National Science Foundation

Graduate Research Fellowship Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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Eligibility

1. **How can I determine if I am eligible to apply to the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP)?**

   The eligibility requirements for the NSF GRFP competition are contained in Section IV of the NSF GRF Program Solicitation.

2. **At what point in my academic career can I apply to NSF GRFP?**

   You can apply both *before* you begin your graduate studies (as long as you are at least an undergraduate senior) *and* as an early graduate student. If you have completed more than one year in a graduate degree program, there are restrictions on your eligibility to apply. Check the Detailed Eligibility Requirements in the NSF GRFP Solicitation to be sure you're eligible.

3. **I have a bachelor's degree, but no graduate study yet. I am in the process of applying to graduate school this year. Can I apply to the upcoming NSF GRFP competition, or must I wait until I'm in graduate school?**

   You can apply as an undergraduate senior or as a bachelor's degree-holder without any graduate study; you do not have to wait until you are enrolled in graduate school. Applying before you begin your graduate studies does not affect your ability to apply one time after you're enrolled in graduate school, as long as you continue to meet eligibility requirements.

4. **Can I apply to NSF GRFP and wait to apply to graduate school in a future year, if I am offered a Fellowship?**

   No. If you are offered and accept the Fellowship, you must be ready to begin your graduate program in the fall of the year you are offered the Fellowship.

5. **Can I apply for the NSF GRFP if I do not know where I will be attending graduate school? I don't know if I will be accepted by the program of my choice so the research I plan to conduct may change.**

   Yes. Undergraduate seniors and and bachelor's degree-holders who plan to enter graduate school in a NSF GRFP-eligible field by the coming fall are strongly encouraged to apply. The research statement in your application is not considered to be a proposal that you are obliged to carry out; it is used to evaluate the evidence of your potential. In addition, you are not obligated to attend the proposed institution listed in your application.

6. **Can I apply if I plan to attend a non-US institution?**

   No. The Fellowship can only be used at a non-profit institution of higher education accredited in, and having a campus located in, the United States, its territories, or possessions, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

7. **Can I accept the Fellowship but change the field of study? Can I accept the Fellowship but change the degree program?**

   Not in the first year of the Fellowship. In the first Fellowship year, Fellows must pursue the Major Field of Study in the disciplinary degree program indicated in the application (e.g., Chemistry). After completing the first year, the Fellow may change the Major Field of Study and/or eligible science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degree program. See the NSF GRF Program Solicitation for eligible degree programs.

8. **What if I am offered a Fellowship, but change my mind and decide to put off enrolling in graduate school? Can I defer the Fellowship?**

   No. The Fellowship cannot be deferred, except under two conditions: medical or military deferral. In order to obtain one of these deferrals, you must be enrolled in a graduate program at an eligible institution, and the deferral must be approved by your graduate institution and the NSF. However, you could decline an offered Fellowship before the published acceptance deadline and apply again if you are still eligible.

9. **I will be entering a master's program next year. Am I eligible to apply to NSF GRFP?**

   Yes, if the master's degree is a research-based program in a field of study eligible for NSF GRFP. Master's programs that are identified as professional degree programs by their institutions are **not** eligible. Check the NSF GRF Program Solicitation for detailed degree eligibility. NSF GRFP only supports research-based master's and doctoral degrees in eligible fields in STEM and STEM education. The Fellowship is portable; Fellows who receive a master's degree can continue their fellowships in a Ph.D. program.

10. **I am currently a beginning graduate student. When can I apply to NSF GRFP?**

    As a currently-enrolled graduate student, you can apply only once, and only if you have completed no more than one academic year of graduate study as indicated on the Registrar-issued transcript from the university attended as of the application deadline. That means you can apply in your first year or the beginning of the second year. Your graduate status indicated on the Registrar-issued academic transcript will determine your eligibility status at the application deadline. If your transcript indicates more than one academic year, you are not eligible. You must also meet the other eligibility requirements.

11. **I enrolled in a graduate program earlier than Fall of the application year (i.e., January, Spring, or Summer semester), so I will have completed at least one semester's worth of graduate study by this year's application deadline in October. How does that affect my eligibility?**

    Assuming you meet the other eligibility criteria, you are eligible to apply as a graduate student this year. Because you will have already completed some graduate study by the deadline, this is the *only* year you will be eligible. You will **not** be able to apply as a second year graduate student as you will have completed more than one academic year of graduate study by the application deadlines.

12. **I applied last year as an undergraduate. I am now in graduate school, am I eligible to apply again?**

    Yes. Any applications submitted before you begin your graduate study (whether as an undergraduate student or bachelor's degree-holder with no graduate training) do not count toward the one-time-in-graduate-school application limit for enrolled graduate students.

