probably do not have a grade or series. In this case, we recommend you contact that hiring official to inquire as to how to complete this aspect of the application.

Many hiring officials, particularly those outside of the U.S. Department of State, will also likely be unfamiliar with the CLS Program. We recommend that you provide some information and context regarding the CLS Program and the skills and competencies you've developed through participation in the program when applying for a position. Be sure to highlight how your CLS experience helped you to become a great candidate for the particular position for which you are applying.

PROFESSIONAL IMPACTS OF THE CLS PROGRAM

Alumni credit the skills they build on-program for making them competitive candidates for their jobs.



87% Knowledge of regional and world affairs

82% Language skills

95% Intercultural communication skills

"I work with Chinese immigrants in healthcare; I help bridge the language barriers between healthcare professionals and patients."

YOUR JOB APPLICATION



Applying to a job in the federal government is different from the regular job application process you might be used to. There are many rules that control how the federal government hires for positions, and so it is important that you keep that process in mind when you are preparing your application.

The same restrictions that can make applying for a position in the federal government challenging also make it difficult for federal agencies to fill important positions quickly. NCE hiring status was created to help federal employers work around these restrictions, so it can be as beneficial for prospective government employers as it is for you! NCE makes the hiring process simpler and allows federal employees to spend more time focused on the work at hand.

An added benefit for federal employers is access to the diverse and highly-talented pool of CLS

Program alumni, who were selected through a highly competitive, merit-based national selection process and have developed valuable skills in critical world languages, intercultural communication, critical thinking, and problem solving through their participation in the CLS Program.

You should not assume that hiring personnel are familiar with the benefits of NCE hiring status or with the CLS Program, however. Highlighting these benefits is an important step to taking advantage of your NCE status. You should prepare to explain what NCE status is and include information about it at every point in your application and hiring process. Make reference to your status in your resume, cover letter, under qualification questions on the USAJobs website, in emails to the hiring managers, as well as on your LinkedIn profile.

RESUME

You will want to highlight your NCE status on your resume, as well as indicate your participation in the CLS Program. Describe the skills you gained on the CLS Program and how those skills are relevant to the job for which you are applying. Your goal is to convince the hiring officials that you are the best candidate for the position and point out that you have NCE status, which makes it easier to hire you!

Alumni have included information about their participation in the CLS Program in resumes in a number of ways, and we encourage you to tailor this based on your career objectives, your experience, and the job description. Your CLS experience could be included in a section on education, international experience, or awards and honors. You could also include this in a statement of objective at the top of your resume.

If you are applying for a federal position through USAJobs.gov, it is recommended that you use the resume builder provided on the website to be sure that you have included all of the required information, such as dates of previous employment and hours worked per week. If you upload your own resume to the website, check to ensure that you have included all of the required

information; if your resume does not include all of the required information, you may be deemed ineligible by the reviewing officials.

When applying for federal positions, you do not need to limit your resume to one or two pages, as you will not be penalized for a longer resume and it is important to make sure that you include as much relevant detail as possible. As with any job application, you will want to tailor your resume based on each position description to highlight how your past experiences have prepared you for this role.

COVER LETTER

For any job, it is a good idea to include a cover letter highlighting why you would be a good candidate for the position. Always include one or two sentences about your NCE status in your cover letter. If you are requesting an extension of your NCE status, include a short justification for that in your cover letter. For example:

"As an alumna of the Critical Language Scholarship Program, I hold Non-competitive Eligibility (NCE) hiring status for federal civil service positions. I have provided further information about my NCE hiring status in my supplemental application documentation."

CLS PROGRAM ALUMNI CONTINUED LANGUAGE USE

Alumni of the CLS Program use the language skills and cultural competencies learned through CLS in their academic and professional careers.



- 83%** Alumni continue study of their CLS language after completing the program
- 79%** Alumni used their CLS language in academic and professional lives last year.
- 49%** Alumni work in positions that require the use of their CLS language

"I work with Middle Eastern peacemakers and use my Arabic skills to communicate and translate for them."



"In 2019, I participated in an intensive overseas language immersion through the Critical Language Scholarship Program, a program of the U.S. Department of State. Per Executive Order 13750, I have been granted Non-competitive Eligibility (NCE) hiring status for federal civil service positions as an alumna of this program through September 1, 2020. I have included further information about NCE in my supplemental application documentation."

