



**National Science Foundation**  
4201 Wilson Boulevard  
Arlington, Virginia 22230

NSF 17-123

## Frequently Asked Questions FAQs for **NSF 16-588** Applicants to the Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP)

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### ELIGIBILITY FAQs

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2. When can I apply to GRFP?
3. I have a bachelor's degree, but no graduate study. 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?
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## **APPLICATION FAQs**

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## ELIGIBILITY FAQs

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

The eligibility requirements for the GRFP competition are contained in Section IV of the Program Solicitation ([NSF 16-588](#)).

### 2. When can I apply to GRFP?

You can apply both *before* you begin your graduate studies *and* as an early graduate student.

### 3. I have a bachelor's degree, but no graduate study. 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. If you are offered and accept the award, you would need to be ready to begin your graduate program in the fall after you are awarded the fellowship. If you are not offered an award and decide to delay graduate school, you can re-apply at this level again if you haven't yet enrolled in or completed any post-baccalaureate graduate courses. Applying before you begin your graduate studies does not affect your ability to apply once after you're enrolled in graduate school, as long as you continue to meet eligibility requirements.

### 4. 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 my research plans may change.

**Yes—undergraduate seniors and post baccalaureates who plan to begin graduate study in a GRFP-supported field by the fall after application are encouraged to apply.** Your research statement in your application provides evidence of your potential; it is not considered to be a proposal that you must carry out. If you are offered an award but your plans to attend graduate school change, you will not be able to defer the award, although you can decline it before the published acceptance deadline without any penalty.

### 5. I will be entering a two-year Master's program next year. Am I eligible to apply to GRFP?

Yes. GRFP supports both Master's and Ph.D. studies. A GRFP award is portable; Fellows who

receive a Master's degree may continue their fellowships in a Ph.D. program if they wish.

**6. 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 12 months of graduate study by the application deadline (you must also meet the other eligibility requirements; see the [GRFP Program Solicitation](#) for details). You will need to 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 next year. This one-time eligibility rule for graduate students was updated in 2016 (see [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf16050](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf16050) for the Dear Colleague letter and [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf16051](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf16051) for related FAQs).

**7. 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. But 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 wait until next year to apply (as a second year graduate student), as you will have completed more than 12 months of graduate study by then.

**8. 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 began your graduate study (whether as an undergraduate or post-baccalaureate student with no graduate training yet) do not count toward the one-time-in-graduate-school limit. However, as soon as you started graduate school you became subject to the new eligibility restriction, so you will need to be strategic about the timing of your application to a GRFP competition. 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 next 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 12 months of graduate study by the application deadline (you must also meet the other eligibility requirements; see the [GRFP Program Solicitation](#) for details).

**9. 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 application rule and are not eligible to re-apply, regardless of any field of study or program changes. Note that NSF counts all graduate

study (including outside of STEM fields, and regardless of the program or field of study) toward the eligibility limits on graduate study. The only exception is that graduate coursework that was required to maintain credentials in a profession such as teaching is not counted toward the limit.

10. **I am a second year graduate student and completed 12 months' worth of graduate study last year. However, before that I took several additional graduate courses in the summer after my bachelor's degree. Am I still eligible?**

No, you are not eligible. In this situation, you have completed more than the allowed amount of graduate study. GRFP applicants are allowed to have completed no more than 12 months of full-time graduate study or its equivalent (24 semester hours or 36 quarter hours of part-time study). This limit applies to your entire graduate education, not just your current program, so all prior graduate study completed after you complete your bachelor's degree counts towards the limit. Graduate coursework that was required to maintain credentials in a profession such as teaching is not counted toward the limit.

11. **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, typically submitted either in the first year or in the second year of graduate school. 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 12 months of graduate study by the application deadline (you must also meet the other eligibility requirements; see the [GRFP Program Solicitation](#) for details).

12. **How do the eligibility rules apply to individuals in joint BS/MS or BA/MA programs?**

Individuals in joint BS/MS programs are eligible to apply in the final year of their program or after completion of the program, as long as they have not completed any additional graduate credits after earning their joint degree. A joint degree program is defined as one in which the applicant is enrolled as both an undergraduate student and a master's student at the same time; this must be reflected in the transcript. Successive enrollment in bachelor's and master's programs does not count as a joint program.