13. **I applied last year as a first-year graduate student. I have changed fields this year and I am in the first year of a different graduate program. Am I eligible to apply this year?**

    No. All graduate students are subject to the one-time-in-graduate-school application limit for graduate students and are not eligible to re-apply, regardless of any field of study or program changes. NSF counts all study in a graduate degree program, regardless of the program or field of study (including outside of STEM fields), toward the eligibility limits on graduate study.

14. **I am a second year graduate student and completed one academic year of a graduate program last year. However, before that I took several additional graduate courses in the summer after my bachelor's degree. Am I still eligible?**

    It depends on whether the graduate courses were taken while enrolled in a graduate degree-granting program. You are eligible if the graduate coursework was taken **without** being enrolled in a graduate degree-granting program. Such coursework is not counted towards the one academic year limit. You are not eligible if the graduate coursework was taken while enrolled in a graduate degree-granting program.

15. **If I apply as a first-year graduate student for this year's competition, will I be able to apply as a second-year graduate student for next year's competition?**

    No. Students are limited to one application while enrolled in graduate school, submitted either in the first or second year of a graduate program. You may apply as a second-year graduate student only if you did not apply and compete as a first year graduate student, and if you have completed no more than one academic year of graduate study as indicated on the Registrar-issued transcript from the university attended as of the application deadline.

16. **How do the eligibility rules apply to joint bachelor's-master's degree students?**

    Individuals pursuing a master's degree simultaneously with the bachelor's degree (joint bachelor's-master's degree) are considered to be graduate students and are limited to one application to NSF GRFP. These individuals can apply EITHER while enrolled in the joint degree program OR as first-year doctoral students shortly after completion of the joint degree (see additional information below). **All applicants in joint bachelor's-master's degree programs must have completed three years in the joint program as of the application deadline.**

17. **What if I previously applied in the final year of my joint bachelor's-master's program? Under the one-time rule for graduate student applicants, am I still eligible to apply in the first year of my Ph.D. program?**

    No. All individuals who previously applied while enrolled in a joint bachelor's-master's program are not eligible.

18. **What if I previously earned a joint bachelor's-master's degree?**

    If you did not apply while enrolled in the joint bachelor's-master's degree program, and continued directly to a doctoral program after completion of the joint degree, you are eligible to apply only as a first-year doctoral student.

    If you did not progress directly to a doctoral program, you will not be eligible unless you have had a continuous interruption of at least two consecutive years immediately prior to the application deadline, and are not enrolled in a degree-granting graduate program at the application deadline.

19. **I have completed more than one academic year of graduate study. Are there any circumstances in which I could be eligible?**

    Possibly. Individuals who have completed more than one academic year in a degree-granting program, who have earned a previous master's degree of any kind (including bachelor's-master's degree), or who have earned a professional degree (e.g., law, medicine, business), are eligible only if they have had a continuous interruption in graduate study of at least two consecutive years immediately prior to the application deadline, and are not enrolled in a degree-granting graduate program at the application deadline. **This means that you cannot already be enrolled in graduate school at the time of the application deadline.** You must address the reasons for the interruption in graduate study in your *Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals* Statement. See the NSF GRF Program Solicitation for detailed eligibility requirements.

20. **I hold a master's degree and plan to return to graduate school after an interruption of longer than two years. Can I enroll in another master's program?**

    No. If you already have a master's degree, you must be planning to enroll in a PhD program. The NSF GRF cannot be used for an additional master's degree.

21. **I completed a master's degree in less than 12 months, with no additional graduate study after that. Am I still eligible?**

    No. Having a master's degree makes you ineligible, unless you qualify with an interruption in your graduate study of at least two years immediately prior to your application and are not enrolled in graduate school at the application deadline.

22. **I am in the 1st year of my Ph.D. program, I previously earned a master's degree, am I still eligible?**

    No. Having a master's degree makes you ineligible to apply to the NSF GRFP unless it was followed by a continuous interruption in graduate study of at least two years, and you are not

enrolled in graduate school at the time of application. In this case, you would *not* be eligible because you are already enrolled in graduate school.

23. I have been working for several years since getting my doctoral degree and would like to go back to graduate school in another field. Can this count as an "interruption" in graduate study, for the purposes of applying to NSF GRFP?

No. Doctoral degree recipients in any field of study are ineligible for GRFP.

24. I am changing fields of study. Does NSF consider that to be an extenuating circumstance that would merit an exception to the limit on previous graduate study?

