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Estimated burden per response to comply with this voluntary collection request: 8 hours. This brochure is used by candidates applying for the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Graduate Fellowship Program. The NRC needs the information provided in the program's application form and package to assist in the evaluation of the applicant's qualifications for the program and possible employment. Send comments regarding burden estimate to the Records and FOIA/Privacy Services Branch (T-5 F53), U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Washington, DC 20555-0001, or by internet e-mail to [infocollects@nrc.gov](mailto:infocollects@nrc.gov), and to the Desk Officer, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, NEOB-10202, (3150-xxxx), Office of Management and Budget, Washington, DC 20503. If a means used to impose an information collection does not display a currently valid OMB control number, the NRC may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, the information collection.

## Graduate Fellowship General Information

### PROGRAM

The NRC Graduate Fellowship Program (GFP) consists of work experience at the NRC followed by subsidized graduate education and a return to work with the NRC for a minimum period of service in a position that uses the knowledge gained through graduate study. Newly hired fellows are offered a regular excepted appointment and are subject to satisfactory completion of a two-year trial period. However, new Federal employees who are Veterans are subject to a one-year trial period.

### OBJECTIVES

- Attract, develop and retain highly qualified, diverse individuals for careers with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
- Enhance the scope of knowledge of the scientists, engineers, and other technical professionals at the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) that require highly specialized technical knowledge and skills
- Meet current and future NRC critical skill needs
- Build a pool of potential experts in specialized engineering, science, and other technical disciplines related to NRC's mission.
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## ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible, applicants must:

- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Be interested in a career with NRC in an engineering, scientific, or other technical field of a critical need.
- Commit to NRC employment for 2 months for each month of subsidized education.
- Have or be completing a bachelor's or master's degree in an engineering, scientific or other technical field.
- Have an overall GPA of 3.0 in a bachelor's degree and 3.5 in a master's degree.
- Have or be eligible for an NRC Security Clearance.

## APPLICATION

Who Should Apply?

- Individuals with appropriate backgrounds (i.e. engineering, scientific or other degrees related to NRC's mission) who want to undertake full-time graduate work at the master's or doctoral levels.
- Both current NRC employees and individuals outside of the agency are encouraged to apply.

How To Apply?

Submit an application package which includes all of the following:

- Completed Application Form (NRC Form 770)
- Graduate Record Examination scores
- Transcript(s) (one for each institution attended) sent to Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) by the institution.
- Three references (sent directly to ORISE by the references.)

Send the completed application as follows:

Electronically by logging on to [www.ornl.gov/nrced](http://www.ornl.gov/nrced), as an attachment to an e-mail addressed to: [nrced@ornl.gov](mailto:nrced@ornl.gov), or mailed as a hard copy to:

NRC Graduate Fellowship Program  
Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education  
P.O. Box 117  
Oak Ridge, TN 37831-0117  
Attn: Pat Pressley, M.S. 36

### When Is the Application Deadline?

Application opening and closing dates will vary by year and budget. References and GRE Scores Deadline: Due within 10 days after application deadline.

[NOTE: Applications will be copied and used solely for the purpose of selecting fellows and administering the GFP. Disclosure of the information is subject to Public Law 93-579 (Privacy Act of 1974), and NRC regulations, as published in the Federal Register, August 20, 1990.]

### SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF CANDIDATES

- ORISE staff screen the applications to ensure that each application is complete and that the applicant meets the basic eligibility criteria.
- Copies of applications are submitted to the NRC for evaluation by a panel of subject matter experts.
- Fellowships will be awarded on the basis of ability. The evaluation of applicants will be based on all available evidence of ability including:
  - Grade Point Average (GPA)
  - Courses taken
  - Graduate Records Examination (GRE) scores
  - Statement of Career and Academic Goals and Objectives
  - Academic awards and honors
  - Extracurricular activities
  - Employment experience
  - Personal Interview (Best qualified applicants will be invited for an in-person interview)
  - References
- Current NRC employees, including cooperative education participants, are also evaluated on the basis of their performance at NRC.
- Each application will be evaluated by a panel. The panel submits the list of selected fellows to the Office of Human Resources (HR) in priority order.
- Final selection is made by the Executive Director for Operations.
- If not a current NRC employee, the selected fellow will work with HR to initiate the security clearance process and arrange entrance-on-duty. Newly hired fellows are placed in their initial work offices according to the disciplines requested by the program offices.

