



National Science Foundation
WHERE DISCOVERIES BEGIN



NSF 19-081

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Applicants to NSF 19-590

https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590

Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP)

ELIGIBILITY

1. How can I determine if I am eligible to apply to the NSF GRFP?
2. When can I apply to GRFP?
3. I have a bachelor's degree, but no graduate study yet. I am in the process of applying to graduate school this year. Should I apply to the upcoming GRFP competition, or wait until I'm in graduate school?
4. Can I apply to GRFP and wait to apply to graduate school in a future year, if I am offered a Fellowship?
5. Can I apply for the 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; therefore the research I plan to conduct may change.
6. Can I apply if I plan to attend a non-US institution?
7. What if I'm offered a Fellowship but decide to change my research? Can I accept the Fellowship but change the field of study or degree?
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?
9. I will be entering a two-year master's program next year. Am I eligible to apply to GRFP?
10. I am currently a beginning graduate student. When should I apply to GRFP?

11. The graduate program I am enrolled in began in January of this year, so I will have completed one semester's worth of graduate study by this year's application deadline in October. How does that affect my eligibility?
12. I applied last year as an undergraduate and I am now in graduate school. Am I eligible to apply again?
13. I applied last year as a first-year graduate student. However, 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?
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?
15. If I apply as 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?
16. How do the eligibility rules apply to individuals in joint bachelor's-master's programs?
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?
18. I have completed more than one academic year of graduate study. Are there any circumstances in which I could be eligible?
19. What if I previously earned a joint bachelor's-master's degree?
20. I completed a master's degree in less than 12 months, with no additional graduate study after that. Am I still eligible?
21. 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?
22. I am in the first year of my Ph.D. program, but I previously earned a master's degree. Am I still eligible?
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 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?
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 GRFP?
26. If I apply for the GRFP this year and I am not offered an award, can I re-apply?
27. How can I find out if my specific research topic is eligible?
28. I am enrolled in a clinical psychology program. Am I eligible?

29. I am enrolled in a biology program and I am doing biomedical research. Am I eligible?
30. I am enrolled in a bioengineering program and my research will involve applications that aid people with disabilities. Am I eligible?
31. 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?
32. Who is NOT eligible to apply to the GRFP?

MERIT REVIEW CRITERIA

33. What are NSF's Merit Review Criteria for the GRFP?
34. What counts as evidence of Intellectual Merit?
35. How should the Broader Impacts criterion be addressed in GRFP?
36. How much weight should I give to each criterion in my statements?

TRANSCRIPTS

37. Are transcripts required?
38. Do the transcripts uploaded with my application need to be official transcripts?
39. My school doesn't provide electronic transcripts. How can I include transcripts in my application?
40. I just started at my current institution this fall and do not have a transcript. What can I do?
41. My school offers official electronic transcripts that require the recipient to login and download the transcript. May I list the GRFP's contact information, and have the GRFP download the transcript and add it to my application?
42. My school's official electronic transcripts are password-protected. Can I still submit them?
43. I am receiving an error when uploading my transcript file.
44. I have attended several schools. Do I need to list all of them and upload all of the transcripts?

APPLICATION FAQs

45. Are GRE scores required for the GRFP application?
46. Can I include links with supplemental material, such as papers, videos, etc. for reviewers to consider?
47. Can I obtain copies of past successful applications or statements from previously awarded applications?

48. How should I select my Field of Study?
49. 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?

STATEMENT FORMATTING

50. What are the formatting requirements for the statements?
51. What are the page limits for the statements?
52. Do I need to put my name, applicant ID or other identifying information on the statements?
53. Should I put my name, the statement title, and page numbers in the margins on the statements?
54. Can I use a smaller font for figures and tables?
55. For the Graduate Research Plan statement, can I put my references on a third page?
56. Must my application have a reference section?
57. When I upload my statement in the GRFP Application Module, there is an additional blank page at the end, which causes my statement to exceed the page limit. Will this cause my application to be returned without review?
58. Can I use "exactly 12 point" line spacing?
59. When I check my statement in the GRFP Application Module, the formatting is not the same as the document I uploaded and now looks like it does not comply with the requirements. Does this mean my application will be returned without review?
60. Will my application be reviewed if I submit it right after the deadline?