No. All enrollment in graduate or professional degree-granting programs counts towards the limit, regardless of field; this includes study in non-NSF-supported fields as well as in STEM fields.

25. I took some graduate-level courses after finishing my undergraduate program, but they were not part of a degree program. Do they count as "graduate study" for the NSF GRFP?

No. Graduate coursework taken without being enrolled in a graduate degree-granting program is not counted in this limit.

26. If I apply for the NSF GRFP this year and I am not offered a Fellowship can I re-apply?

Only if you meet eligibility requirements for the active competition.

Applications that are not reviewed by NSF GRFP (i.e., are withdrawn before the withdrawal deadline or are returned without review) do not count toward the one-time-in-graduate-school application limit for graduate students.

27. How can I find out if my specific research topic is eligible?

The NSF GRF Program Solicitation contains the official guidance regarding eligible fields and programs of study; see Section IV.3. Field of Study, Degree Programs, and Proposed Research.

28. I am enrolled in a clinical psychology program. Am I eligible?

If you are in a clinical psychology program, you may be eligible only if: 1) your proposed graduate study is not focused on clinical practice and 2) you are doing basic research on an eligible topic or topics as described in the NSF GRF Program Solicitation. Regarding the eligibility of clinical areas of study, Section IV.3 of the NSF GRF Program Solicitation states:

"Individuals are not eligible to apply if they will be enrolled in graduate study focused on clinical practice, counseling, social work, patient-oriented research, epidemiological and medical behavioral studies, outcomes research and health services research. Ineligible study includes pharmacologic, non-pharmacologic, and behavioral interventions for disease or disorder prevention, prophylaxis, diagnosis, therapy or treatment. Research to provide evidence leading to a scientific basis for consideration of a change in health policy or standard of care is not eligible. Graduate study focused on community, public, or global health, or other population-based research including medical intervention trials is also not eligible."

29. I am enrolled in a biology program and I am conducting biomedical research. Am I eligible?

No. See Section IV.3 of the NSF GRF Program Solicitation.

30. I am enrolled in a bioengineering program and my research will involve applications that aid people with disabilities. Am I eligible?

Yes. As stated in Section IV.3 of the NSF GRF Program Solicitation, you are eligible if your research will apply engineering principles to problems in medicine while primarily advancing engineering knowledge. When you prepare your application, you can select *biomedical engineering* as the subfield.

31. What are the high priority research areas mentioned in the NSF GRFP Solicitation?

NSF will continue to fund outstanding Fellowships in all areas of science and engineering supported by NSF, including the research outlined in https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/FY2022-Discretionary-Request.pdf.

32. My job required me to take some continuing education credits for a professional credential and these continuing education credits were at the graduate level. Do these count towards the limit of allowed graduate study?

Graduate coursework taken without being enrolled in a graduate degree-granting program is not counted in this limit.

33. Who is NOT eligible to apply to the NSF GRFP?

- Individuals who are not U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or permanent residents are not eligible. Foreign nationals who are in the U.S. on a student visa and those awaiting green cards are not eligible.
- Individuals who do not intend to enroll or be enrolled in a research-based graduate degree program at a non-profit institution of higher education accredited in, and having a campus located in, the United States, its territories, or possessions, or the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, in an eligible Field of Study in STEM or STEM education (see Appendix and Section IV.3 in the NSF GRF Program Solicitation for eligible Fields of Study) are not eligible.
- Individuals who have previously accepted a NSF GRFP offer are not eligible.
- Individuals who were offered the Fellowship and did not notify NSF of their intention to accept or decline the fellowship by the published deadline for accepting the fellowship are not eligible.
- Individuals who have previously applied while enrolled in a degree-granting graduate program are not eligible.
- Individuals who have earned a doctoral or terminal degree in any field are not eligible.
- Individuals who are current NSF employees are not eligible.
- Individuals who will be enrolled in a practice-oriented professional degree program such as medical, dental, law, and public health degrees at any time during the fellowship are

not eligible. Ineligible degree programs include, but are not limited to, MBA, MPH, MSW, JD, MD, DVM, and DDS.

- Individuals who plan to pursue a joint science-professional degree program (such as an MD/Ph.D. or JD/Ph.D.) even if they are proposing to use the GRFP only for the Ph.D. part of their program are not eligible. Additionally, applicants who are enrolled, or plan to enroll, in a graduate degree program while on a leave of absence from a professional degree program or professional degree-graduate degree joint program are not eligible.

Additional Questions About Eligibility

The official NSF GRFP eligibility guidelines are published in the NSF GRF Program Solicitation. Read the eligibility criteria thoroughly to ensure you, your field of study, and proposed degree program are all eligible.