## GENERAL FELLOWSHIP REQUIREMENTS

Applicants appointed to this program must:

- Work at NRC at least 12 months before starting graduate studies. Fellows are required to demonstrate successful performance and meet all requirements for the degree program in which enrolled. If the fellow is a participant in the Nuclear Safety Professional Development Program (NSPDP), he/she should complete the NSPDP requirements before beginning graduate studies.
- Be accepted into a graduate school program approved by the NRC within 1 year of being selected as a fellow and begin studies within an agreed-upon time frame.
- Fulfill the post-graduation service commitment. The fellow must continue to work at NRC after completion of the degree (two months for each subsidized month of education) or reimburse the agency for any portion of academic subsistence received for which the fellow has not fulfilled service.

## GRADUATE SCHOOL SELECTION

Fellows must apply to graduate school at accredited U.S. universities that have programs in one of the disciplines listed on the GFP Announcement. The selection of a specific program of study at a particular university is based on Agency need. NRC must approve the fellow's choice of program and university. The approved disciplines are listed on the announcement.

## ANTICIPATED GFP EVENTS SCHEDULE

- GFP application submission deadline varies by year.
- References and GRE scores due within 10 days after application deadline.
- NRC completes selections and notifies applicants approximately two months after application deadline.
- NRC employment begins, if the selected fellow is not a current NRC employee. Fellows possessing bachelor's degrees may be hired at the GG-7 level. Fellows possessing master's degrees may be hired at the GG-9 level.
- Submit university applications.
- Be accepted into a graduate school program approved by the NRC within 1 year of being selected as a fellow and begin studies within an agreed-upon time frame.
- Begin graduate study at least 12 months after beginning employment with NRC.

- After graduation, return to NRC employment for at least two months for each subsidized month of education.
- Fellows who have successfully obtained a master's degree will be promoted to the GG-9 level and fellows who have successfully obtained a doctoral degree will be promoted to the GG-11 level upon return to work status if they had not previously reached the grade commensurate with their degree.

## EMPLOYMENT SALARY AND BENEFITS

### Leave Without Pay (LWOP)

Current NRC employees selected as fellows will remain at their same pay levels during periods of full-time employment. NRC new hires selected as fellows receive permanent NRC Regular Excepted (Conditional) appointments with Federal employment benefits and are paid according to their qualifications. (see Management Directive (MD) 10.1 Part II(A) outlining appointments [http://www.internal.nrc.gov/ADM/DAS/cag/Management\\_Directives/v10p1.htm](http://www.internal.nrc.gov/ADM/DAS/cag/Management_Directives/v10p1.htm)). For example an entry level engineer with a bachelor's degree could be hired at a GG-7 level, and with a master's degree could be hired at the GG-9 level, placed in a career ladder position leading to a full performance level of GG13, and receive full federal government employees' benefits.

When fellows are enrolled in full-time classes they are put in a leave without pay (LWOP) status See NRC Management Directive 10.1 outlining LWOP policies.

<http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/lwop.htm>.

When fellows are enrolled in full-time classes and are on LWOP they receive a stipend equal to 90% of their full-time salary. Fellows earn their regular salaries during periods of full-time employment such as the initial work period and summer breaks. Current salary tables can be found at: <http://www.nrc.gov/who-we-are/employment/salaries.html>.

Outside employment must be approved by the NRC.

### What NRC Pays

During periods of LWOP for full time study, the GFP pays fellows a stipend equal to 90% of their salary and full tuition for up to 24 months of study for the master's degree and up to 36 months for the doctoral degree.

