Graduate Student Government
University of Maine
Office of the Grants Officer

Instructions to Grant Readers

Interpretation of Applications

As you read through the applications, keep an open mind. **If you recognize someone's research and feel you cannot be impartial, contact us, and we will make arrangements for the application in question.** *Please note that grant applicants in the Spring cycle may request funding for the current fall, reimbursement for monies spent during the past fall semester, or forward one semester for events that occur early in the summer 2017 semester prior to the next grant cycle due date (typically late September or early October).*

How to read your grants

The recommended method for reading grants is to skim all of the grants once without worrying about scoring them. After you do this, then go back through and carefully read and score them by section. That means you would go through all of the grants reading and scoring only the abstract. Then you would go through them again reading and scoring only the budget, and then the budget explanation. You will find that this results in faster and more consistent scoring.

Consistency in Scoring

Each packet includes a scoring sheet based on the criteria outlined in the application, and space is provided for comments. You may award all or only partial points for many categories as you deem appropriate, and it is essential that you are consistent with your awards and penalties in scoring.

In scoring applicants, focus on the quality of the statement rather than presence or absence of a statement. You will likely be reviewing grants that are outside of your field. Please keep your personal opinions of whether you think the writer's work is "important", and instead focus on how well the research purpose is communicated. There is also a 1-2-3 ranking that you can use to compare applications overall to each other. Some readers felt that the end scores didn't exactly match who they thought were the best applicants so this can help you remember which applications really struck you as strong.

The scoring process is driven by the rubric. **If you find yourself scoring grants as either a 90 or 100, that means you are probably not reading the grants closely enough.** Your grading scale, at least, should be from 70-100, but don't feel that scoring 60-90 is too harsh. If you are having trouble with this, please contact the grants officer for guidance. Please refer to the application instructions on our website for more details about what should be present in each section.

Giving Feedback

Record the score for each section of the rubric provided. Please take a moment to include constructive comments about the application, remember that the grant process is a learning experience for the applicant. Your comments will provide guidance for improvement in future applications. Include the whys and the whats, speak strongly and forcefully if you feel the need but please be constructive with your comments. Many of you have applied for grants this cycle, so do not write anything that you wouldn't want written in your application. Try and pair a criticism with a compliment for something that was done well in the application.

Anonymity of Readers and Applicants

Do not discuss specific grants with anyone, including other readers. Readers' identity will not be disclosed to any applicants to ensure anonymity. It is important that each applicant receives individual evaluations. If you are concerned someone may recognize your handwriting and are uncomfortable with this, contact the grants officer and we will send you digit copies of all the score sheets.

Group Discussion

It is best to record scores in pencil. Keep the applications in the order you receive them, as we will discuss them in this sequence. (If they become disarrayed you can follow the proposal numbers to order them again.) Grant readers in each category will meet as a group to discuss scores in about 2-3 weeks. Bring your grant packages and

score sheets. We will review each application as a group and discuss any concerns. You will have the opportunity to compare your criteria with others in your reading group and may adjust scores as necessary.

Alert the Grants Officer of any concerns and they will spread the information to other readers.

Breakdown in Scoring

GSG Grants are evaluated via a rubric and scores are out of 100 points. The rubric includes four sections: Abstract, Budget, Budget Explanation, and Overall Directions.