REFERENCE LETTERS

61. How can I find out if my reference letters have been submitted?
62. What happens if more than three of my reference letters are submitted?
63. Can I change the priority rankings for my references?
64. My reference writer was asked to provide letters for several applicants. While other applicants show up on his/her list of applicants, my name does not appear. How can I ensure that the letter is submitted?
65. Can reference letters be submitted by email or by physical mail?
66. My reference writer did not receive the email nominating them to serve as a reference writer or the email containing their temporary password.

NOTIFICATIONS

67. When will applicants be notified of the results?

- 68. How are notifications sent?
- 69. I did not receive a notification. What should I do?
- 70. Can I receive additional feedback beyond the comments I received on my reviews?
- 71. Can I appeal the results of my application if I was not awarded a Fellowship?
- 72. Does NSF offer any additional Fellowships after the announcements in early April?
- 73. Is there a waiting list for GRFP, and if so, how can I be placed on the waiting list?

INFORMATION FOR REFERENCE WRITERS

- 74. I am unable to log in using the temporary password I received via email.
- 75. I did not receive the email nominating me to serve as a reference writer or the email containing my temporary password.
- 76. 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?
- 77. What are the formatting requirements for the letters of reference?
- 78. Is there a page limit for letters of reference?
- 79. Can reference letters be submitted by email or by physical mail?

INFORMATION FOR REVIEWERS

- 80. How can I become an NSF GRFP reviewer?
- 81. I have served as an NSF GRFP reviewer before. Do I need to view the training materials and participate in the orientation webinar again?
- 82. What is the flat rate fee?
- 83. How will I receive the flat rate fee?

ELIGIBILITY

1. How can I determine if I am eligible to apply to the NSF GRFP?

The eligibility requirements for the NSF GRFP competition are contained in Section IV of the NSF GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> .

2. When can I apply to GRFP?

You can apply both *before* you begin your graduate studies *and* as an early graduate student, as long as you are at least an undergraduate senior.

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

As a bachelor's degree holder without any graduate study, you are eligible to compete with others at the undergraduate level. 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 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 immediately after you are awarded the Fellowship.

5. Can I apply for the 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; therefore the research I plan to conduct may change.

Yes. Undergraduate seniors and post baccalaureates who plan to enter graduate school in a GRFP-eligible field by the coming fall are 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 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship can only be used at a non-profit university, college, or other 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. What if I'm offered a Fellowship but decide to change my research? Can I accept the Fellowship but change the field of study or degree?

Not in the first year. In the first year, Fellows must pursue the field of study/degree program indicated in the application. After completing the first year, the Fellow may change the field of study and/or degree program.

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 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 two-year master's program next year. Am I eligible to apply

to GRFP?

Only if the master's degree is a research-based program in a field of study eligible for GRFP. Master's programs that are identified as professional degree programs by their institutions are not eligible. Check the GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> 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 may continue their fellowships in a Ph.D. program

10. I am currently a beginning graduate student. When should I apply to GRFP?

As a graduate student, you may apply only once, and only if you have completed no more than one academic year of graduate study as defined by the university attended as of the application deadline. You must also meet the other eligibility requirements. Be strategic about the timing of your application to a GRFP competition. As a graduate student in your first year, you should consult with your advisor(s) to assess if you have already demonstrated strong evidence of potential through achievements, activities, research experiences, and plans compared to others at this early stage, or whether such evidence is likely to be stronger the following year.

11. The graduate program I am enrolled in began in January of this year, so I will have completed 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 began your program in January and 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 wait until next year to apply (as a second year graduate student), as you will have completed more than one academic year of graduate study by then.

