



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
2415 EISENHOWER AVENUE  
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 18-108

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Applicants to the **NSF 18-573** 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 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 an award?
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.
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21. 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?
22. 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?
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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 18-573](#)).

**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 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 once 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 an award?**

No. 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.

**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.**

Undergraduate seniors and post baccalaureates who plan to enter graduate school in an eligible field by the coming fall are encouraged to apply; in fact, most applicants at this level do not yet know where they will be attending graduate school. Your research statement in your application is not considered to be a proposal that you are obliged to carry out, but provides evidence about your potential. Note also that while Fellows cannot change field of study in the first year of their award, the field of study name in the GRFP application need not match the name of the graduate program.

**6. What if I am offered an award, but I change my mind and decide to put off enrolling in graduate school? Can I defer using the award?**

No. You cannot defer the award unless you are approved by your graduate institution and NSF for military deferral or medical deferral. However, you could decline an offered award before the published acceptance deadline without any penalty and apply again

later if you are still eligible.

**7. I will be entering a two-year master's program next year. Am I eligible to apply to GRFP?**

Yes. You can use a GRFP award to fund your master's degree if it is a research-based program. GRFP supports research-based 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.

**8. 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 by August 1 of the application year (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.

**9. 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 one academic year of graduate study by then.

**10. 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 yet) 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 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. 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 by August 1 of the application year and meet the other eligibility requirements outlined in the [GRFP Program Solicitation](#).

**11. 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. NSF counts all graduate study, including outside of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields regardless of the program or field of study, toward the eligibility limits on graduate study.

**12. I am a second year graduate student and completed one academic year 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?**

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.

**13. 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 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 one academic year while enrolled in a degree-granting graduate program as of August 1 of the year the application is submitted.

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

Individuals in this category applying in the 2019 competition (Fall 2018 deadline) will have one more opportunity to apply as first-year doctoral students in the 2020 competition (Fall 2019 deadline). Effective with the 2020 competition (Fall 2019 deadline), individuals pursuing a master's degree simultaneously with the bachelor's degree (joint bachelor's-master's degree) will be considered to be graduate students

and will be limited to one application to GRFP; they will not be eligible to apply again as a doctoral degree student.

15. **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?**

Yes, but only in the 2019 competition (Fall 2018 deadline). Effective with the 2020 competition (Fall 2019 deadline), individuals who have earned a joint bachelor's-master's degree will not be eligible to apply again as a doctoral degree student.

16. **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](#) for detailed eligibility requirements.

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

For the 2019 competition (Fall 2018) only, you are eligible to apply as a first-year doctoral student. Effective with the 2020 competition (Fall 2019 deadline), your joint degree will be counted as a master's degree, so you would be ineligible unless you meet the interruption category described above.

18. **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.

19. **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 and meet the other eligibility requirements outlined in the [GRFP Program](#)

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

**20. 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 master's degree makes you ineligible to apply to GRFP unless it was followed by a continuous interruption in graduate study of two years or longer; in this case, you would *not* be eligible because you are already enrolled again in graduate school.

**21. 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 doctoral degree) makes you ineligible for the GRFP competition.

**22. 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.

**23. 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.

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

Yes, if when you apply, you have not yet enrolled in any degree-granting graduate program. Applications prior to enrolling in graduate school do not affect your ability to apply once later 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, so first year graduate students in this situation may still be eligible to apply in their second year of graduate school.

**25. 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.

**26. 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, 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 and other population-based medical intervention trials are also ineligible."

**27. 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](#).

**28. 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.

**29. 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.

**30. 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 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 already applied before while enrolled in a degree-granting graduate program are not eligible.

Individuals who have earned a doctoral degree are not eligible.

Individuals who are a current NSF employee are not eligible.

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](#). 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

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### 31. 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](#) and in the *NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG)* Chapter III.A

### **32. 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**:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to:
  - a. Advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
  - b. Benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?
2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
3. 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?
4. How well qualified is the individual, team, or organization to conduct the proposed activities
5. Are there adequate resources available to the PI (either at the home organization or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

### **33. 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 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.

### **34. 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

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### **35. 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.

### **36. 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.

### **37. 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.

### **38. 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.

**39. 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.

**40. 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.

**41. 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**

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

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

**43. 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.

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

No.

**45. I am in an interdisciplinary field of study and 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 first field of study that you select. Check the [list of prospective panels and their component fields](#) of study 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.

**46. 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 18-573](#) for application deadlines). Note: You can track your reference letters' submission (see [NSF 18-573](#) for the letter deadline).

## STATEMENT FORMATTING

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**47. 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. 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 Nov. 15 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

**48. 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.

**49. 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.

**50. 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.

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

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

**52. 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.

**53. 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 Times New Roman font for references, and in addition, you may decide to abbreviate the reference information.

**54. 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.

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

No. You **may not** use "exactly 12 point" line spacing. The [GRFP Program Solicitation](#) states that the statements must be written using spacing that is single spaced or greater line spacing.

56. **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.

## REFERENCE LETTERS

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57. **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.

58. **What happens if more than three of my reference letters are 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 will be included in your application package for review.

59. **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.

60. **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).

**61. 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

**62. 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.

**63. 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 (see [NSF 18-573](#) for letter deadlines).

## NOTIFICATIONS

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### 64. **When will applicants be notified of the results?**

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

### 65. **How are notifications sent?**

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

### 66. **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.

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

The reviews in FastLane are the only available feedback for GRFP applications. 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.

### 68. **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.

### 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.

## INFORMATION FOR REFERENCE WRITERS

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### 71. 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 FastLane GRFP Reference Writer Module, check the following:

1. **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 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?**

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.**

**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.**

**76. 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.

## **INFORMATION FOR PANELISTS**

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**77. 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 October and November, along with information about specific panel dates. As an accepted panelist, you will be expected to: 1) participate electronically in an orientation webinar in November or December; 2) review 30 or fewer applications; and 3) participate in a virtual panel meeting in January or February.

**78. 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.

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

The flat rate fee is a fee paid to panelists for costs associated with participation in the

virtual panel sessions (4.5 hour minimum duration). Panelists will receive the fee for each panel day in which they participate for at least 4.5 hours. If a panelist is unable to attend one of the panel sessions, or is unable to join for the 4.5 hour minimum 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. The flat rate fee is currently set at \$200 per panel day.

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

Via an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), which is a direct deposit to your bank account using the NSF Guest Travel and Reimbursement System. An email will be sent in December with information on how to register to receive reimbursement.

**81. Where and when will the panel review meetings be held?**

All GRFP panel meetings will take place online in January or February, using WebEx. Your panel will take one or two days. Panelists will be sent detailed instructions about their assigned panel, about 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.

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

Panelists will need a computer with an Internet connection and a webcam 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.