Abstract (40 points):
- Description of Research or Concentration (10 points): This includes a description of the applicant's research or concentration. Please evaluate the quality of the statement. Graduate students at all states of their studies in a wide range of programs apply for GSG Grants, so please keep this in mind when evaluating grants.
- Proposed Use of Funds (5 points): Includes a description of how the applicant intends to utilize their funds. **This section is separate from the budget and budget explanations.** The applicant should state in their abstract what they will be spending their grant monies on and why it is essential for the completion of their studies.
- Significance to the Field (5 points): A description of why the work supported by this grant is significant to the applicant's field; ie, how the field will be moved forward, implications, etc.
- Significance to the University of Maine and/or the State of Maine (5 points): A description of how the applicant's work is significant to the University and/or the State.
- Cohesiveness and Style (10 points): This is an evaluation of how well the abstract flows, how logically the paragraphs fit together, etc. Essentially, this is an evaluation of how well the applicant wrote their abstract and explained their work.
- Grammar and Spelling (5 points): Please evaluate the applicant on spelling and grammar throughout the abstract. Be careful not to confuse spelling mistakes with jargon (see below)!
- *Deduction-Technical Jargon or Colloquial Language (Up to -4):* This is the place to deduct 1-4 points from applications that include technical jargon or colloquial language. Folks that include a technical term but then define it in laymen's terms for a general, educated audience shouldn't automatically lose points. Keep in mind that many fields have standard terms that are not easily replaced. See the examples of jargon and colloquial language on the GSG Grants website for more details.

Budget (20 Points):
- Easy to Read and Professional Format (10 points): An evaluation of the layout of the budget spreadsheet. This spreadsheet should be easy to read and look professional. Utilizing very light gray shading or bold print helps achieve this. Landscaped budgets are okay.
- Minimum of 3 Price Quotes *or Rationale Provided in the Budget Explanation (5 points):* For items such as hotels, air and/or bus travel, or supplies, three price quotes should be provided. Meals and car travel **DO NOT NEED** three price quotes because of the per diem and mileage rates. **Reimbursement grants do not require 3 price quotes.**
- Followed Pricing Guidelines (5 points): Mileage and/or Per Diem Rates: Mileage and per diem rates according to the UM system should be strictly applied when asking to pay for meals or car transportation.

- *Deduction- Calculation Errors (Up to -4):* If you find that certain numbers don't match up between columns, between budget and budget explanation, or mathematical errors in the spreadsheet, this is where you deduct.

Budget Explanation (25 points):
- Description of Grant Utilization (10 points): This is not the same as the proposed use of funds in the abstract. The applicant should include, in list form, what items the grant will cover with an explanation as to why these particular items were chosen.
- Most Economical Choice and Rationale Provided (10 points): Applicants should either choose the most economical choice and/or provide rationale behind their choices. If they do not choose the least expensive option, they should explain why the most economical choice is illogical. **Mileage or per diem rates are not included here.**
- Additional Funding Explored (5 points): The beginning or end of this section should include alternate sources of funding. We require and encourage applicants to seek alternate options (advisor as an alternative source for the entire grant **does not count**!).
- *Deduction- Weak or Illogical Spending Rationales (Up to -4):* If someone's budget explanation is weak or illogical, this is where to take off points.

Overall Directions (15 points):

This section is completed by the Grants Officer prior to distributing grants to readers. You should leave this section alone unless you find significant header, margin, or font errors while reading that were not caught by the Grants Officer. Right versus left-hand alignment is not concretely specified in the directions, so don't take off for that. There are some errors that only the Grants Officer is aware of because they involve file names, file formatting, or general failures to follow directions. Significant errors that were caught later may be modified in the final Overall Directions scores at the review session.
- Header on all pages (5 points): Semester, Funding Category, and ID Number in Correct Format: Aligned on the right hand side, 12 point font. **Example: 2017 Spring, Degree Related, 12345.**
- Double spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font, Times New Roman (5 points): Self-explanatory. Left hand or justified alignment throughout is permissible. Budget table is subject to these!
- Correct File Name and Format (PDF) and All Materials Included (receipts and sections) (5 points): Those applying for true reimbursement should have all original receipts. Reimbursement will be clarified in the instructions. This also includes Correct Sections. All application packages should be no more than 5 pages and in PDF format. **Correct File name Example: 2017Spring_DR_12345.**
- *Deduction- Failure to Follow Directions; Names or Identifiers on Application (Up to -9):* Following directions deductions include, but are not limited to: sections exceeding page limits, incorrect sections, errors in Zoho portion of the application, usage of full Maine Street ID number, and submitting Reimbursement materials in the same PDF as the abstract, budget, and budget explanation.