



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

Indigenous and Minorities Fellowship Programmes

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions



Photo: Nicholas Hopkins Hall

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¹ Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section.

A. What are fellowships?

Fellowships in the UN system are specially tailored or selected training activities that provide a monetary grant to qualified individuals to fulfil special learning objectives.²

As fellowships are training programmes, their purpose is not to add or replace regular staff positions.³

Fellowships have a Coordinator who serves as the mentor and to whom the fellows can turn to resolve issues related to the programmes.

² <https://www.un.org/development/desa/fellowship/fellowships>.

³ OHCHR Programme Support and Management Services, paras. 2 and 3.



Photo: Nicholas Hopkins Hall

B. What type of fellowships are offered by OHCHR-IPMS?

1. Indigenous Fellowship Programme

The OHCHR Indigenous Fellowship Programme (IFP) is an initiative of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to provide training and capacity-building opportunities to Indigenous Peoples. It was created in 1997.

The IFP offers training and educational opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to strengthen their capacities as human rights

defenders. Fellows learn about international human rights standards, instruments, mechanisms, and the UN system's work in promoting and protecting human rights, with a special focus on Indigenous Peoples' rights. The IFP also provides fellows with the skills and knowledge to engage with international human rights mechanisms effectively.

Further, the IFP offers fellows the opportunity to build a network of contacts and partnerships with other Indigenous activists, orga-

nizations, and human rights experts, which can help strengthen the Indigenous Peoples' rights movement at all levels on a global scale.

The program might be offered in five linguistic components: English, Spanish, French, Russian and Portuguese.

2. Minorities Fellowship Programme

The Minorities Fellowship Programme (MFP) is OHCHR's most comprehensive training programme for human rights and minority rights defenders belonging to national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities. It was launched in 2005.

The MFP offers training and educational opportunities for members of minorities to strengthen their capacities as human rights defenders. Fellows learn about international human rights standards, instruments, mechanisms, and the UN system's work in promoting and protecting human rights, with a special focus on minority rights.

The MFP also provides fellows with the skills and knowledge to engage with international human rights mechanisms effectively.

Further, the MFP offers fellows the opportunity to build a network of contacts and partnerships with other minority activists, organizations, and human rights experts, which can help strengthen the minority rights movement at all levels on a global scale.

The MFP might be offered in three linguistic components: English, Russian and Arabic.

***Please note that the IFP and the MFP are separate programmes and have different content, application process and deadlines.**

3. Senior Fellowship Programme

The Senior Fellowship Programme (SFP), covering both Indigenous Peoples and Minorities, was established in 2011. Under the SFP, selected individuals who have graduated from the IFP or the MFP may be offered on the job training.

Through this programme, Senior fellows gain practical knowledge and working-level experience.



Foto: Morse Flores

Current Senior fellowship positions might be available in Geneva or OHCHR regional or country offices or other UN country presences and can be extended for up to two years.

This manual refers only to the IFP and MFP. Thus, the SFP is not covered.



UN Photo

C. What is the programme schedule and where does it take place?

Indigenous Fellowship Programme

The IFP lasts four weeks and takes place in the summer in Geneva, Switzerland. The date of the final week of the IFP usually coincides with the annual session of the [Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (June/July each year), allowing the fellows to participate actively in the Expert Mechanism's meeting.

Minorities Fellowship Programme

The MFP lasts four to five weeks and takes place in the fall in Geneva, Switzerland, and might include visits to other cities. The final week of the programme usually coincides with the annual session of the [UN Forum on Minority Issues](#) (final week of November/December each year), allowing the fellows to participate actively in the Forum's meeting.

D. Who is eligible to participate?

Indigenous Fellowship Programme

> The candidate must be an Indigenous person. Non-Indigenous persons and former fellows will not be considered even if they work for an Indigenous Peoples' institution/organization. Indigenous Peoples share some or all of the following identifying characteristics:

- Descendants of the peoples who inhabited land or territory before colonization or the establishment of State borders;
- Distinct social, economic and political systems, languages, cultures and beliefs;
- Determined to maintain and develop a distinct identity;
- Strong attachment to their ancestral lands and natural resources;
- Belong to the non-dominant groups of society and self-identify as Indigenous Peoples.

> The candidate should be proposed and the candidacy supported by his/her/their Indigenous Peoples' institution/organization. It is desirable that the sponsoring organization:

- undertakes work on Indigenous Peoples; and
- is composed mainly of Indigenous Peoples.

> The candidate must have a good working knowledge of one of the languages of

the IFP (English, Spanish, French, Russian or Portuguese).

