



Thomas J. Watson Fellowship

Getting Started Worksheet

Don't worry about having all the answers: this form is intended to help you! We hope that seeing the key questions will be useful to you, and it can help us to see where you are in the process/what you're thinking: You might share a working draft with a member of the Fellowships team before an advising appointment, to give us a good basis for conversation. You will not be able to edit this form online, but you may download it and edit it on your own device.

Name (and pronouns):

Wellesley class year and major(s)/minor:

Best email at which to reach you:

Getting started:

Check out campus deadlines and advice via the [Career Education Watson page](#). Don't miss the helpful resources on the official Watson website, or [advice on the Career Education website](#), like brief recorded webinars on [Writing Personal Statements](#) and [Writing Fellowship Proposals](#).

What about the Watson **appeals** to you?

What is the topic you're most deeply curious to explore as a Watson? What might you hope to do as a Watson Fellow? What's the big idea? Is there a guiding topic or set of questions you're hoping to learn more during a Watson year?

Pro tip: A good Watson proposal isn't just a cool project, but something that speaks to your long-standing interests, to things you've studied or done in the past, and also in some way to something you might hope to do in future, even if not for a living.

Where did this **interest** come from? What started you thinking about this? What keeps you coming back to this idea?



How have you **developed** this interest? Through coursework, research, clubs, volunteer experiences, language study, internships, study abroad, other means? How does this interest connect to things you've done in the past? What about your experiences so far might prepare you for your Watson project?

Why this topic/idea/question? Why would this be the *most* interesting way you could spend the first year out of college? Why couldn't you do this by other means (a job, or graduate or professional study, for example)?

Where would you go to explore your topic? **Why** these places? What makes these interesting places to pursue this project and/or what makes you curious to spend time there?

Pro tip: Keep in mind that you may not return to countries you've visited previously, to your home country if you're an international student, or to the U.S. at all during the fellowship year. Please also note Watson's guidelines for permitted countries of travel [here](#), under "Fellow Expectations."

Who? With what organization(s) and/or individuals might you hope to connect, and to what end? What interests you about the work that they're doing and why might you want to talk/work with them in order to explore your Watson topic? How are you hoping to engage with them and how might this help you explore your project idea? [Have you emailed/talked with potential contacts and discussed what you might do if you visit? This comes later in the process, rarely right at the beginning.]

Pro tips for making contacts abroad:

- Start by *reading around the topic*, as you would for a term paper. Where in the world are people doing interesting things related to your topic? Are there scholars doing research, artists exploring related ideas, organizations or individuals doing relevant work? (Did you know that you can get advice from [research staff at Wellesley's library](#)?)
- *Talk to people* you know: a professor whose work intersects with your interest, a Wellesley sib from a country you hope to visit, mentors and supervisors, staff at Wellesley and especially in Career Education. Get the word out and see what comes of it! At the very least, you'll gain practice talking about your project and hopefully get helpful feedback. At best, someone might be able to make an introduction to a potential contact abroad.

As your application takes shape, a little further into the process...



- **Reach out to potential contacts** abroad. You'll want an idea of what your project might look like and what you want to ask people before you reach out, so it may take you a little while to get to this stage, but you want to start as soon as you can. Cold emailing/messaging can be surprisingly effective—and the worst that might happen is that someone will say no. Be sure to mention that if you were to visit, you'd have funding from the Watson.

Template (bonus points if you can reach out to contacts in their own languages):

Dear [start formal, and only get more familiar if someone invites you to address them informally],

Greetings! I've been reading about your work on x and am especially interested in [be as specific as you can about what they're doing that is so interesting, while keeping your overall message brief].

I am applying for a fellowship, and if I were to receive funding to visit [your potential contact's location] might it be possible for me to speak with you/volunteer with your organization/etc. [again, make a specific suggestion or two, while also making clear that you're flexible and would adapt according to their availability/interest/needs]? I have attached a copy of my resume and would be very glad to arrange a conversation via video chat or telephone [or whatever] at your convenience if you might like to speak about this possibility. Thank you so much!

- A **budget**, like your contact list, can be a good way to provide additional information about the details of your project proposal, as well as a way to demonstrate your practical planning and the feasibility of your proposal. You can list the countries to be visited, along with estimated costs for travel to the locations you hope to visit, visas, accommodations, and living expenses (clothes, food, health, communications, etc.). Travel guides can be good not only for vacation planning but also as a way to get started thinking about where to seek local accommodations, food, etc. and how much it might cost to live in a particular place, as long as you don't assume you'll be living in a hotel/eating out frequently.
- You'll want to think about how this project might connect to your longer-term **future**. What might you be thinking of doing, career-wise, in the shorter or longer-term? (It's okay if you don't know the answer to this! [Career Education](#) is here to help, whether you're not sure [where to begin](#) or [you know the field](#) into which you hope to go but would like to talk over possible career paths/strategy.) What might a Watson tell you about next steps? What might be *different* about your path thereafter if you were to be able to pursue your Watson project?
- Whom might you think of asking for **references**, and why them? You want people who can speak not only to their deep knowledge of you but also to how this relates to your proposal. For the campus deadline, you'll need one letter from a Wellesley faculty member; if you're nominated you'll need another letter by the national deadline, ideally from someone outside "the Wellesley bubble."

Pro tips for asking for references:

The Fellowships team would love to help you strategize whom to ask—and how best to ask. You want to give your recommenders plenty of lead-time, especially at a busy season. (Ideally references will be in by early September—recommenders get an automatic extension as long as *you* meet the campus application deadline in August.)