

Submit Personal Narratives & QEP

In addition to Consular Fellows Program Test (CFPT) scores, the Department of State screens candidates for job-related qualities that indicate a candidate's ability to perform Foreign Service work successfully. This is done through the Qualifications Evaluation Panel (QEP) review, which looks at a candidate's total file: the CFPT and Personal narrative (PN) scores, work history, education, and personal experiences..

Consular Fellows Program (CFP) Candidates will submit Personal Narratives (PNs) as part of the job application when they register to take the CFPT. Although these narratives are evaluated later in the process, candidates are asked to complete them at the beginning and how seriously candidates address them can make or break their candidacy. The PNs will ask candidates to answer questions describing the knowledge, skills, and abilities they would bring to the CFP. Candidates will be asked to address the following six areas:

1. Leadership: innovation, decision making, teamwork, openness to dissent, community service and institution building
2. Interpersonal Skills: professional standards, persuasion and negotiation, workplace perceptiveness, adaptability, representational skills
3. Communication Skills: written communication, oral communication, active listening, public outreach, foreign language skill
4. Management Skills: operational effectiveness, performance management and evaluation, management resources, customer service
5. Intellectual Skills: information gathering and analysis, critical thinking, active learning, leadership and management training
6. Substantive Knowledge: Understanding of U.S. history/ government/culture and application in dealing with other cultures. Knowledge or application of career track information that is relevant information.

Candidates are sent an email once the Qualifications Evaluation Panel has completed their review of the application. Successful candidates are provided instructions on language testing.

Candidates should keep the following considerations in mind when drafting their PNs:

- Respond appropriately to the questions asked. A candidate may have a great story that highlights his or her unique qualities, but if the response does not directly address the question, the candidate will receive a lower score.
- The PNs allow candidates to draw attention not only to what they have done, but also how they did it, why it mattered, and what effect it had. Simple lists of accomplishments, recaps of candidates' resumes, or theories learned in school are not effective.
- The QEP panels are composed of experienced, trained current or former Foreign Service Officers who read the PNs from hundreds of candidates and are familiar with the type of experience a candidate acquires when spending two weeks in Africa for a graduate school project or working as a summer intern in the State Department. While candidates should not be shy about reporting their actual accomplishments, inflating the facts or their work positions is counterproductive and very likely to work against them.
- Candidates should not make assumptions about the types of responses the Department of State is looking for or the type of candidate it wishes to hire. While most candidates have had some overseas

experience — e.g., travel, study, or business — many have not. It is possible that a candidate's summer job at a local animal shelter could provide a better response to a PN question than the experience acquired during study abroad.

- Candidates should spend time developing and refining their PNs. Draft responses in a word document and then copy and paste them into the application. Candidates should also be sure to have others edit and review their PNs.
- Before submitting their PNs, candidates should make sure their responses that not only answer the specific question, but are also appropriate to the work of a Consular Fellow.
- PNs should be clear, concise, and complete: state the issue, what you did to address the issue, and the outcome of your actions or solutions. This is what we call “why it mattered.” Avoid using passive voice wherever possible.