12. I applied last year as an undergraduate and 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 or post-baccalaureate student with no graduate training) do not count toward the one-time-in-graduate-school limit. However, as soon as you enroll in a graduate degree-granting program, you become subject to the eligibility restriction, so you will need to be strategic about the timing of your application. If you are in your first year of graduate school, you should consult with your advisor(s) to assess whether you have already demonstrated strong evidence of potential through achievements, activities, research experiences, and plans compared to others at your current stage, or whether such evidence is likely to be stronger the following year (compared to others at your stage). Note that you may apply as a second-year graduate student only if you have completed no more than one academic year of graduate study as defined by the university attended as of the application deadline. You must also meet

the other eligibility requirements.

- 13. I applied last year as a first-year graduate student. However, 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 limit 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 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (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 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 defined by the university attended as of the application deadline.

- 16. How do the eligibility rules apply to individuals in joint bachelor's-master's programs?**

Beginning in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 (Fall 2019 deadlines), 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 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.

Individuals in this category who applied in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 competition (Fall 2018 deadline) are eligible to apply as first-year doctoral students **only** in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 competition (Fall 2019 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?

Only if you applied in the FY 2019 competition (Fall 2018 deadline). If you applied in the FY 2019 competition while enrolled in a joint bachelor's-master's program, you may apply as a first-year doctoral student in the FY 2020 (Fall 2019 deadline) competition. All other individuals who previously applied while enrolled in a joint bachelor's-master's program will not be eligible to apply unless 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.

18. 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), 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 GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> for detailed eligibility requirements.

19. 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 as a first-year doctoral student only.

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.

20. 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.

21. 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. GRFP cannot be used for an additional master's degree.

22. I am in the first year of my Ph.D. program, but I previously earned a master's degree. Am I still eligible?

No. Having a master's degree makes you ineligible to apply to 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 GRFP?

No. As described in the GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> , the Graduate Research Fellowship is intended for students early in their graduate education. Having earned the highest terminal degree (typically, a doctoral degree) in any field of study makes you 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 post-baccalaureate 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 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 GRFP this year and I am not offered an award, can I re-apply?

If you are post-baccalaureate with no graduate study while enrolled in a graduate degree-granting program, you can re-apply. Applying prior to enrolling in graduate school does not affect the one-time application in graduate school.

Applications that are not reviewed by GRFP (i.e., are withdrawn before the withdrawal deadline or are returned without review) do not count toward the one-application limit for graduate students. If you applied as a first year graduate student and withdrew your application by the deadline, or your application was returned without review, you may re-apply as a second-year graduate student only if you meet all other eligibility requirements. This also applies to individuals with a master's degree and continuous two-year interruption in study, not enrolled in graduate school at the time of application deadline.

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

The GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> contains the official guidance regarding eligible fields and programs of study; see Section IV.3. *Field of Study*.

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 Program Solicitation. Regarding the eligibility of clinical areas of study, Section IV.3 of the GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> states:

"Individuals are not eligible to apply if they will be enrolled in an area of 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 investigations to provide evidence leading to a scientific basis for consideration of a change in health policy or standard of care, and includes pharmacologic, non-pharmacologic, and behavioral interventions for disease prevention, prophylaxis, diagnosis, or therapy. Individuals pursuing graduate study focused on community, public, or global health, or other population-based research including medical intervention trials are also ineligible."

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

No. See Section IV.3 of the GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> .

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 GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> , 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 should select *biomedical engineering* as the field of study.

31. 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.

32. Who is NOT eligible to apply to the GRFP?

Individuals who are not a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or permanent resident at the time

of application 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 university, college, or other 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 Program Solicitation for eligible Fields of Study) are not eligible.

Individuals who have previously accepted a GRFP award are not eligible.

Individuals who were awarded 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 a current NSF employee are not eligible.

Individuals are not eligible to apply if they 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. 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.), are ineligible for the GRFP, even if they are proposing to use the GRFP only for the Ph.D. part of their program. 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 ineligible.

Additional Questions About Eligibility

The official GRFP eligibility guidelines are published in the GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> . Read the eligibility criteria thoroughly to ensure you, your field of study, and proposed degree program are all eligible. Call the GRF Operations Center at (866) 673-4737 or email info@nsfgrfp.org (mailto:info@nsfgrfp.org) if you have additional questions about the eligibility guidelines.