13. **What if I applied in the final year of my joint BS/MS program? Under the new one-time rule for graduate student applicants, am I still eligible to apply in the first year of my Ph.D. program**

Yes. When you applied in the final year of your joint BS/MS program, you were still considered to be an undergraduate since you hadn't yet earned your BS degree. After your joint degree was awarded, you have one more chance to apply-but it must be at the beginning of the first year of your Ph.D. studies (before you complete any additional graduate credits). Note that having earned a joint BS/MS degree, you would *not* be eligible in the second year of your Ph.D. studies, as by then you will already have completed more than the allowable amount of graduate study.

**14. I have completed more than 12 months of graduate study. Are there any exceptional circumstances in which I could be eligible?**

Possibly. The [GRFP Program Solicitation](#) states that applicants who have completed more than 12 months of graduate study are eligible if they have had an interruption in graduate study of at least two consecutive years directly prior to November 1 of the application year (as well as having completed no additional graduate study by August 1 of the application year). This means that you cannot already be enrolled in graduate school at the time you apply to GRFP after the interruption. You must address the reasons for the interruption in graduate study in your *Personal, Relevant Background and Future Goals Statement*

**15. 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 graduate degree makes you ineligible, unless it was part of a joint bachelor's/master's program or unless you qualify with an interruption in your graduate study of at least 2 years immediately prior to your application, and are not currently enrolled in graduate school (see FAQ #14, above).

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

Having a graduate degree makes most individuals ineligible to apply to GRFP. As an enrolled first-year graduate student, you could be eligible to apply *only* if your master's degree was completed as part of a joint baccalaureate-master's program and you have not completed any subsequent graduate study since then. If you had an interruption in graduate training, you would *not* be eligible if you are already enrolled again in graduate school (see FAQ #14, above).

**17. I have been working for several years since getting my Ph.D., 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, you are not eligible. As described in the [GRFP Program Solicitation](#), the Graduate Research Fellowship is intended for students early in their graduate education. Having earned the highest terminal degree in a field of study (typically, a Ph.D.) makes you ineligible for the GRFP competition

**18. 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 post-baccalaureate graduate or professional study counts towards the limit, regardless of field; this includes study in non-NSF-supported fields as well as in STEM fields. The only exception is graduate study required to establish or maintain professional credentials for your job (but *not* to prepare for a job not yet held). This means that any graduate or professional study that you completed while working, that was for the specific purpose of establishing or maintaining a professional credential, would not be included in the 12-month limit

**19. I have completed more than 24 semester hours or 36 quarter hours of graduate study. Does that mean I am ineligible?**

It would depend on whether you are (and were) a part-time or full-time student. The credit hour limit applies only to part-time students and students who completed both part-time and full-time graduate-level study. If you have only been a full-time graduate student, your eligibility would be based on how much time you spent in graduate school, rather than how many credits you completed (so taking an over-load of classes while enrolled full-time within a 12-month period would not make you ineligible). A full-time student who started their graduate education in the fall of the year before the application deadline year would still be within the limit, even if they completed more than 24 semester credits or 36 quarter credits during that academic year.

**20. I took some graduate-level courses as an undergraduate. Do those count towards the 12-month limit?**

No. Any graduate-level courses taken as an undergraduate (before you have earned any bachelor's degree) do not count towards the limit of allowed graduate study. Only graduate-level courses taken after you completed your undergraduate degree would count (unless you were in a joint baccalaureate-master's program, which have their own set of eligibility requirements - see FAQs #12 and 13 regarding joint BA/MA and BS/MS programs

**21. 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?**

Yes. All post-baccalaureate graduate-level study completed outside a degree program counts towards the limit of allowed graduate study. Individuals who completed both part-time, non-degree graduate-level coursework and full-time graduate study would be expected to have completed no more than 24 semester credits or 36 quarter credits of graduate study as of August 1 of the application year.

**22. If I apply for the GRFP this year and I am not offered an award, can I re-apply?**

It depends: Yes (if you are an undergraduate this year, or if you have already earned your bachelor's degree but have not yet enrolled in any post-baccalaureate graduate studies as of this year). Applications prior to any graduate enrollment do not affect your ability to apply once later in graduate school. Those who are enrolled in graduate school may apply to GRFP only once (see [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf16050](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf16050) for the Dear Colleague letter and [https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub\\_summ.jsp?ods\\_key=nsf16051](https://www.nsf.gov/publications/pub_summ.jsp?ods_key=nsf16051) for related FAQs). Applications that are not reviewed by GRFP (i.e., are withdrawn before review or are returned without review) do not count toward the one-application limit for graduate students, submitted either in their first year or in their second year of graduate school.

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

The [GRFP Program Solicitation](#) contains the official guidance regarding eligible fields and



programs of study; see Section IV.3. *Field of Study*.