Call the NSF GRF Operations Center at (866) 673-4737 or email info@nsfgrfp.org if you have additional questions about the eligibility guidelines.

Merit Review Criteria

1. What are NSF's Merit Review Criteria for the NSF GRFP?

The Merit Review Criteria for the NSF GRFP are Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts, as described in Section VI of the current NSF GRF Program Solicitation and in the *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide* (PAPPG), Chapter III.A.

2. What counts as evidence of Intellectual Merit?

Reviewers evaluating applications submitted to the Graduate Research Fellowship Program may consider the following with respect to the Intellectual Merit Criterion:

What is the potential for the proposed activity to:

- Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
- Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
- To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
- Is the plan for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?
- How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?
- Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

3. **How are Broader Impacts defined by NSF?**

   Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to, the project. NSF values the advancement of scientific knowledge and activities that contribute to achievement of societally relevant outcomes.

   Such outcomes include, but are not limited to: full participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minorities in STEM; improved STEM education and educator development at any level; increased public scientific literacy and public engagement with science and technology; improved well-being of individuals in society; development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce; increased partnerships between academia, industry, and others; improved national security; increased economic competitiveness of the US; and enhanced infrastructure for research and education.

4. **How much weight is given to Intellectual Merit versus Broader Impacts when applications are reviewed? Must I address each of these Criteria in each of my statements?**

   Both Criteria are to be given full consideration during the review and decision-making processes; each Criterion is necessary but neither, by itself, is sufficient. Therefore, applicants must fully address both Criteria in each statement.

   Applicants are reviewed on their demonstrated potential to advance knowledge and to make significant research achievements and contributions to their fields throughout their careers. Reviewers are asked to assess applications using a holistic, comprehensive approach, giving balanced consideration to all components of the application, including the educational and research record, leadership, outreach, service activities, and future plans, as well as individual competencies, experiences, and other attributes. The aim is to recruit and retain a diverse cohort of early-career individuals with high potential for future achievements, contributions, and broader impacts in STEM and STEM education.

   Applicants must include separate sections on Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts in each of their written statements in order to provide reviewers with the information necessary to evaluate the application with respect to both criteria. Applicants should address Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts under separate headings in each of their written statements.

NSF GRFP Fellowship Application Document Upload

1. **What format is required by the GRFP Application Module for uploading documents?**

   All fellowship application documents must be uploaded in PDF format. These documents include:

   a. Transcripts
   b. Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement
   c. Graduate Research Plan Statement

d. Reference Letters

2. **What are the PDF upload document formatting and compliance requirements?**

The Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement and the Graduate Research Plan Statement must conform to the following requirements:

a. Times New Roman font for text, Cambria Math for equations, Symbol font for non-alphabetic characters (it is recommended that equations and symbols be inserted as an image)
b. Font size 11-pt or higher (except text that is part of an image)
c. No less than single spacing (approximately six lines of text within a vertical space of one inch)
d. 1" margins on all sides, no text inside 1" margins (no header, footer, name, or page number)
e. Standard letter paper size (8.5" by 11")
f. File cannot be a scanned image
g. File size cannot exceed 10 MB
h. File cannot be password protected
i. File cannot be empty
j. Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement cannot exceed 3 pages
k. Graduate Research Plan Statement cannot exceed 2 pages

Reference letters and transcripts must conform to the following requirements:

a. File size cannot exceed 10 MB
b. File cannot be password protected or encrypted
c. File cannot be empty
d. Reference letter cannot exceed 2 pages

Failure to comply with the above rules will result in one or more error messages. You will be required to correct the error(s) and upload the PDF again.

3. **Why is there a margin error for my PDF? My margins are set to one inch.**

Some potential root causes may be:

- **Remove page numbers:** Be sure that the document has no text in the header or footer including page numbers.
- **Review inserted images or shapes**: Margins can be set to one inch, but a stray image or shape can violate the margin rule. Setting the margin rule to one inch would not automatically correct the images or shapes within margins.

4. **Why do I receive a font error upon document upload when the font was set to an acceptable font type and size using "Select All"?**

Much depends on the particular word processor used because of how word processors export files to PDF.

For Microsoft Office, "Select All" will not include inserted images, shapes, and numbered lists or bullets. Each object will have its own font and those would have to be updated to accepted fonts and sizes. Be mindful of images inserted into shapes, as each image and shape can have its own font type.

In Microsoft Office Word, double-click an image to ensure it was not inserted as an object (e.g., PowerPoint slide). If another application opens, this means a non-graphical image was inserted and the object contains invalid metadata that will make the PDF upload fail. Re-insert an image by pasting it as an image.