MERIT REVIEW CRITERIA

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

The Merit Review Criteria for the GRFP are Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts, as

described in Section VI of the current GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> and in the *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG)*, Chapter III.A.

34. 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**:

- a. What is the potential for the proposed activity to:
 - i. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
 - ii. Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
- b. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
- c. 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?
- d. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities?
- e. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

35. How should the Broader Impacts criterion be addressed in GRFP?

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 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (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.

36. How much weight should I give to each criterion in my statements?

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 statements on Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts in their written statements in order to provide reviewers with the information necessary to evaluate the application with respect to both Criteria. Applicants should include headings for Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts in their statements.

TRANSCRIPTS

37. Are transcripts required?

Yes. At least one transcript must be uploaded with the application. The GRFP Application Module will not accept an application without a transcript.

38. 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 GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> . Redact sensitive personally-identifiable information (date of birth, social security number) from the transcripts before uploading.

39. My school doesn't provide electronic transcripts. How can I include transcripts in my application?

If your school does not provide electronic transcripts, you can upload a scanned version of the hard copy transcript. Redact sensitive personally-identifiable information (date of birth, social security number) from the transcripts before uploading.

40. I just started at my current institution this fall and do not have a transcript. What can I do?

You must upload transcripts for all institutions listed in your application, regardless of the start date. If you started at your current institution in the fall, you can upload an unofficial transcript, a course schedule, or other document from your school showing the courses for which you are registered, an enrollment verification document, or similar document. 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.

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

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

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

No. The 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, 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.

43. 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 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.

44. 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 you should upload transcripts from all institutions listed in your application. If you attended more than one baccalaureate institution before receiving your first baccalaureate degree, it is up to you as to whether you list the ones you attended before you earned that degree. However, you must list and include transcripts from all graduate study done after you obtained your first baccalaureate degree.

APPLICATION FAQs

45. Are GRE scores required for the GRFP application?

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

46. 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 GRFP Application Module by the application deadline. Do not submit any other material. Nothing will be accepted via email.

From the 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.

47. Can I obtain copies of past successful applications or statements from previously awarded applications?

No.

48. How should I select my Field of Study?

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

Choose your Field of Study carefully. Your choice determines the disciplinary knowledge of the experts who will review your application, and also the Field of Study and discipline if you are offered a Fellowship. If you are offered a Fellowship, it will be in the Field of Study and discipline 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 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).

49. 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 first Field of Study that you select. Check the list of eligible Fields of Study and the subfields https://www.nsfgrfp.org/applicants/application_components/choosing_primary_field <https://www.nsf.gov/cgi-bin/goodbye?https://www.nsfgrfp.org/applicants/application_components/choosing_primary_field> and choose as your first field 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.

Choose the first field of study carefully. Your choice determines the disciplinary knowledge of the experts who will review your application, and the field of study and discipline for the Fellowship if you are offered an award. If you are offered a Fellowship award, it is in the field of study and discipline 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 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).

STATEMENT FORMATTING

50. What are the formatting requirements for the statements?

The statements must be written using standard 8.5"x 11" page size, 12-point, Times New Roman font, 1" margins on all sides, and must be single-spaced or greater. References, footnotes, and figure captions must be no less than 10-point Times New Roman. Failure to follow any of these guidelines will result in an application being returned without review.

51. 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.

Check the PDF before uploading to make sure the page limit has not been exceeded in the PDF conversion process.

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

No.

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

No.

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

Yes. It is acceptable to use 10-point font for figures and tables. Images may be included within the page limit, but must not overlap with the 1" margins.

55. 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 is a total of three pages, with nothing but references on the third page, your application will be returned without review.

56. Must my application 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. You may use 10-point font for references, and in addition, you may decide to abbreviate the reference information.

57. When I upload my statement in the GRFP Application Module, there is an additional blank page at the end, which causes my statement to exceed the page limit. Will this cause my application to be returned without review?

No. If your statement contains an additional page at the end, and that extra page is completely blank, it will not cause your application to be returned without review.

