

NRSA Fellowship Application Checklist

Standard F31 Applicants

The following is a checklist and timeline of items you should complete in order to submit your NRSA Fellowship Application. There are two parts to this checklist: Part A. Completing the Application and Part B. Application Sign-Off. Please read through each part carefully.

Please help us improve this information. If you learn additional important issues or notice items that need expansion or clarification, please let us know.

A. Completing the Application

- Start the process at least six weeks ahead of the due date. If your research involves animals or especially human subjects, allow even more time.
- Download the most recent Program Announcement and "SF424 (R&R) Individual Fellowship Application Guide..." (links at <https://www.med.illinois.edu/msp/Students/Fellowships/>)
READ THESE CAREFULLY – the Application Guide is very long and detailed. Much of it is not pertinent to most applications, but it is important that you follow the instructions for those sections that are relevant very carefully. It's not as hard as it might first appear.
- The application is a fancy PDF file. Some information is entered directly into text boxes, while the proposal and training sections, literature cited, CVs, etc are attached or uploaded into the master file as separate PDF files. Reference letters are entered online by the referee in a separate process. Unfortunately, the grant is not assembled in its final version until it is submitted to grants.gov; this includes the addition of page numbers and creation of a table of contents. Until then, you can only print out the forms and then individually print out PDFs that you have created. This manually assembled document can be used for approvals (see below).
- Contact the Grants Administrator in your department. Your advisor will know who they are. Importantly, this individual should fill out most of the detailed stuff on the application and the "transmittal sheet" (see below). They can also attach your PDFs to the master file. A few Depts might not have such a person, in which case you can deal directly with the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Administration (OSPRA). Contacts for each Dept are listed at: <http://www.ospra.uiuc.edu/propcoordassignments.html> . Again, talk to your advisor. How do they submit grants to the NIH? You need to deal with the same person.
- Read the document "Tips for Preparing an NIH NRSA in Grants.gov" (link at <https://www.med.illinois.edu/msp/Students/Fellowships/>). This was prepared by OSPRA and is rather detailed. Again, your Grants Administrator should handle much of this.

- **IMPORTANTLY**, you must be registered in the “ERA Commons” in order to submit an application. This needs to be done only once in your lifetime. Follow the directions in the “Tips...” document above.
- **Letters of Recommendation:** To ensure that you receive personalized letters of recommendation, ask for your letters at least three weeks in advance (a month’s notice is better). It is also helpful to provide your letter writers with a resume as well as a summary of your research interests. They don’t need to see the proposal per se. The LORs are submitted electronically. Therefore, once an individual has agreed to write you a letter you must follow the instruction in section 5.4 of the “Application Guide”. You are allowed 3-5 LORs.

You must list the referees **BOTH** in Item 12 **AND** in the cover letter. You send each referee the following suggested information. Don’t forget to attach the reference form.

Thank you for agreeing to write me a letter of recommendation for my NRSA application. The due date for my application is [August 8]. The letter must be submitted via the eRA Commons at:

<https://commons.era.nih.gov/commons/reference/submitRefereeInformation.jsp>

Please note that you must create a single PDF file that includes the Fellowship Reference Form that is attached. The additional information you need is:

PI Commons User ID: [Your Commons ID]

PI Last Name: [Your last name]

Funding Opportunity Announcement Number: [The appropriate PA number, eg, PA-10-107]

Full instructions are pasted below:

Part B. Instructions for Referees:

In two pages or less, describe the applicant’s potential for a research career using the [Fellowship Reference Form](#), available in Microsoft Word. The Fellowship Reference Form **must** be used to evaluate the applicant. The form has three sections. One section is used to compare the applicant to other individuals of similar training and experience that you have known. The second section is used to enter your evaluation. The form will automatically expand to an additional page as you enter your evaluation. The third section is the Referee information section.

Forms may be submitted to the eRA Commons at any time after the Funding Opportunity Announcement opens and not later than 5 business days after the application receipt due date.

Fellowship Reference Form – two pages maximum. Complete the format page using word processing software and then convert to PDF using PDF generating software. Avoid scanning text attachments to convert to PDF since that causes problems for the agency handling the application. Additional tips for creating PDF files can be found at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/ElectronicReceipt/pdf_guidelines.htm.

Note reference letters can be submitted at any time prior to the receipt deadline. It is not necessary to wait until after the application is submitted before reference letters are submitted; the two submissions are distinct. After you have submitted your Reference Letter, both you and the applicant will receive a confirmation of receipt by email. Your email confirmation will include a Reference Letter Confirmation Number. The

Confirmation Number will be required when resubmitting reference forms. Please print the confirmation email for your records.

- Contact your grant administrator, who will provide a projection of tuition and fees for graduate school for the next six years. This will differ depending on your graduate program and whether you are in-state or out-of-state. List this amount in the appropriate place in the application (section D). You will also need to show this table to the Graduate College Fellowship Office (see below). Note that this projection is your best estimate and you are not limited by what you say here. The Univ actually bills the NIH later based on real costs.

B. Application Sign-Off

- Please keep in mind that several university offices and officials must sign off on your application and you must therefore allow sufficient time for each of these entities to act. But note that most of these individuals are not competent to judge the actual proposal. So although you need a “complete” application to get signatures, you can continue to make minor edits to the proposal and upload new PDF files into the master PDF UNTIL it is time to send it to OSPRA.
- The Grants Administrator in your Dept should provide and fill out a “Transmittal Form”. They will help you or instruct you in obtaining the appropriate signatures. You can also obtain a copy of a “Transmittal Form” from OSPRA (<http://www.ospra.uiuc.edu/forms.html>).
- For fellowship applications, the Grad College Fellowship Office also needs to sign off. This is not explicitly listed on the transmittal form; rather this is an “other signature if required.” The appropriate contact is

Bruce Prothe
Graduate Fellowship and Assistantship Coordinator
Graduate College
204 Coble Hall
Champaign, IL 61820
217 333-0036
Fax: 217 333-8019
gradfellowships@illinois.edu

You must allow at least 24 hours for the Grad College to approve the proposal. Their primary concern is the proposed tuition and fee charges over the life of the fellowship. So, you must provide the table given to you by your Grants Administrator. A cover letter is useful:

Fellowship Office
Grad College

I am applying for the NIH Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award F30 (or 31) Fellowship. The upcoming deadline is (August 8th). My proposal and transmittal form are attached. The information that you will need is as follows:

Residency: Out-of-state resident
Initial enrollment status: 8/2008
Terms fellowship will cover: Fall, Spring, Summer
Years: 06/01/2011-05/31/2016

A table listing projected tuition and fees for these years is attached. Please let me know if you need any other information. I may be reached at jdoe@illinois.edu.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,
Jane Doe

- Submit completed application that has been reviewed by the appropriate offices (with help from your Grants Administrator) to OSPRA (at least 48 hours in advance).

Good Luck!