More advice on how to articulate the benefits of the CLS Program in the job search process is provided in CLS Program re-entry materials, including the Re-entry Handbook and Re-entry Webinar, which can be accessed on the CLS Program website at <https://clscholarship.org/alumni/re-entry>.

INTERVIEWS

You should be prepared to talk about your NCE status in in-person or screening interviews for federal positions; this is another opportunity for you to remind the federal employer that you hold NCE status, to answer their questions about it,

and to emphasize the skills and experiences that you gained on the CLS Program for which you received the status. At this stage in the hiring process, NCE status could be a decisive advantage for you over other strong candidates for the position.

You should also bring copies of your Certificate of Achievement and the Letter to Employers attached to this guide for each member of your interview panel.

Be sure that you are familiar with your hiring status so that you can answer any questions interviewers have, but you should also feel comfortable to refer them to the supporting documentation if you are unsure. You should follow up any interview with a thank you email, which is also another opportunity to respond to questions that you were not able to address in the interview, and to highlight your NCE status a final time.



APPENDICES

LETTER TO EMPLOYERS

EXECUTIVE ORDER 13750

CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

APPENDIX: LETTER TO EMPLOYERS

TO: Federal Employers

FROM: The Critical Language Scholarship Program

RE: Non-Competitive Eligibility

What is the Critical Language Scholarship Program?

The Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program is an intensive overseas language and cultural immersion program wherein students spend eight to ten weeks abroad studying one of 15 critical languages. The CLS Program, a program of the U.S. Department of State, is part of a wider government initiative to expand the number of Americans studying and mastering foreign languages that are critical to national security and economic prosperity. CLS plays an important role in preparing students for the 21st century's globalized workforce and increasing national competitiveness.

What is non-competitive eligibility (NCE)?

Executive Order 13750, signed in November 2016, grants non-competitive eligibility (NCE) hiring status to alumni of certain education programs of the U.S. Department of State, including the Fulbright Student Program and the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program, for employment in federal civil service positions, as long as they meet minimum qualifications and requirements.

Federal agencies may elect to extend the period of eligibility for up to two additional years, or a total of 36 months in all, if after completing the CLS Program the candidate:

- Served in the military
- Studied at a recognized institution of higher education
- Was involved in another activity, which in the agency's view, warrants an extension.

NCE allows U.S. federal government agencies to hire highly-qualified CLS Program alumni outside of the formal competitive job announcement process and for CLS Program alumni to compete for certain federal positions that are only open to federal employees. CLS Program alumni can receive a job offer with as little as an open position and a resume that reflects the necessary experience and education for an agency. Broadly advertising the position, interviewing candidates, and other common hiring procedures are not required for an agency to hire an applicant with NCE status.

Why hire CLS Program alumni using NCE?

The Executive Order recognizes the valuable skills and competencies attained by scholars who participate in these programs. CLS Program alumni have developed language skills and cultural expertise in regions that are critical to the United States with regards to its diplomatic and economic interests. In addition, CLS Program alumni have gained valuable skills in intercultural communication, resourcefulness, critical thinking, problem solving, and adaptability.

Hiring a candidate with NCE status is a simple process—if the candidate meets the necessary experience and education for a position, they can be hired without the formal job announcement and interview process.

Whom can I contact with questions about NCE?

If you have any questions about NCE, or would like to confirm a candidate's NCE status, please contact the Critical Language Scholarship at cls@americancouncils.org or (202) 833-7522.

DOWNLOAD THIS LETTER AS A PDF: [CLSCHOLARSHIP.ORG/ALUMNI/NCE/LETTER.PDF](https://clscholarship.org/alumni/nce/letter.pdf)

APPENDIX: CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT



CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Critical Language Scholarship Program



Summary of Achievement

_____ was selected for the U.S. Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program for intensive study of _____ in _____ and completed the CLS Program.

Selected through a competitive process, CLS participants complete a multi-week intensive language and cultural immersion program overseas, which is equivalent to approximately one academic year of university-level language coursework. In addition to 20 hours of weekly formal classroom instruction, participants engage in one-on-one language practice with native speakers for conversational practice, as well as cultural activities designed to enhance language ability and understanding of the history, politics, and culture of the host country and region.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program, a program of the United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, provides intensive immersive summer language instruction and cultural enrichment overseas for periods of 8 – 10 weeks for U.S. undergraduate and graduate students with demonstrated ability and commitment to the study of strategic languages. CLS Program languages currently include Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, and Urdu. Institutes take place in countries where the target languages are spoken.