- ORISE, which administers the GFP for the NRC, pays the fellow's required tuition and fees directly to the participating university. ORISE also pays the stipend directly to the fellow.
- The fellow is reimbursed for the costs of required books and other course materials.
- Optional, refundable, and penalty fees (such as late registration, duplication fees, etc.) are the responsibility of the fellow.

- NRC pays an academic allowance of \$5,000.00 annually to the university on behalf of the enrolled fellow through ORISE. The academic allowance provided to the university program will be used to support the fellow's graduate studies and research, such as, purchase of laboratory instruments, materials, computers, and travel for participation in professional meetings and collection of research data.

### Benefits

- The fellow's health insurance benefits will continue during the academic periods, with the employee paying his or her share of the cost and the NRC paying the Government share until the employee reaches 365 days in a LWOP status. Enrollment will terminate when the total time on LWOP reaches the 365-day limit, unless the participant returns to work for at least 4 consecutive months. Since participants are responsible for paying their share of the cost of enrollment, they may make payments to the NRC Payroll Office while on LWOP. If participants do not make these payments, NRC will recover the cost from their salary when they return to work. When enrollment terminates, graduate fellows should procure health insurance benefits through another source. If health insurance coverage is elected through the university, the cost will be included with programmatic expenses paid by NRC. If another source of health benefits is selected the fellow is responsible for the cost. Fellows should consult the NRC benefits specialist for additional details or questions.
- Federal Employees Group Life Insurance basic and optional insurance continues without cost to the graduate fellow for up to 12 months. If the employee has at least 4 consecutive months during which he or she receives some pay in each pay period after a period of non-pay status, the graduate fellow is entitled to begin a new 12-month period of continuation of enrollment. Fellows should consult the NRC benefits specialist for additional details or questions.
- The fellow will earn leave while actively working but will stop earning leave whenever the fellow accumulates 80 hours of LWOP. Any unused annual or sick leave will be carried over while participants are on LWOP.

## **GFP Questions and Answers**

### **A. What is the Graduate Fellowship Program (GFP)?**

- A. The NRC GFP is a developmental program designed to attract and/or retain highly qualified individuals who aspire to obtain graduate degrees and work in areas requiring highly specialized technical knowledge and skills. This program combines a period of work experience (at least 12 months) at the NRC with a subsequent graduate education and a return to a position with NRC that utilizes the learning gained through graduate study.

### **Q. Who manages the GFP?**

- A. The Office of Human Resources (HR) manages the GFP, and Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) administers it. ORISE is familiar with the operations and

skills needed in the nuclear industry, and has established networks with the committees and universities that provide such skills for the industry.

**Q. Who is eligible?**

A. The following are eligible:

- U.S. citizens.
- Anyone interested in an engineering, scientific, or technical career with the NRC.
- Those who possess a bachelor's or master's degree in an appropriate engineering, scientific, or technical field and who have an overall GPA of 3.0 in a bachelor's degree and 3.5 in a master's degree.
- Employees who have or applicants who can obtain an NRC Security Clearance.

**Q. Who should apply?**

A. Individuals with technical backgrounds who want to undertake full-time graduate work at the master's or doctoral levels in fields critical to NRC, and have an engineering, scientific or other technical degree related to NRC's mission. NRC encourages current NRC employees as well as individuals outside of the Agency to apply.

**Q. Is preference given to honorably discharged veterans?**

A. Yes. If you served on active duty in the U.S. military, you may be eligible for veterans' preference. If your service began after October 15, 1976, to receive preference you must have a Campaign Badge, Expeditionary Medal, or service connected disability.

**Q. Does the program accept individuals with disabilities?**

A. Yes. The Federal government is an equal opportunity employer. Hiring and advancement are based on qualifications and performance, regardless of your race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.