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

If you are in a clinical psychology program, you may be eligible as long as your proposed graduate study is not focused on clinical practice and you are doing basic research on a topic or topics that are not described in the Program Solicitation as being ineligible. Regarding the eligibility of clinical areas of study, Section IV.3 of the Program Solicitation states:

"Individuals are not eligible to apply if they will be enrolled in an area of graduate study focused on clinical practice, for example, counseling, social work, as well as patient-oriented research, epidemiological and medical behavioral studies, outcomes research and health services research. Ineligible clinical studies include 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. Graduate study focused on community and other population-based medical intervention trials are also ineligible."

**25. 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](#).

**26. 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](#), 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.

**27. 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?**

No. According to the [GRFP Program Solicitation](#), all graduate, post-baccalaureate and professional study is counted towards the allowed 12 months of graduate study, including all full-time and part-time master's and doctoral degree programs, and non-degree graduate-level and professional coursework. The one exception is for graduate coursework required to establish or maintain credentials in a profession such as teaching; such coursework is not included in the 12-month limit."

**28. Who is NOT eligible to apply to the GRFP?**

If you are not a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or permanent resident at the time of application, you are ineligible. Foreign nationals who are in the U.S. on a student visa are not eligible to apply.

If you have received and accepted a GRFP award, you cannot apply for a second GRFP award.

If you did not notify NSF of your intention to accept or decline the fellowship by the published deadline for accepting the fellowship, you are not eligible to apply again for a GRFP award.

If you plan to pursue a joint science-professional degree program (such as an MD/Ph.D. or JD/Ph.D.), you are ineligible for the GRFP, even if you are proposing to use the GRFP only for the Ph.D. part of your 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 for a Graduate Research Fellowship.

### **Additional Questions About Eligibility**

The official GRFP eligibility guidelines are published in the [GRFP Program Solicitation](#). Applicants are strongly encouraged to read them carefully.

Please 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 FAQs**

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### **29. What are NSF's Merit Review Criteria for the GRFP?**

The Merit Review Criteria for the GRFP are Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts. Please see Section VI of the current [GRFP Program Solicitation](#) for more information.

### **30. What is the Broader Impacts criterion?**

Reviewers may consider the following with respect to the **Broader Impacts Criterion**: the potential of the applicant to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes based on a holistic review of the complete application, including personal experiences, professional experiences, educational experiences and future plans. Broader impacts can be achieved through your research, research-related, and non-research activities and achievements, including any that broaden participation in STEM and STEM education.

### **31. 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**: the potential of the applicant to advance knowledge based on a holistic review of the complete application, including the Personal, Relevant Background, and Future Goals Statement, Graduate Research Plan Statement, strength of the academic record, description of previous research experience or publication/presentations, and references.

Holistic review is a flexible, individualized way of assessing an applicant's interests and competencies by which balanced consideration is given to experiences, attributes, and academic

achievements and, when considered in combination, how the applicant has demonstrated potential for significant research achievements in STEM and STEM education.

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

There is no specific limit on how much weight to give each criterion in your statements, but it is important to demonstrate both criteria as thoroughly as possible in both statements. Prepare both statements so that the reviewers can easily access and evaluate the evidence of your Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts.

## TRANSCRIPT FAQs

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

You may upload either official or unofficial transcripts, as long as the unofficial transcript meets the requirements described in the [GRFP Solicitation](#). Applicants are encouraged to redact sensitive personally identifiable information (date of birth, social security number) from the transcripts before uploading

**34. 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. Applicants are encouraged to redact sensitive personally identifiable information (date of birth, social security number) from the transcripts before uploading.

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

The FastLane GRFP application requires transcripts to be uploaded for all institutions listed on 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 you registered for, an enrollment verification document, etc. It may be helpful if the document you upload shows what courses you are taking in the fall, even though there would be no grades, since it gives reviewers some information about your coursework.

**36. 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 FastLane. In this case, you would need to obtain a copy of your transcript and upload it. Applicants are encouraged to redact sensitive personally identifiable information (date of birth, social security number) from the transcripts before uploading.

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

No, the FastLane module does not accept password-protected or similarly encrypted PDFs. If your school's electronic transcripts are encrypted, we suggest either obtaining an unencrypted unofficial electronic transcript, or scanning a hard copy of your transcript and uploading the scan. Applicants are encouraged to redact sensitive personally identifiable information (date of birth, social security number) from the transcripts before uploading.

**38. 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 FastLane. If you receive an error, please print a copy of the transcript and scan to PDF prior to uploading. We strongly suggest that you check to make sure that your transcript has been uploaded properly.