5. **What should I consider if I include images in my statement files?**

   If your image includes text (titles, labels, captions, etc.), that text should be part of the image and not editable. Failure to make all text part of the image could result in font type and font size errors.

6. **What other known issues should I be aware of regarding unallowable fonts when exporting a file to PDF?**

   a. OpenOffice inserts an unallowable font for superscript and subscript.
   b. Google Docs may not properly export bulleted text and should not be used.
   c. Certain LaTeX-generated PDF elements are not yet supported. If using LaTeX, use the function to create a PDF and check to ensure that it is accepted by the GRFP Application Module **in advance of the deadline**.
   d. Microsoft Office for Macs "Save as PDF" functionality "Best for Printing" may not be supported. Instead, select the "Best for electronic distribution and accessibility (uses Microsoft online service)" option.
   e. Older versions of Microsoft Word (2007 or earlier) may produce font errors.
   f. For Microsoft Office, do not use "Print as PDF" to create a PDF. Instead, use "Export" and "Create PDF."

Transcripts

1. **Are transcripts required?**

   Yes. **A transcript is required for all degree-granting programs listed in the application**. The NSF GRFP Application Module will not accept an application without a transcript.

2. **Do the transcripts uploaded with my application need to be official transcripts?**

   No. You may upload either official or unofficial transcripts, as long as the unofficial transcript meets the requirements described in the NSF GRF Program Solicitation. Redact sensitive personally identifiable information (date of birth, social security number) from the transcripts before uploading.

3. **My school doesn't give electronic transcripts. How do I include transcripts in my application?**

   If you have a hard copy of your transcripts, you can scan and upload it. Redact sensitive personally identifiable information (date of birth, social security number) from the transcripts before scanning and uploading.

4. **I just started at my current institution and do not have a transcript. What can I do?**

   If you just started at your current institution, you can upload an unofficial transcript, a class schedule, or enrollment verification form from your school showing the courses for which you are registered. It is helpful if the document you upload shows what courses you are taking in the fall as it gives reviewers some information about your coursework.

5. **My school offers official electronic transcripts that require the recipient to login and download the transcript. May I list the NSF GRFP's contact information, and have the NSF GRFP download the transcript and add it to my application?**

   No. Applicants must upload transcripts directly into the NSF GRFP Application Module. Obtain a copy of your transcript, convert it to PDF and upload it into the NSF GRFP Application Module. Redact sensitive personally identifiable information (date of birth, social security number) from the transcripts before uploading.

6. **My school's official electronic transcripts are password-protected. Can I still submit them?**

   No. The NSF GRFP Application Module does not accept password-protected or similarly encrypted PDFs. If your school's electronic transcripts are encrypted, either obtain an unencrypted unofficial electronic transcript and make a PDF, or scan a hard copy of your transcript and upload the scan. Redact sensitive personally identifiable information (date of birth, social security number) from the transcripts before uploading.

7. **I am receiving an error when uploading my transcript file.**

   Many universities will place a layer of encryption on official transcript files which can cause issues when uploading to the NSF GRFP Application Module. If you receive an error, please print a copy of the transcript and scan to PDF prior to uploading. Check to make sure that your transcript has been uploaded properly.

8. **I have attended several schools. Do I need to list all of them and upload all of the transcripts?**

   You should list all institutions from which you received a bachelor's degree or higher-level degree, and upload transcripts from all degree-granting programs listed in your application. Transcripts from other institutions listed in your application (i.e., for coursework taken outside of a degree-granting program) are optional.

Application

1. **Are GRE scores required for the NSF GRFP application?**

   No. GRE (Graduate Record Examination) scores are not part of the NSF GRFP application.

2. **Can I include links with supplemental material, such as papers, videos, etc. for reviewers to consider?**

   No. The only application content that is considered by reviewers is what is submitted via the NSF GRFP Application Module by the application deadline. Do not submit any other material. Nothing will be accepted via email.

   From the NSF GRF Program Solicitation: "Only the information required in the Application Module will be reviewed. No additional items or information will be accepted or reviewed. Do not provide links to web pages within the application, except as part of citations in the References Cited section. Images must be included in the page limits. Review of the application and reference letters is based solely on materials received by the application and reference letter deadlines." Reviewers are instructed to evaluate only the evidence provided within the application.

3. **Can I obtain copies of past applications or statements from previously awarded applications?**

   No.

