

Division of Biology and Medicine-Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
General Guidelines for  
Submitting an Individual Fellowship Application

**Starting your individual fellowship application**

- ❖ Make a list of all the materials required to submit your grant/fellowship application (proposal, summary of previous research, personal statement, bio-sketch or CV, additional employment history, transcript(s), recommendation letters, proof of/plan for responsible conduct of research (RCR) training, budget, description of facilities)
- ❖ List the deadlines for each piece of your application. Some grants have an intent-to-file deadline; some allow recommendation letters to be submitted later than other materials. Be sure to allow time for institutional processing.
- ❖ Notify everyone whose support and/or approval you will need well in advance of the deadline(s): mentors, research administration, review board(s), program coordinator. All of these people have other commitments too!
- ❖ Start writing!

**Brown's Institutional Processes and Deadlines**

- ❖ NB: Students working in hospital labs should submit fellowship applications through Brown.
- ❖ All grant/fellowship applications must be reviewed by Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP, <http://research.brown.edu/rschadmin/osp.php>) and/or BioMed Research Administration (BMRA, <http://bms.brown.edu/bmra/>). Notify the appropriate office as soon as you decide to submit an application; they process many applications for grants with standard deadlines.
- ❖ Submit your application to the appropriate office according to the schedule below:
  - **Grants.gov** applications: **5 full business days before the deadline**
  - **NIH** and **NSF** applications not using Grants.gov: **2 business days**
  - **Other federal** and **all private** applications: **4 business days**, if going to BMRA; **2 business days** if going directly to OSP
  - The following departments/programs prepare their own budgets and send their completed applications directly to **OSP** :
    - MPPB (ABC, BME, MPP): Nina McEvoy
    - Neuroscience: Mary Ellen Flinn
    - Psychiatry & Human Behavior: Liz Barlow
    - Gerontology: Audrey Kydd
    - Alcohol Center: Jeff Griffin
  - Other BioMed departments can contact [Deborah Pomerantz](#) in **BMRA** to receive a worksheet of budget information
  - All other departments/programs submit their applications to **BMRA**, which will forward them to OSP if necessary.
  - Fellowship budgets are generally straightforward—the granting agency offers a set award—but may include travel allowances or tuition for additional training for postdocs. BMRA can provide a tuition and fee schedule and help you with the business pages.
- ❖ Complete a Proposal Summary and Approval Form (PSAF) online ([http://research.brown.edu/pdf/PSAF\\_1\\_28\\_08.pdf](http://research.brown.edu/pdf/PSAF_1_28_08.pdf)). This three-page overview of your application gets it into the Brown system and the information on it becomes part of the University's official system of record. *You can't get any money without it!*

- ❖ [Liz](#) can help you with any questions you have about the PSAF.
- ❖ You must complete a Conflict of Interest (COI) Disclosure Certification for each and every Public Health Service (PHS) or National Science Foundation (NSF) application you submit (<http://research.brown.edu/pdf/certification.pdf>). The American Cancer Society and some other foundations also require COI disclosure. This is separate from the COI disclosure faculty must file annually.
- ❖ If your research involves one or more of the following, you will require additional approval or certification. Your certification can be "pending" at the time of application. Contact Chris Harwood ([Christopher.Harwood@Brown.EDU](mailto:Christopher.Harwood@Brown.EDU)), Brown's Biosafety Officer, for details.
  - Human subjects—Institutional Research Board (IRB), 2-stage.
    - Principal investigators (PIs) must successfully complete the web-based human research protections education program, CITI (Collaborative IRB Training Initiative, [http://research.brown.edu/rschadmin/hrpo\\_citi.php](http://research.brown.edu/rschadmin/hrpo_citi.php)), before IRB will certify a project.
  - Animal subjects—Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).
    - Separate certification required for each grant.
    - Though hospitals have their own IACUCs, Brown certification is required too.
  - Recombinant DNA—Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC)
  - Potentially infectious agents (inc. human blood, tissues)—IBC
  - Select Agents—IBC
  - Biohazards—IBC
  - Radioactive Materials or radiation-producing equipment—Radiation Safety Committee
  - Export Controls (ITARS/EARS)—OSP
  - Hazardous Waste
- ❖ **Give BMRA or OSP the original and two (2) copies of the completed application and PSAF. When the institutional review is completed, you will be asked to pick up your application so you can submit it electronically or mail it.**

### Transcripts

- ❖ If you need them, order them as soon as you decide to apply. You don't want your application thrown out because some holiday delayed processing of your transcript request!

### Recommendation Letters

- ❖ Ask for recommendation letters at least a month ahead of time.
  - Always ask in a way that allows the person you're asking to say no. Always take no for an answer—you don't want a lukewarm, or hostile, recommendation letter.
  - Provide the recommender with:
    - A summary of the work you've done with him/her.
    - A summary of what the grant/fellowship is looking for.
    - Your current CV
    - Drafts of the research proposal and other essays for you're writing for this fellowship.
    - Your qualifications.
    - The address to which s/he should send the letter (a pre-addressed, stamped envelope or an email with the electronic address is the best way to do this).
    - The postmark or received by deadline for mailing the letter.
  - When the deadline approaches (i.e. a week or so before, not the day of), ask politely if the letter has been sent.