**39. 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**

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**40. Are GRE scores required for the GRFP application?**

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

**41. 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 FastLane GRFP module by the application deadline. Any other information that is submitted would be marked as extraneous and will not be considered in the review process.

From the Program Solicitation: "Applicants should not send extraneous information or materials such as manuscripts, resumes, medical reports, or news clippings. These items will not be reviewed with an application. No additional information may be provided by links to web pages within the application, except as part of citations in the References Cited section." Reviewers are instructed to evaluate only the evidence provided within the application.

**42. Can I obtain copies of past successful applications or statements from previously awarded**

## applications?

No. Content from past applications is not available from NSF's GRFP.

### 43. I am in an interdisciplinary field of study, and so will select multiple fields for my application. Will my application be reviewed by reviewers drawn from these multiple fields?

No. Your application will be assigned for review according to the primary field of study that you select. Check the list of prospective panels and their component fields of study at [https://www.nsfgrfp.org/applicants/application\\_components/choosing\\_primary\\_field](https://www.nsfgrfp.org/applicants/application_components/choosing_primary_field) and choose as your first field the one that is within the panel you consider most compatible with your research interests. Your reviewers will be drawn from the experts within that panel. You can consult your advisor(s) for input about this decision.

## STATEMENT FORMATTING FAQS

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### 44. 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 or Computer Modern (LaTeX) font, 1" margins on all sides, and must be single spaced or greater. Only references, footnotes, and figure captions may be a smaller font, no less than 10-point Times New Roman. Failure to follow any of these guidelines will result in an application being returned without review. Applications that are not reviewed by GRFP (i.e., are withdrawn before review or are returned without review) do not count toward the one-application limit for graduate students, submitted either in their first year or in their second year of graduate school.

### 45. 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.

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

No, it is not required to put your name or any other identifying information on the statements.

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

Applicants do not need to add their name or any other identifying information to their statements. Therefore, it is not necessary to fit your name, the statement title, or page numbers on the statements, either within or outside the margins. However, it is fine to submit an application with your name or similar identifying information in the 1" margins, as long as the identifying information does not contain meaningful statement content.

**48. 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.

**49. 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.

**50. 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.

**51. When I upload my statement in FastLane, 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.

**52. Can I use "exactly 12 point" line spacing?**

No, you should *not* use "exactly 12 point" line spacing. The Program Solicitation states that the statements must be written using spacing that is single spaced or greater line. The single-spaced setting on word processors has a small amount of vertical space that acts as a visual cushion between the lines. Exactly 12-point spacing removes this visual cushion, resulting in a more condensed page than one using the single-spaced setting. Therefore, applicants should not use exactly 12 point line spacing.

**53. I am using LaTeX to prepare my statements. Is there anything special I need to do?**

If you are using LaTeX for your statements, you can use Computer Modern or Times New Roman font. Please be aware that the default font size for LaTeX documents is 10 point font, so be sure to specify that the document's font size should be 12 point. (10-point font is acceptable for references and figure captions). As a general rule, statements prepared in LaTeX must follow the same formatting requirements as statements prepared with any word processor.

**54. When I check my statement in FastLane, the formatting is not the same as the document I uploaded and now looks like it does not comply with the guidelines. Does this mean my**

### **application will be returned without review?**

Possibly. FastLane provides applicants with the opportunity to preview their statements after uploading them, to make sure that everything uploaded correctly. The status of applications will be based on the contents as submitted in FastLane. Therefore, if the version that is uploaded in FastLane does not comply with the formatting requirements, it may be returned without review. For this reason, we strongly encourage applicants to upload their statements and preview them well in advance of the application deadlines, in case they experience issues during the PDF upload process.

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

No. You must submit your GRFP application by the deadline time; 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 [NSF 16-588](#) for application deadlines). Note: You can track your reference letters' submission (deadline for letters: first Thursday in November, 5 p.m. Eastern Time).

## **REFERENCE LETTER FAQs**

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

You can track the submission status of reference letters using FastLane. Once you log into your FastLane account, click "Check Application Package Status" under the Application Package Optional Task List.

### **57. What happens if I have more than three reference letters submitted?**

On the GRFP application, 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 letters that you listed as the three highest priority ones will be included in your application package for review.

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

Yes, you may change the priority rankings of your references by logging into your FastLane application, and selecting "Manage References" under the Application Package Optional Task List. You can change priority rankings even if a reference letter has already been submitted, up until the time your application is due.

### **59. 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 his/her 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).

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

No. All reference letters must be submitted online through FastLane. 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

**61. 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:

1. **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.
2. **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 FastLane 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 on your GRFP homepage). 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.
3. **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.
4. **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.