4. **Will my application be reviewed if I submit it right after the deadline?**

   No. The GRFP Application Module will not accept applications after the deadline. NSF must **receive** your application by 5 p.m. local time, as determined by the applicant's mailing address, on the Major Field of Study specific deadline day (see NSF GRF Program Solicitation for application deadlines). Mailed in applications will not be accepted.

5. **How should I select my Major Field of Study?**

   Select the Major Field of Study and the subfield that is closest to your research interests. If the subfield is not listed, it may not be eligible for NSF GRFP.

   Choose your Major Field of Study carefully. Your choice determines the disciplinary knowledge of the experts who will review your application. If you are offered a Fellowship, it will be in the Major Field of Study that you chose in your application, and cannot be applied to another field or discipline for the first year of the Fellowship. The name of the degree program does not need to match the Major Field of Study exactly, but must be in the same discipline (i.e., a science discipline cannot be substituted for an engineering discipline or vice versa, e.g. chemistry for chemical engineering).

6. **My intended study is interdisciplinary, so I will select multiple fields for my application. Will my application be reviewed by reviewers drawn from these multiple fields?**

   No. Your application will be reviewed in the Major Field of Study that you select. Check the list of eligible Fields of Study and the subfields in the NSF GRFP Solicitation Appendix and choose

as your Major Field of Study the one that you consider most compatible with your research interests. Your reviewers will be drawn from experts within that field. You can consult your advisor(s) for input about this decision.

NSF welcomes applications for interdisciplinary programs of study and research; however, data on interdisciplinary study is collected for informational purposes only. Interdisciplinary research is defined as "a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice" (Committee on Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research, Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy (2004). *Facilitating interdisciplinary research*. National Academies. Washington: National Academy Press, p. 2). **Applications must be received by the deadline for the Major Field of Study designated in the application. Applications will be reviewed only by experts in the Major Field of Study listed. If awarded, Fellows are required to enroll in a degree program in the Major Field of Study in which the application was funded.**

Statement Formatting

1. **What are the formatting requirements for the statements?**

   The statements must be written using:

   - Standard 8.5" x 11" page size
   - Times New Roman font for all text, Cambria Math font for equations, Symbol font for non-alphabetic characters (it is recommended that equations and symbols be inserted as an image)
   - 11-point or higher font, except text that is part of an image
   - 1" margins on all sides, no text inside 1" margins (no header, footer, name, or page number)
   - No less than single spacing (approximately 6 lines per inch). Do not use line spacing options such as "exactly 11 point," that are less than single spaced.
   - Compliance with these requirements will be automatically checked by the GRFP Application Module. If your documents are not compliant, they will not be accepted by the NSF GRFP Application Module.

   Upload your documents **early** to ensure they are format-compliant. Non-compliant documents will delay upload of the complete application and may result in missing the deadline.

2. **What are the page limits for the statements?**

   The Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement has a 3-page limit. The Graduate Research Plan Statement has a 2-page limit. All references, footnotes, citations, images, etc. must be included in these page limits.

3. **Do I need to put my name, applicant ID or other identifying information on the statements?**

   No.

4. **Should I put my name, the statement title, and page numbers in the margins on the statements?**

   No.

5. **Can I use a smaller font for figures and tables?**

   Yes. It is acceptable to use font smaller than 11-point in **images**. Images must be included within the page limit, and not overlap with the 1" margins.

6. **For the Graduate Research Plan Statement, can I put my references on a third page?**

   No. All references must fit within the two-page limit. If you submit an application in which the Graduate Research Plan Statement is a total of three pages, with nothing but references on the third page, your application will not be accepted by the Application Module.

7. **Must my Graduate Research Plan Statement have a reference section?**

   No. A reference section is not required, although your reviewers may expect to see references if your statement cites background work needed to convincingly motivate your research plan. All text for references must be no smaller than 11-point, and you can abbreviate the reference information.

8. **When I upload my statement in the NSF GRFP Application Module, there is an additional blank page at the end, which causes my statement to exceed the page limit. Will my statement be accepted?**

   No. Your Statement will not be accepted by the GRFP Application Module if it exceeds two pages. Make sure the Statement PDF doesn't exceed two pages so your application upload isn't delayed.

9. **Can I use "exactly 11 point" line spacing?**

   No. The NSF GRF Program Solicitation states that the statements must be written using spacing that is single-spaced or greater line spacing. Deviation from the format requirements will result in your application being rejected by the NSF GRFP Application Module.

10. **How should I ensure that my application complies with the format requirements and isn't rejected by the GRFP Application Module?**

    Prepare each document for upload exactly according to the format requirements. Only PDFs with the correct page size, font, font size, margins, line spacing, and number of pages will be accepted. Upload each PDF **well in advance** of the application deadlines so a technical glitch doesn't delay your application upload. Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed.