**Q. How do I apply?**

A. You may apply online by logging on [www.ornl.gov/nrced](http://www.ornl.gov/nrced)

**Q. What is the deadline for application?**

A. The deadline varies from year to year. Check the current announcement for opening and closing dates.

**Q. What must I submit to apply?**

A. Applicants are required to submit all the items below to ORISE for an application to be screened for eligibility.

- Completed application form
- Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores
- Transcript(s) (one for each institution attended) sent to ORISE by the institution.
- Three references (sent to ORISE by the references.)

**Q. What are the steps and time-lines in the GFP application/selection process?**

A. The GFP application/selection process follows this sequence:

- Submit GFP application, deadline varies by year.
- Submit references and GRE scores, due within 10 days after application deadline.

- NRC completes selections and notifies applicants approximately two months after application deadline.
- Begin NRC employment if not a current NRC employee. Fellows possessing bachelor's degrees may be hired at the GG-7 level. Fellows possessing master's degrees may be hired at the GG-9 level.
- The fellow completes at least 12 months of employment at NRC before beginning graduate studies, if he/she has not already done this.
- Submit university applications.
- Be accepted into a graduate school program approved by the NRC within 1 year of being selected as a fellow and begin studies within an agreed-upon time frame.
- After graduation, return to NRC employment for at least two months for each subsidized month of education.
- Fellows who have successfully obtained a master's degree will be promoted to the GG-9 level and fellows who have successfully obtained a doctoral degree will be promoted to the GG-11 level, upon return to work status, if they have not previously reached the grade commensurate with their degree.

**Q. Is the fellow's choice of institution subject to NRC approval?**

A. Yes, the fellow's educational institution choice must be approved by the NRC.

**Q. What is the employment status of the fellow while enrolled in a full time education program?**

A. The fellow is in Leave Without Pay (LWOP) status during periods of enrollment in a full time education program.

**Q. What expenses does NRC pay for the fellow?**

A. NRC pays full tuition, fees, books plus a stipend equal to 90 % of the fellow's current salary while enrolled in full time classes.

**Q. Is a fellow required to work at the NRC during school breaks?**

A. Fellows are not required to work during brief school breaks, those less than 30 days. For periods of 30 days or more away from full-time enrollment in their academic programs, the stipend will be discontinued. The fellow may return to NRC for work to receive a salary or stay in a LWOP status.

**Q. Can the fellow work for the university while enrolled?**

A. Yes, however, a fellow may not work for the university in the department in which the graduate studies are undertaken. The fellow may pursue outside work, but certain restrictions apply. Any outside work requires the approval of NRC/HR.

**Q. What is a fellow's employment obligation to the NRC?**

A. The fellow must sign a Continued Service Agreement before beginning graduate studies. The agreement requires the fellow to commit to NRC employment two months for each month of subsidized education. Therefore, the service obligation period is generally four years for masters level or six years for the doctoral level. The service period starts when the fellow completes his/her degree requirements and returns to full-time employment at NRC.

**Q. If academic support is stopped for a reason beyond the control of the fellow, will the Continued Service Agreement remain valid for any portion of support that was provided?**

A. The agreement will be canceled and right of recovery waived if the fellow is separated involuntarily for reasons beyond his or her control. If a fellow voluntarily leaves the program or the NRC during the period of obligated post-education service, he or she immediately becomes liable to the Government for repayment of that portion of academic support not satisfied by the period of post-education service. For example, if a fellow has incurred a four year service obligation and leaves after completing only two years, the fellow will be responsible for repaying half of the tuition costs, stipends, fees, etc. incurred by NRC.

**Q. Is a fellow's employment subject to completion of a trial period?**

A. Yes, a new employee, including a fellow, generally serves a two-year trial period beginning when the fellow enters on duty (EOD). When the fellow completes the degree requirements and returns to work the remainder of the trial period will continue. During the trial period the NRC evaluates the likelihood that the employee will be successful in the job.