**62. If only two of my reference letters are received, can my application still be reviewed?**

Yes, you may keep your application in the competition even if it has only two letters; this is a practical option if you have not started graduate school yet, or if this is your last chance to apply. Alternatively, you may decide to withdraw your application; this option is useful in case you will still be eligible next year and would like to preserve your one-time chance to apply in graduate school until then. Note: You can track your reference letters' submission online (the reference writers' deadline is the first Thursday in November, 5 p.m. Eastern Time).

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## NOTIFICATION FAQs



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

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

**64. How are notifications sent?**

Notifications are sent via email to the email address registered in FastLane.

**65. 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 FastLane GRFP application, and include your name, 10-digit applicant ID number, and primary mailing address

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

The notification email will direct applicants to log in to FastLane in order to download their reviews. Reviews are available on FastLane for a limited time. The reviews in FastLane are the only available feedback for GRFP applications.

**67. Can I appeal the results of my application if I was not awarded a fellowship?**

No. Per NSF policy ([Proposal and Awards Policies and Procedures Guide](#), CH IV), there is no reconsideration for fellowship award decisions.

**68. Whom should I contact to discuss my ideas for a CRII proposal to be sure CISE supports the topic area?**

If you believe there is an issue with the content of one of your reviews, please email [info@nsfgrfp.org](mailto:info@nsfgrfp.org) with details of the possible issue.

**69. Does NSF make any additional awards after the announcements in early April?**

If applicants who are recommended for awards decline their offers and funds are available, NSF may offer awards to some applicants who received honorable mention in the early April announcement.

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

There is no waiting list for GRFP awards. However, if applicants who are recommended for awards decline their offers and funds are available, NSF may offer awards to some applicants who received honorable mention. Any such decisions are based on the submitted applications and no further information is required from applicants.

## REFERENCE WRITERS' FAQS

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### 71. I am unable to login using the Temporary Password I received via email.

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

1. **Check your email address.** Check to confirm you are using the same email address provided by the applicant when attempting to login. 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 FastLane GRFP application module.
2. **Check the temporary password.** Record the temporary password and type it into FastLane manually rather than copying and pasting.
3. **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.

### 72. 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:

1. **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 FastLane GRFP application module.
2. **Check SPAM folders.** Check your SPAM or trash folder to ensure that the email did not get sent to one of those folders inadvertently.
3. **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

### 73. 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.

**74. What are the formatting requirements for the letters of reference?**

Letters of reference are limited to a maximum of 2 pages in length. **Please note that the FastLane module will not accept letters that are longer than 2 pages.** The letters must be written using standard 8.5" x 11" page size, 12-point, Times New Roman font or Computer Modern (LaTeX) font, 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.**

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

Letters of reference are limited to a maximum of 2 pages in length. **Please note that the FastLane module will not accept letters that are longer than 2 pages.**

## PANELISTS' FAQs

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**76. How can I become a GRFP panelist?**

Go to [https://www.nsfgrfp.org/panelist\\_info](https://www.nsfgrfp.org/panelist_info) to register your interest in serving as a GRFP panelist. No obligation is assumed by registering. After GRFP assesses the needs for the upcoming competition, invitations are issued to prospective panelists in September or October, along with information about specific panel dates. As an accepted panelist, you will be expected to participate electronically in an orientation webinar in November, and to review 30 or fewer applications in December.

**77. I have served as a GRFP panelist before. Do I need to view the orientation webinar again?**

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

**78. What is the Flat Rate Fee?**

The Flat Rate Fee is a fee paid to panelists for participation in the virtual panel sessions (4 hour minimum duration). Panelists will receive the fee for each session they participate in for at least four hours. If a panelist is unable to attend one of the panel sessions, or is unable to join for the four hour duration, he or she is not eligible to receive the flat-rate fee for that session. You are not eligible to receive the Flat Rate Fee if you are not a U.S. citizen or if you are employed by the Federal Government.

**79. 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 around December with information on

how to register to receive reimbursement.

**80. Where will the panel review meetings be held?**

All GRFP panel meetings will take place online, using WebEx. Panelists will be sent detailed instructions for testing and using WebEx, and for accessing the online sessions prior to the panels convening. There is no option to travel to NSF and participate on-site.

**81. What technology do I need to participate in the panel meetings?**

Panelists will need a computer with an Internet connection to be able to access the applications and participate in the virtual sessions. Panelists should also have a land-line phone and use a wired internet connection instead of wireless for participation in the virtual panel sessions.