Reference Letters

1. **How can I find out if my reference letters have been submitted?**

   Track the submission status of reference letters in the NSF GRFP Application Module. Click "Check Application Package Status" under the Application Package Optional Task List.

2. **What happens if more than three of my reference letters are submitted?**

   You will be asked to assign a priority ranking to each reference writer you list. If more than three reference letters are submitted for your application, letters from the three highest ranked reference writers will be included in your application package for review.

3. **Can I change the priority rankings for my references?**

   Yes. You can change the rankings of your reference writers in the NSF GRFP Application Module by selecting "Manage References" under the Application Package Optional Task List. You can change rankings even if a reference letter has already been submitted, as long as it is before the reference writer deadline.

4. **My reference writer was asked to provide letters for several applicants and other applicants show up on his/her list of applicants, my name does not. How can I ensure that the letter is submitted?**

   Reference letter requests are associated with the reference writer's email address. If you and another applicant provide different email addresses for the same reference writer, and the reference writer logs in to submit a letter using the email address listed by the other applicant, the reference writer will not see you on their list of applicants. In this case, the reference writer should create another login using the email address that you listed, or else you can edit the email address you entered for that reference writer to match the one listed by the other applicant(s).

5. **Can reference letters be submitted by email or by physical mail?**

   No. All reference letters must be submitted online through the NSF GRFP Application Module. If you need assistance with the reference letter submission process, please contact the NSF Help Desk at fastlane@nsf.gov or 1-800-673-6188.

6. **My reference writer did not receive the email nominating them to serve as a reference writer or the email containing their temporary password.**

   There are a few reasons that your reference writer may not have received the email nominating them as a reference writer. Please check the following if this occurs:

   - **Ensure you have initiated sending the email**. When adding your reference writer to your application, you must hit the "Send Email" link on the References Screen to send the email notification to the reference writer.
   - **Check the reference writer's email address**. Check to ensure that the email address you have entered for the reference writer is accurate. An exact email address is crucial to matching the reference writer and the applicant in the NSF GRFP Application Module. If there is a typo or you need to change the email address, you can choose to edit the

reference writer record (either from your unsubmitted application or from the Manage References link in the NSF GRFP Application Module). After editing the reference writer email address, the "Send Email" link will reappear on the references screen, allowing you to re-send the nomination email.

- **Check spam folders**. Ask your reference writer to check their spam or junk folder to ensure that the email did not get sent to one of those folders inadvertently.
- **Ask your reference writer for an alternate email address**. It is possible that the email domain used by your reference writer is rejecting the email and not allowing delivery. In this case, request an alternate email from your reference writer to be used for this purpose. You can then edit the email address and use the "Send Email" link that appears to re-send the nomination email.
- If you have confirmed that the email address entered for the reference is accurate but they have not received the request, **you must delete the reference and add it again**.
- Ensure that the reference writer is not forwarding their email to another account. NSF emails might not be forwarded from the email address that is in the Application Module.

Notifications

1. **When will applicants be notified of the results?**

   Reviewed applicants will be notified of the results of the competition by early April.

2. **How are notifications sent?**

   Notifications are sent via email to the email address registered in the NSF GRFP Application Module.

3. **I did not receive a notification. What should I do?**

   If you did not receive a notification, please check your spam or junk folder. If you cannot locate the email there, please email info@nsfgrfp.org from the address associated with your NSF GRFP application, and include your name, 10-digit applicant ID number, and primary mailing address.

4. **Can I receive additional feedback beyond the comments I received on my reviews?**

   No. The reviews in the NSF GRFP Module are the only available feedback for NSF GRFP applications. The notification email will direct applicants to log in to the NSF GRFP Module in order to download their reviews. Reviews are available for a limited time only.

5. **Can I appeal the results of my application if I was not offered a Fellowship?**

   No. Per NSF policy (PAPPG Chapter IV), there is no reconsideration for fellowship decisions.

6. **Does NSF offer any additional Fellowships after the announcements in early April?**

   No.

7. **Is there a waiting list for NSF GRFP, and if so, how can I be placed on the waiting list?**

   There is no waiting list.

Information for Reference Writers

1. **I am unable to log in using the temporary password I received via email.**

   If you have received your temporary password and are unable to log in to the NSF GRFP Reference Writer Module, check the following:

   - **Check your email address**. Check to confirm you are trying to log in using the same email address entered for you by the applicant. The email address provided by the applicant can be found in the body of the email you received with your temporary password. An exact email address is crucial to matching the reference writer and the applicant in the NSF GRFP Application Module.
   - **Check the temporary password**. Record the temporary password and type it into the module manually rather than copying and pasting.
   - **Ensure you are using the most recent Temporary Password received**. Occasionally, a user will inadvertently select "Create A Password" multiple times. If this occurs, use the temporary password in the most recent email you received.