58. Can I use "exactly 12 point" line spacing?

No. The GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> 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 returned without review.

59. When I check my statement in the GRFP Application Module, the formatting is not the same as the document I uploaded and now looks like it does not comply with the requirements. Does this mean my application will be returned without review?

Yes. The GRFP Application Module provides applicants with the opportunity to preview their documents after upload, to make sure that everything uploaded correctly. Check your statement and research plan after upload to confirm they comply with formatting requirements.

The acceptance of applications will be based on the contents as submitted in the GRFP Application Module. If the version that is uploaded does not comply with formatting requirements, it will be returned without review. Upload your documents and preview them well in advance of the application deadlines, in case technical glitches arise during the upload process.

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

No. Applications will not be accepted after the deadline. **There are no exceptions.** NSF must receive your application by 5 p.m. local time, as determined by the applicant's mailing address, on the Field of Study specific deadline day (see GRFP Program Solicitation <https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf19590> for application deadlines).

REFERENCE LETTERS

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

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

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

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

63. Can I change the priority rankings for my references?

Yes. You can change the rankings of your references in the 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 of **November 1, 2019, 5pm Eastern Time (ET)**.

64. My reference writer was asked to provide letters for several applicants. While other applicants show up on his/her list of applicants, my name does not appear. 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).

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

No. All reference letters must be submitted online through the GRFP Application Module. If you need assistance with the reference letter submission process, please contact us at info@nsfgrfp.org (mailto:info@nsfgrfp.org) or (866) 673-4737.

66. 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:

- a. **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.
- b. **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 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 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.
- c. **Check SPAM folders.** Ask your reference writer to check their SPAM or Trash folder to ensure that the email did not get sent to one of those folders inadvertently.
- d. **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 using the directions in step 2 above.

- e. 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.**

NOTIFICATIONS

67. When will applicants be notified of the results?

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

68. How are notifications sent?

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

69. I did not receive a notification. What should I do?

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

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

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

71. Can I appeal the results of my application if I was not awarded a Fellowship?

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

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

No.

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

There is no waiting list.

INFORMATION FOR REFERENCE WRITERS

74. 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 GRFP Reference Writer Module, check the following:

- a. **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 GRFP Application Module.
- b. **Check the temporary password.** Record the temporary password and type it into the module manually rather than copying and pasting.
- c. **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.

75. 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:

- a. **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 GRFP Application Module.
- b. **Check SPAM folders.** Check your SPAM or trash folder to ensure that the email did not get sent to one of those folders inadvertently.
- c. **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.

76. 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.

77. What are the formatting requirements for the letters of reference?

The letters must be written using standard 8.5" x 11" page size, 12-point Times New Roman font, and 1" margins on all sides. Letters must be single spaced or greater and character spacing should use normal (100%) single-line space option. **The letters should also be signed and submitted on professional letterhead, if available.**

78. 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 GRFP Module will not accept letters that are longer than 2 pages.**

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

No. All reference letters must be submitted online through the GRFP Module. If you need assistance with the reference letter submission process, please contact us at info@nsfgrfp.org (mailto:info@nsfgrfp.org) or (866) 673-4737

INFORMATION FOR REVIEWERS

80. How can I become an NSF GRFP reviewer?

Go to https://www.nsfgrfp.org/panelist_info <https://www.nsf.gov/cgi-bin/goodbye?https://www.nsfgrfp.org/panelist_info> to register your interest in serving as a reviewer for NSF GRFP. No obligation is assumed by registering. After 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 electronically in a reviewer orientation webinar in November or December; 3) review 30 or fewer applications; and 4) submit all reviews electronically by the review submission deadline.

81. 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. GRFP information has been updated, and it is important that all reviewers are aware of these updates.

82. 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 or if you are employed by the Federal Government.

83. How will I receive the flat rate fee?

An Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) is a 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.

National Science Foundation, 2415 Eisenhower Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, USA Tel: (703) 292-5111,
FIRS: (800) 877-8339 | TDD: (800) 281-8749