

Writing Successful Grant and Fellowship Applications in the Humanities and Social Sciences



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Outline of Presentation

- Part 1: Preparing to Write
- Part 2: Writing the Proposal
- Part 3: Editing and Revising
- Part 4: Additional Resources



Part 1: Preparing to Write

What will you need to apply? Usually some combination of the following:

- Plan of Research
- Preliminary bibliography
- Personal Statement/Prior Research Experience
- CV/Biography
- Transcripts, GRE scores
- Recommendations (2-4)



Part 1: Preparing to Write

- Get Used to Talking about Your Project and Yourself
- Proposal = Persuasive Document
- Argument is:
 - Your project is feasible and significant
 - You are qualified to undertake it
 - It is a good fit for the mission of the funding agency



Part 1: Preparing to Write

Who is reviewing this application?

- Reviewers in your field?
- Reviewers in related fields?
- Peer review (1-on-1) or panel review (group discussion)? Is there a program director with discretionary power?



Part 1: Preparing to Write

Recommendations in Fellowship Proposals:

- Whom to pick?
- Best to have recommenders who really know you
- Pick recommenders likely to be known in the field
- Your recommendations should support your narrative
- Be sure they will submit by the deadline!



Part 2: Writing the Proposal

Create a narrative across the components:

- Aim is to prove that you are (1) trained and motivated to undertake original research, (2) well prepared to work on this research topic, and (3) that this research project is original, feasible, and meaningful within your field (or broader).
- How do your life experiences (personal statement) make you suited to do this research (plan of research)?



Part 2: Writing the Proposal

Personal Statement

- Argument: Why you are an ideal candidate?
- Identify 4-5 points that you want the reader to remember about you
- Use personal statement to highlight elements of your CV, biography, transcript
- Don't make it too personal
- Don't be trapped by chronology



Part 2: Writing the Proposal

Personal Statement

- Are you applying to a Personal Characteristic Fellowship?
 - Yes? Be sure to address that in your PS
- Is the Personal Statement separate from the Research Statement (RS)?
 - Yes? Remember to connect your PS to your RS
 - No? Weave in PS material into your RS



Part 2: Writing the Proposal

Research/Grant Statement

- The most important element in the proposal
- 2-10 pages
- Is the project the target of their funding, or is it you?
- Three main questions must be addressed: Is the research significant? Is the research feasible? Does it fit the mission of the funding agency?



Part 2: Writing the Proposal

Research/Grant Proposal

- Structure of the proposal (2 pages / 10 pages)
- Introduction (1 paragraph / 1 page)
- Background/Literature Review (1/2 pg/ 4 pages)
- Project/Methods/Initial Results (1 pg / 5 pgs)
- Conclusion – (1 paragraph)

The “Double Funnel” Structure



Structure of the Research Proposal (2 pages / 10 pages)

The “Double Funnel”

- Introduction
(1 paragraph / 1 page)

- Body of Proposal
(1.5 pages / 9 pages)

- Conclusion
(1 paragraph)

- Big Picture Questions
- Your Specific Research Q's
- Background/Lit Review
 - Methods, Hypotheses/Results
- Relevance to Field
- Relevance to Society



Part 2: Writing the Proposal

Introduction

- Purpose is to convince reviewers to want to read your proposal
- 1-2 paragraphs, should contain clear, concise, interesting idea
- Include a clear research question/topic – what is the problem, why is it interesting



Part 2: Writing the Proposal

Introduction- Tips and Questions

- Revise this section continuously
- Be sure language is accessible to non-specialists
- Go for compelling, not cute or dramatic

Questions: Does this section provide a clear overview of the project and why it's compelling? Does it synch up with the rest of the proposal?



Part 2: Writing the Proposal

Relevance (Literature Review)

- Relate your work to the field (narrowly or widely defined)
- Describe how other people have addressed this question.
 - Are there conflicting answers? Faulty answers? Gaps?
- Should end with your proposed contribution, which should either:
 - Correct faulty approaches
 - Extend correct approaches to new terrain
 - Fill a gap in the literature



Part 2: Writing the Proposal

Literature Review- Tips and Questions

- Be prepared to expand and contract this section
- Remember to critique other scholars with care
- Remember to tie in your project (this is not a seminar paper on the state of the field)

Questions: Is it clear what works are related to your project and why? Have you clearly positioned your approach in relation to these scholars? Do you demonstrate a clear understanding of the field?



Part 2: Writing the Proposal

Project Description (Methods, Expected Results)

- What will you actually do?
- What is the data set/object of study/texts?
- How will you access it/them?
- How will you analyze it/them?
- How will this address the research question/topic?
Provide preliminary work or explanation of anticipated results
- Are you trained in the methods you will use?



Part 2: Writing the Proposal

Project Description- Tips and Questions

- Provide sufficient but minimal background
- Be as specific as possible
- Include timelines and tables when applicable

Questions: Does this researcher have a plan? Is it feasible given the constraints of the project and the researcher's abilities? Does it stand up to disciplinary standards? What is at stake?



Part 2: Writing the Proposal

Conclusion

- Usually 1 paragraph
- Address the research question/topic (answer it to the extent possible based on current stage of research)
- Return to relevance and feasibility, summarize these here
- Use non-technical language
- Mention the Grant Agency or Organization
- What is the take-home point?



Part 3: Editing and Revising

How to edit your own work

- Be an Editor, not the Author
- Edit for **COST**
 - **C**ontent (what you say)
 - **O**rganization (how you present it)
 - **S**tyle (how you describe it)
 - **T**echnical (formatting, typos)
- Edit in this order!
 - Make sure your ideas and organization are solid before you waste time with formatting



Part 3: Editing and Revising

Editing- Questions

Content

- Does it target the review criteria?
- Does it include the necessary components?
- Do you have a clear argument?
- Does it accurately represent you and your project?

Organization:

- Is it “skimmable”? Do the important parts stand out?
- Is each paragraph a new thought?
- Is it properly balanced?
- Are you bombarding the reader with too much information too soon? Or, are you withholding critical information until too late?



Part 3: Editing and Revising

Editing- Tips and Questions

Style:

- Is the document concise?
- Is the document full of jargon?
- Are there inconsistencies that might confuse a reader?

Technical:

- Does it meet the font, margin, word limit, etc. requirements for submission?
- Typos? Errors from Editing?



Part 3: Editing and Revising Feedback

Get others to read your proposal – this is critical

- Fellow students
- More advanced students who received the grant
- Faculty advisor or mentor
- Graduate Writing Center consultants
- Graduate Division Faculty Extramural Fellowship consultant

Plan to revise extensively!



Part 3: Editing and Revising

Practical Tips

- Be organized
- Create a calendar with deadlines for progress and submission
- Keep copies of every draft, numbered sequentially
- Keep notes from discussions with peers and faculty, all reviewers' comments
- Pace yourself
- Reward yourself!



Part 3: Editing and Revising

Rejected! What next?

- Get the rating sheets/reviews
- How can you modify your proposal to help the readers understand your point?
- Can you apply again next year? Do it!
- Give yourself more time next year; try to get additional, different feedback
- Take this proposal and rework it for another granting agency



Part 5: Resources for Grant Writing

- GWC writing consultant appointments:
 - Several consultants have received grants and fellowships and are available for appointments (<http://gsrc.ucla.edu/gwc/reservations/>)
- Graduate Division:
 - Cherie Francis, Graduate Division Fellowships and Financial Services (cfrancis@grad.ucla.edu)
- Grant Writing courses through UCLA Extension



Good Luck and Happy Writing!