> The candidate should have the ability, willingness, and possibility to train other persons belonging to Indigenous Peoples upon return to their respective community or organizations and should agree to do so.

> The candidate should not be a father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister or spouse of a UN staff member.

> If the candidate is the manager or director of an organization, the nomination should come from his/her/their community.

> Formal education is not a limitation to participating in the IFP if relevant experience can be demonstrated.



Foto: Morse Flores

> The candidate nominated must be someone who will return to his/her/their community or organization to work in this field.

> There is no age limit to apply to the IFP, but only candidates over 18 years will be considered.

Minorities Fellowship Programme

> The candidate must belong to a national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minority group. A person not belonging to a minority group and former fellows will not be considered even if they work for minority organizations. The concept of minority is multifaceted and might involve other factors such as:

- Individual self-identification. The person must recognize themselves as belonging to a national, ethnic, religious, or linguistic minority group.

- Recognition by its organization or community as a member of the minority group.

> The candidate should be proposed—and his/her/their candidacy supported—by his/her/their community and/or organization. It is desirable that the sponsoring organization:

- undertakes work on minority issues; and

- is composed of persons belonging to minorities.

> The candidate must have a good working knowledge of one of the languages of the MFP (English, Russian or Arabic).

> The candidate should have the ability, willingness, and possibility to train other persons belonging to minorities upon return to their respective community or organizations and should agree to do so.

> The candidate should not be a father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister or spouse of a UN staff member.

> If the candidate is the manager or director of an organization, the nomination should come from his/her/their community.

> Formal education is not a limitation to participating in the MFP if relevant experience can be demonstrated.

> The candidate nominated must be someone who will return to his/her/their community or organization to work in this field.

> There is no age limit to apply to the MFP, but only candidates over 18 years will be considered.



Photo: Nicholas Hopkins Hall

E. How is the application process?

Please check the online application and deadlines for the **Indigenous Fellowship Programme** page, which is available [here](#).

Please check the online application and deadlines for the **Minorities Fellowship Programme** page, which is available [here](#).

Candidates should send the application before the deadline. Applications will only be taken into consideration if they are fully completed. If the candidate has problems submitting the online application form, the signed application form could also be sent by regular post to the following address:

Mr. Morse Caoagas Flores
Coordinator, Indigenous and Minorities
Fellowship Programmes
Indigenous Peoples and Minorities Section
Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Scanned applications are also accepted
and can be sent to the following email:

ohchr-fellowship@un.org





Photo: Nicholas Hopkins Hall

F. How is the selection process?

The selection of fellows reflects a gender balance. Female candidates, including nursing mothers, are encouraged to apply.

Persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity are encouraged to apply.

Persons with disabilities are also encouraged to apply, as OHCHR would strive to provide reasonable accommodations.

The selection process also considers regional balance. The general human rights situation in the respective regions/countries and the situation of the peoples/community or organizations to which the applicant belongs is also considered.

A Selection Committee (composed of OHCHR staff, representatives of partner Universities, and former Fellows) makes a pre-selection of 15 to 20 candidates per linguistic component.

The selection process also entails interviews of pre-selected candidates.

***Given the large number of applications, only pre-selected candidates are contacted.**

G. What is included in the curriculum?

Preparatory training programmes for the Indigenous and Minorities Fellowship Programmes

Depending on the language and arrangements made for the specific year and programme, fellows might have the opportunity to participate in preparatory programmes at different academic institutions before traveling to Geneva. More information will be provided to accepted candidates.

Existing preparatory training programmes may include for the IFP:

- Two months in Bilbao, Spain, in collaboration with the Deusto University for the Spanish-speaking component.
- Two weeks in Brasilia, Brazil, in collaboration with the Brazilian academic institution, Conselho Indigena Missionario and the UN Country Team for the Portuguese-speaking component.
- Two weeks in Quebec, Canada, in collaboration with the Centre Interuniversitaire d'études et de Recherches Autochtones and the Femmes Autochtones de Québec for the French-speaking component.
- Two weeks in Canberra, in collaboration with the Australian National University for the English-speaking component.

The existing preparatory training programme for the MFP may include the following:

- One week in Strasbourg, France, in collaboration with the Faculty of Law of the University of Strasbourg.

Indigenous Fellowship Programme

The IFP curriculum includes both theoretical and practical sessions, individual and group assignments, and observations of sessions of human rights bodies, such as the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review, UN Treaty Bodies, the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), interactions with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and members of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

In addition, the training in Geneva includes an introduction to the activities of other UN entities or specialized agencies and introductory sessions to the work of Geneva-based human rights NGOs.

The curriculum includes gender and intersectionality perspectives.