**Q. What training should a fellow receive during the work period?**

A. The training required during the work period will be established by the sponsoring office and should be specified on the Individual Development Plan (IDP). All fellows are encouraged to attend the following courses which provide an introduction to NRC and its mission: NRC: What it is and What it Does; Nuclear Reactor Concepts; and The Regulatory Process. Other courses may be desirable depending on the fellow's area of study. IDP's should be updated to reflect changes as they occur. If the fellow is participating in a formal developmental program like the NSPDP he/she should complete the program requirements before beginning graduate studies.

**Q. Will the NRC pay for school books?**

A. Yes, fellows will be reimbursed for the cost of books and other required academic expenses.

**Q. How are the costs of education allowance, tuition, fees, and other required expenses paid?**

A. Expenses, such as the tuition and fees, will be paid directly to the university by ORISE.

**Q. Will the NRC pay for moves to and from school?**

A. NRC may pay the following moving expense: transportation of immediate family, household goods and personal effects, if the distance moved is 50 miles or greater.

**Q. What position will the fellow hold upon return from graduate school?**

A. The Executive Director for Operations (EDO) will assign the fellow to an NRC position aligned with the degree obtained through the GFP and on the basis of input from Office Directors and Regional Administrators.

**Q. If a fellow returns to work during school breaks will the NRC pay per diem and lodging for the fellow to retain residence at school?**

A. Yes, NRC will pay transportation to and from the work site and full per diem for the first two weeks. After two weeks the fellow will receive transportation plus a reduced rate of per diem. During this time the fellow will also receive full pay and benefits in lieu of the stipend.

**Q. What will the NRC pay for if the fellow does research during school breaks?**

A. If the fellow remains at school, or moves to another facility to conduct research during school breaks, transportation expenses to and from the facility will be authorized. The fellow will remain on the stipend and will not receive per diem.

**Q. Will the fellow be promoted while attending graduate school?**

A. No. However, fellows who have worked and completed their graduate studies successfully and who had not previously reached the grade commensurate with their degree, will be promoted upon completion of the degree and return to active NRC work. For example, a fellow hired as a GG-7 will generally be promoted to the GG-9 level after completion of the master's degree, and a fellow hired as a GG-9 will normally be promoted to the GG-11 level after completion of the doctoral degree.

**Q. Does the fellow earn leave while on LWOP?**

A. The fellow will earn leave, while actively working but will stop earning leave whenever the fellow accumulates 80 hours of LWOP. Any unused annual or sick leave will be carried over while participants are on LWOP.

**Q. Does the fellow's time in school count toward retirement?**

A. Fellows do not pay into the retirement system while on LWOP. However, they do receive credit toward length of service for LWOP taken for up to a maximum of six months in one calendar year.

**Q. What happens to the fellow's health insurance while on LWOP?**

A. The fellow's health insurance benefits will continue during the academic periods, with the employee paying his or her share of the cost and the NRC paying the Government share until the employee reaches 365 days in a LWOP status. Enrollment will terminate when the total time on LWOP reaches the 365-day limit, unless the participant returns to work for at least 4 consecutive months. Since participants are responsible for paying their share of the cost of enrollment, they may make payments to the NRC Payroll Office while on LWOP. If participants do not make these payments, NRC will recover the cost from their salary when they return to work. When enrollment terminates, graduate fellows should procure health insurance benefits through another source. If health insurance coverage is elected through the university, the cost will be included with programmatic expenses paid by NRC. If another source of health benefits is selected the fellow is responsible for the cost. Fellows should consult the NRC benefits specialist for additional details or questions.

**Q. What happens to the fellow's life insurance while on LWOP?**

A. Federal Employees Group Life Insurance basic and optional insurance continues without cost to the graduate fellow for up to 12 months. If the employee has at least 4 consecutive months during which he or she receives some pay in each pay period after a period of non-pay status, the graduate fellow is entitled to begin a new 12-month period of continuation of enrollment. Fellows should consult the NRC benefits specialist for additional details or questions.

**Q. Can a graduate fellow participate in the Nuclear Safety Professional Development Program (NSPDP)?**

A. Yes, if their hiring office recommends participation in the NSPDP. The fellow can start and should complete the NSPDP requirements before commencing their graduate studies.