

# FAQs for FSOA Candidates

Updated 6/12/2024

Starting May 21, the Department of State is conducting the Foreign Service Officer Assessment (FSOA) on the Zoom platform as part of the Department's overall modernization effort. Conducting the FSOA virtually increases the inclusivity and accessibility for candidates seeking entry into the Foreign Service. The Department of State provides candidates with detailed instructions in advance regarding the equipment, software, and internet connectivity requirements for participating in an FSOA.

## **Q1: Do I need to have a Zoom.gov account?**

Answer: You do not need to have a zoom.gov account. In order to maximize your Zoom functionality, please download the Zoom.com app on your laptop or desktop computer. The Zoom app is free to download at the below links. Candidates should familiarize themselves with basic Zoom functionality (muting microphone, camera functions, chat, etc.).

**For MAC:** [Installing the Zoom application on macOS](#) [Download Zoom for Mac Now](#) | [Zoom](#)

**For PCs:** [Download Center for Zoom Apps and Plugins](#) | [Zoom](#)

## **Q2: What time should I log-in to the Zoom meeting?**

Answer: Please log-in and join the waiting room no later than 9:30am (EST or EDT for Washington, D.C.) on your assessment date. Candidates who arrive to the waiting room after 9:45 am will not be permitted to participate in the FSOA. Failure to appear for a scheduled assessment without prior authorization

to reschedule or reporting any technical difficulties will result in the termination of your candidacy.

**Q3: How will the assessor verify I am alone during the assessment?**

Answer: You may use either an internal or external camera during the assessment. Please be prepared to move your camera around your room to show the assessors that you are alone during your time in the assessment.

**Q4: What do I do if I am disconnected from the Zoom meeting during the assessment?**

Answer: If a candidate discovers they are disconnected from the Zoom meeting, they should immediately seek to rejoin by clicking on the Zoom link in the original invitation. The Board of Examiners (BEX) team monitors the waiting room for the duration of the assessment to assist candidates who unexpectedly disconnect. When on break, candidates should leave the Zoom meeting and rejoin via the original Zoom link prior to their next exercise, as instructed.

**Q5: How do I reschedule my assessment?**

Answer: Candidates should take care in scheduling their assessment, as the appointment will only be rescheduled in genuine emergencies, such as serious illness. The Department of State provides candidates with detailed instructions in advance regarding the equipment, software, and internet connectivity requirements for participating in an FSOA. Please

contact [reschedule@state.gov](mailto:reschedule@state.gov) if your circumstances warrant rescheduling your appointment.

**Q6: How do I know I have joined the correct meeting?**

Answer: When you successfully launch the zoom meeting link, you will see the waiting room featuring a welcome screen with the Department of State logo. When you see this page, please stand by for further instructions. The BEX team will not admit candidates to the Zoom meeting prior to the scheduled start time.



**Q7: What can I have open on my computer during the assessment?**

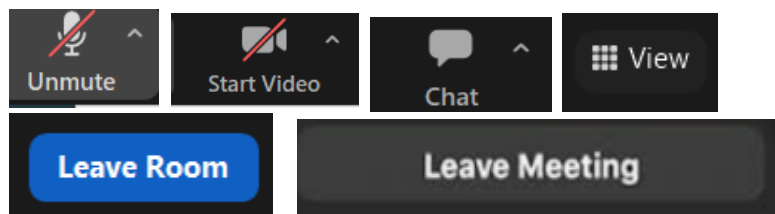
Answer: During your assessment you may only have open files that the BEX team provides, and (only when instructed by an Assessor), note-taking software. Candidates must close all other materials, notes, and software programs completely for the duration of the assessment. You may not have open, have on hand, or refer to any prepared material or notes for the duration of the assessment.

**Q8: Can I take notes during the assessment?**

Answer: The Assessor leading each specific component will instruct you when you may take notes. When taking notes, you may use pen and paper, computer software, or a separate digital tablet. You may not take photos of the screen. You must destroy your notes at the end of the assessment and abide by the non-disclosure agreement you signed, otherwise your candidacy will be terminated. You may not record any portion of the assessment. You are not allowed to bring prepared notes, on paper or digitally, into the assessment.

**Q9: I have never used Zoom before. What do I need to know?**

Answer: Candidates only need basic familiarity with Zoom to participate in the FSOA. The key functions you should be familiar with are shown below. You may watch this linked video to familiarize yourself with the basics of Zoom [meeting navigation](#).



**Q10: How do I increase the size of text on the shared slides?**

Answer: Assessors will share testing material via the “share screen” function. Candidates have several options to enlarge their view. This linked video provides an overview of this functionality to [enlarge the shared screen](#).

**Q11: Can I use a virtual background?**

Answer: To enable Assessors to maintain visibility of the candidate and to ensure candidates are alone for the duration of the assessment, candidates may not use virtual backgrounds in the Zoom meeting.

**Q12: What is the schedule for the day of the assessment?**

Answer: Please refer to the sample schedule you received via email from the Program Assistant. Each candidate will receive an individual schedule during orientation, which will have breaks throughout the day, ranging from 60 to 90 minutes.

**Q13: Will there be breaks during the assessment?**

Answer: There are scheduled breaks during the assessment, including a lunch break. Please refer to the sample schedule you received from the Program Assistant for a general idea of the flow of the day. Each candidate will receive an individual schedule during orientation which outlines the timing of scheduled breaks.

**Q14: Can I step away from the computer for an unscheduled break if I need to use the restroom?**

Answer: If you must take an unscheduled break (e.g. to go to the restroom or answer the doorbell) during the assessment, immediately notify the Assessor. The Assessor will not pause the timer or any ongoing discussion while you step away. For this reason, the BEX team encourages candidates to take the assessment in a quiet location where they will not be disturbed, and to step away from their computers only during the scheduled breaks.

**Q15: Who is my point of contact for the day of the assessment?**

Answer: Please be in touch with the Program Assistant who sent you the Zoom meeting link should you encounter any difficulties on the day of the assessment.

**Q16: Where can I learn more about the FSOA?**

Answer: Please refer to our website for more information, <https://careers.state.gov/faqs/>.