Launched in 2006, the CLS Program builds U.S. international capacity and prepares U.S. students for global careers and engagement, in government and the non-governmental and private sectors.

Designation of Non-Competitive Eligibility Status

In accordance with Executive Order No. 13750, issued on November 29, 2016, this document certifies that _____ successfully participated in the Critical Language Scholarship Program, completing all Program requirements. This individual is therefore eligible to be appointed as a career-conditional employee in the competitive civil service on a non-competitive basis. This benefit under the Executive Order extends for a period of one year after the Program completion date shown above, except that the employing agency may extend that period for up to three years for an alumnus/a who enters military service, pursues studies at a recognized institution of higher learning, or engages in other activities that, in the view of the appointing authority, warrant extension of the period.

APPENDIX: EXECUTIVE ORDER 13750

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

Executive Order 13750—Providing for the Appointment of Alumni of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, and the Critical Language Scholarship Program to the Competitive Service

November 29, 2016

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including sections 3301 and 3302 of title 5, United States Code, and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. The Federal Government benefits from a workforce that can be recruited from the broadest and deepest pools of qualified candidates for our highly competitive, merit-based positions. The issuance of an order granting Non-Competitive Eligibility (NCE) to certain alumni of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, and the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program, all of which are academic exchange programs carried out under the authorities of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87–256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act, and the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000, title III of Public Law 106–309, would be in the best interest of the Federal Government. Participants in these programs develop advanced-to superior-level skills in languages and cultural competence in regions that are strategically, diplomatically, and economically important to the United States. It is in the interest of the Federal Government to retain the services of these highly skilled individuals, particularly

given that the Federal Government aided them in the acquisition of their skills. Participants in the Fulbright, Gilman, and CLS programs are drawn from highly competitive, merit-based national selection processes to which a veterans' preference applies to ensure that the most qualified individuals are selected.

Accordingly, pursuant to my authority under 5 U.S.C. 3302(1), and in order to achieve a workforce that is drawn from all segments of society as provided in 5 U.S.C. 2301(b)(1), I find that conditions of good administration make necessary an exception to the competitive hiring rules for certain positions in the Federal civil service.

Sec. 2. Establishment. The head of any agency in the executive branch may appoint in the competitive service any person who is certified by the Secretary of State or designee as having participated successfully in the Fulbright, Gilman, or CLS international exchange programs, and who passes such examination as the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) may prescribe.

Sec. 3. The Secretary of State or designee shall issue certificates, upon request, to persons whom the Department of State determines have completed the requirements of a program described in section 1 of this order.

Sec. 4. Any appointment under this order shall be effected within a period of 1 year after completion of the appointee's participation in the programs described in section 1. Such period may be extended to not more than 3 years for persons who, following participation in the programs described in section 1, are engaged in military service, in the pursuit of studies at an institution of higher learning, or in other activities which,

in the view of the appointing authority, warrant an extension of such period. Such period may also be extended to permit the adjudication of a background investigation.

Sec. 5. A person appointed under section 2 of this order becomes a career conditional employee.

Sec. 6. Any law, Executive Order, or regulation that would disqualify an applicant for appointment in the competitive service shall also disqualify an applicant for appointment under this order. Examples of disqualifying criteria include restrictions on employing persons who are not U.S. citizens or nationals, who have violated the anti-nepotism provisions of the Civil Service Reform Act, 5 U.S.C. 2302(b)(7), 3110, who have knowingly and willfully failed to register for Selective Service when required to do so, 5 U.S.C. 3328(a)(2), who do not meet occupational qualifying standards prescribed by OPM, or who do not meet suitability factors prescribed by OPM.

Sec. 7. The Office of Personnel Management is authorized to issue such additional regulations as may be necessary to implement this order. Any individual who meets the terms of this order, however, is eligible for noncompetitive hiring with or without additional regulations.

Sec. 8. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

- (i) the authority granted by law to an executive department, agency, or the head thereof, or the status of that department or agency within the Federal Government; or
- (ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
November 29, 2016.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:15 a.m., December 1, 2016]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on December 2.

Categories: Executive Orders : Fulbright U.S. Student Program, Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, and Critical Language Scholarship Program alumni, noncompetitive appointments to Federal civil service.

Subjects: Education : Foreign language study, promotion efforts; Government organization and employees : Noncompetitive appointments to Federal civil service.

DCPD Number: DCPD201600802.



www.clscholarship.org

The Critical Language Scholarship Program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, with funding provided by the U.S. Government. It is supported in its implementation by American Councils for International Education.