## Preparing your proposal

- ❖ The goal is to frame your project and its import clearly and concisely.
- ❖ Get advice from your advisor, other profs, and your fellow grad students, especially if they've been awarded a fellowship. Discuss your proposal with them as you start drafting.
- ❖ Look at samples of previous applications (preferably successful ones) to see how others have framed their proposals.
  - Mary Lavoie in the M.D./Ph.D. program has copies of fellowship applications submitted by grad students in that program.
  - Liz McClaine in Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies is also compiling a file of individual fellowship and institutional training grant applications.
- ❖ Show your personality! Don't go overboard, but make sure your description of your project and its impact communicate your excitement about and investment in this project. If the committee doesn't believe you care about your project, why should they care? Give brief examples of what sparked your interest in this project, what you've learned so far, and why the piece you're proposing to work on matters to you, to your field, to the world.
- ❖ Use the language of the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) and the sponsoring agency. Check the agency's Web site for current and projected themes and areas of interest. If the agency talks about "innovation," be explicit about the ways in which your research is "innovative." If they're interested in cross-disciplinary projects, specify how your work is relevant to investigators in other fields.
- ❖ Remember that the people on the selection committee may not specialize in your exact field: explain your research goals and their potential impact in clear, simple language that will be easily understood by non-specialists.
  - Clearly state the hypothesis, overall goals, and specific aims of your research.
  - Try thinking about how you would explain your research to someone from another school at a national conference. Keep your description relatively free of jargon, while at the same time making clear what sets you apart from others working in your field.
  - Review professors' profiles on the Directory of Research and Researchers at Brown (<http://research.brown.edu/research/search.php>). Read both the short (intended for non-specialists) and long (intended for peers with specialized knowledge) research descriptions of multiple professors in your field and related fields so you'll have many examples (good and bad). Deborah Britt, Yow-Pin Lim, and Stephen Correia—just to name a few examples—all have fairly brief descriptions that are comprehensible to non-specialists and still communicate valuable information to specialists.
- ❖ Check your proposal against the review criteria: have you touched on each point in a way that will be obvious to your reviewer?
- ❖ Have lots of people read your materials. Your advisors and colleagues in your field can advise you on presenting your qualifications and project in the best way, and each new pair of eyes will catch another typo or grammatical error.
  - Liz is happy to edit your application, so long as she has adequate time to review it. To be sure she can devote enough time to your proposal, contact her as early as possible: [Elizabeth\\_McClaine@brown.edu](mailto:Elizabeth_McClaine@brown.edu) or 863-2067.
- ❖ Read the instructions carefully to see if the review process is blind. If not, put your name and the page number (and possibly the number of pages) in the header or footer of each page of the proposal in the same font and font size used in the rest of the document.

## CV

- ❖ The point of a CV is to highlight your accomplishments and qualifications. Don't use any categories for which you don't have content (e.g. military service) unless specifically required to do so by the granting agency.
- ❖ There are many, many ways to organize and format your CV. The key is that the organization be logical and the formatting be clear and consistent: your reader should understand your categories, which items belong in each, and the relationship between the categories and sub-categories.
- ❖ NIH proposals use a standard Biosketch form (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>)
- ❖ Put your name and the page number in the header or footer of pages 2-on; you may also wish to put the total number of pages.
- ❖ Use reverse chronology so that readers see your most recent accomplishments first.
- ❖ If you can't list all of your publications (or other relevant qualifications), note what's missing: e.g. by saying "selected publications (out of #)."
- ❖ Format publications consistently and in a manner that makes the information easy to parse: e.g. Author(s). "Title." Journal. (date) Vol.(issue): pages.
- ❖ Bold or underline your name in your publications so readers can find it easily in the list.

## Electronic Applications

- ❖ If you are applying for a grant electronically, create a profile and familiarize yourself with the application system as soon as possible.
  - Some systems require special software.
  - Some are not compatible with all platforms.
- ❖ To register for Commons (Grants.gov) or NSF Fastlane, you will need to get a username and ID from Lori Nascimento ([Lori\\_Nascimento@Brown.edu](mailto:Lori_Nascimento@Brown.edu)) in OSP (exception: NSF-GRF applicants can register themselves).
- ❖ Submit your application early to avoid "net traffic" and other electronic mishaps.

## Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Training

- ❖ Many fellowships require evidence that you are being trained in RCR practices as well as in your discipline. Liz can provide a standardized description of the Division's RCR Training for inclusion in your application.

## Things of which You Should Be Aware.

- ❖ The tuition allowance that comes with most fellowships is not adequate to cover the full cost of tuition. The Division or your program may make up the difference.
- ❖ In addition to a stipend and tuition, many fellowships provide an "expense" or "research" allowance that can be used for such things as travel, research materials, and health insurance. Where possible, the Division will take the full cost of health insurance from this allowance, which may exhaust these funds.
- ❖ When possible, the Division usually supplements fellowships that are less than the standard TA/RA/Fellow stipend for your program. However, some fellowships prohibit supplementation. The honor of receiving the fellowship and the boost to your CV are generally well worth the financial difference.

## **Mentor and Mentee Expectations and Responsibilities**

- ❖ Mentor
  - Read through mentee's application and proposal to guide them in the appropriate direction for editing and clean-up
- ❖ Mentee
  - Make sure your mentor is familiar with these guidelines (or the grant agency's mentor guidelines, if any) before you apply, so neither of you has any unexpected surprises.