2. **I did not receive the email nominating me to serve as a reference writer or the email containing my temporary password.**

   There are a few reasons that you may not have received the email nominating you as a reference writer. Please check the following if this occurs:

   - **Confirm your email address with the applicant**. Check to ensure that the email address the applicant entered for you is accurate. If there is a typo or if they need to change the email address, the applicant can edit the reference writer record in their application and have the nomination email resent to you. An exact email address is crucial to matching the reference writer and the applicant in the NSF GRFP Application Module.
   - **Check spam folders**. Check your spam or junk folder to ensure that the email did not get sent to one of those folders inadvertently.

   - **Use an alternate email address**. It is possible that your email domain is rejecting the email and not allowing delivery. In this case, provide an alternate email address to the applicant and they will be able to edit your reference writer record in their application and re-send the nomination email.

3. **I was asked to provide letters for several applicants, but one is not showing up on my list of applicants. How can I submit the letter?**

   Reference letter requests are associated with the reference writer's email address. If two applicants list different email addresses for the same reference writer, and the reference writer logs in to submit a letter using the email address listed by the first applicant, the second applicant will not show up on that reference writer's list of applicants. In this case, you should repeat the first-time login process using the email address listed by the "missing" applicant.

4. **What are the format requirements for the letters of reference?**

   The letter must be a PDF and adhere to the following requirements:

   - Letter must be **signed**
   - Use institutional or professional letterhead, if possible
   - 2 page limit, standard 8.5" x 11" page size
   - Times New Roman, 11-point font in the body of the letter
   - Name and title of reference writer
   - Department and institution or organization

5. **Is there a page limit for letters of reference?**

   Yes. Letters of reference are limited to a maximum of 2 pages in length. Please note that the NSF GRFP Module will not accept letters that are longer than 2 pages.

6. **Can reference letters be submitted by email or by physical mail?**

   No. All reference letters must be submitted online through the NSF GRFP Module. If you need assistance with the reference letter submission process, please contact the NSF Help Desk at fastlane@nsf.gov or 1-800-673-6188.

   All reference letters are due by the deadline published in the NSF GRFP Solicitation. There are no exceptions.

Information for Reviewers

1. **How can I become an NSF GRFP Reviewer?**

   Go to https://www.nsfgrfp.org/reviewers to register your interest in serving as a reviewer for NSF GRFP. No obligation is assumed by registering. After NSF GRFP assesses the needs for the upcoming competition, invitations are issued to prospective reviewers in October and November. If you are accepted as a reviewer, you will be expected to agree to: 1) view all reviewer training materials; 2) participate online in a reviewer orientation webinar in November or December; 3) review 30 or fewer applications; and 4) submit all reviews online by the review submission deadline.

2. **I have served as an NSF GRFP Reviewer before. Do I need to view the training materials and participate in the orientation webinar again?**

   Yes. NSF GRFP information and reviewer training is updated annually, and it is important that all reviewers are aware of these updates.

3. **What is the flat rate fee?**

   The flat rate fee paid to NSF GRFP reviewers eligible to receive payment is $200. You are not eligible to receive the payment if you are not a US citizen/permanent resident or if you are employed by the Federal Government.

4. **How will I receive the flat rate fee?**

   NSF uses an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) direct deposit to your bank account using the NSF Guest Travel and Reimbursement System. An email will be sent to reviewers with information on how to register to receive reimbursement.

5. **I do not have a PhD, am I eligible to serve as a reviewer?**

   NSF welcomes reviewers who are professional graduate education experts and you may serve regardless of having a PhD degree. However, reviewers should not be active graduate students.

6. **I am a current postdoc, am I eligible to serve as a reviewer?**

   No. Reviewers should not be current postdocs, but the program hopes you will consider serving after you have completed your postdoc position.

7. **Am I eligible to serve if my student is applying or I have written a letter of recommendation for a NSF GRFP applicant?**

   Yes, you are still eligible to serve as a reviewer. You may serve on the same panel as an application for which you have a conflict of interest (you are the applicant's advisor, wrote a letter of reference for the applicant, etc.). However, you cannot participate in the evaluation of applications that pose a potential conflict of interest or the perception thereof. If you are not comfortable serving on the same panel as an applicant you know, please let us know and we will attempt to place you on a different panel.