Minorities Fellowship Programme

The MFP curriculum includes both theoretical and practical sessions, individual and group assignments, and observations of sessions of human rights bodies, such as the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review, Treaty Bodies, the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights, interaction with the Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues and participation during the session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues.

In addition, the training in Geneva includes an introduction to the activities of other UN entities or specialized agencies and introductory sessions to the work of Geneva-based human rights NGOs.

The curriculum includes gender and intersectionality perspectives.

H. What are the entitlements of the selected candidates?

The selected candidates for the IFP and the MFP are entitled to an economy-class return flight ticket. As per United Nations regulations and rules, fellows travel in economy class no matter the duration of the journey.

IFP and MFP are also entitled to a daily stipend covering living expenses, and basic medical insurance for the duration of the programmes.

OHCHR and the Geneva Welcome Centre (CAGI) arrange accommodation in Geneva at a subsidized rate.

I. How is the visa arranged?

There is no visa allowance. The fellow is responsible for passport and visa expenses, but visas for the fellowship programmes are usually free of charge. It is the fellow's responsibility to apply for a visa at the appropriate consulate in their country of residence and with sufficient advance time. The fellow will be provided with a fellowship award confirmation letter from OHCHR, where it is clearly stated that the fellow will be provided with a stipend that will cover living expenses and that they will be offered basic medical insurance. In cases where there is no consular presence where the fellows live and they need to travel to another country to apply for a visa, OHCHR will cover the costs for travel as well as pay for daily subsistence allowance at the rate of the country where the visa will be issued.

J. Is the progress monitored and evaluated?

During the programmes, the fellows' progress is constantly monitored and evaluated. Fellows can also provide feedback and evaluate the programme in which they participate.





UN Photo

K. Do fellows receive a certificate?

Yes, fellows who complete the entire program, fulfil the assigned tasks and respect the code of conduct will receive a certificate from OHCHR.

L. Are there follow up activities with the fellows?

Yes, after completing the programme, OHCHR follows up with the fellows, maintaining open communication channels and building a network. OHCHR also follows up on the fellows' activities after the programme ends. Outstanding fellows who continue to advocate for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Minorities may also apply for the SFP.

In addition, Indigenous fellows, as they have been trained in the United Nations human rights system, may receive priority while applying to the [Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples](#), which provides financial assistance to Indigenous Peoples to participate in UN meetings and processes related to Indigenous Peoples' issues.

M. Have there been cases of intimidation or reprisals against participants?

Yes, there have been cases of intimidation or reprisals against fellows and/or other Indigenous Peoples and minorities when engaging with the United Nations, including for posting information about their participation in the programmes on social media.

Although OHCHR has guidance procedures to support and deal with these cases, participants might find themselves in challenging and stressful situations affecting them, their relatives, organizations or peoples.

The UN can neither ensure their safety or security nor provide any assurance that acts of intimidation or reprisals will not occur.

Candidates are requested to consider the possibility of intimidation or reprisals affecting them before accepting to participate in the programmes.

Further details would be provided by the Coordinator to pre-selected candidates.



N. What is the expected behaviour of participants?

Participants in the fellowship programmes must observe the following basic rules of behaviour:

Fellows shall participate actively in all the sessions of the programme and carry out their studies in a manner and within the period prescribed by the Coordinator.

Fellows shall treat all individuals respectfully, courteously, and professionally.

Fellows shall uphold the principles and values of the United Nations, including respect for human rights, diversity, and non-discrimination.

Non-Discrimination

Fellows shall not discriminate against individuals based on race, color, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, disability, or other characteristic.

Sexual harassment, abuse or exploitation

Fellows shall not engage in sexual harassment, abuse or exploitation. Fellows who are aware of these acts must immediately report such incidents to the fellowship Coordinator.

Compliance with Laws and Regulations

Fellows shall comply with all relevant laws, regulations, and policies in the host country and the UN system.

Social Media Use

Fellows shall exercise caution when using social media, ensuring that online activities do not discredit the UN.



Photo: Nicholas Hopkins Hall

Alcohol and Substance Use

Fellows shall not consume alcohol or other substances in a manner that impairs their ability to perform their duties effectively.

Liability

OHCHR assumes no liability for damages to persons or property caused by participants in fellowship programmes.

Breaches of the rules of conduct

OHCHR does not tolerate breaches of the rules of conduct. Fellows are encouraged to report immediately any violation of the code of conduct or other incidents to the programme Coordinator.

O. Further questions?

Any questions about the Indigenous and Minorities Fellowship Programmes can be e-mailed to ohchr-fellowship@un.org

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CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland
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