

# **Key aspects for a successful fellowship grant Reviewers' Perspective**

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# F30/31/32 Funding Mechanisms

- F30:** Ruth L. Kirschstein Individual Predoctoral NRSA for MD/PhD and other Dual Degree Fellowships (DO/PhD, DDS/PhD, and DVM/PhD)
- F31:** Ruth L. Kirschstein Predoctoral individual National Research Service Award (NRSA)
- F32:** Ruth L. Kirschstein Postdoctoral individual NRSA

# SCORED REVIEW CRITERIA

## 1. Fellowship Applicant:

### a. Statement about career goal:

- Should be in applicant's Biosketch (Research, Teaching, Biotech industry etc).
- Why you picked your sponsor's laboratory for your proposed training?

### b. Academic qualification:

- Grades in undergraduate and graduate level courses
- GRE/MCAT scores (F30/F31)
- Awards and fellowships during undergraduate and graduate studies
- Research experience during undergraduate studies or even during high school (F30/F31)
- Poster presentation in regional, national, international conferences
- Publications in peer reviewed journals (F30/F31; Even middle author publications help)
- Progress in your current project (Is project now well-defined, F30/F31)  
(Preliminary data is not required but anything which supports your current project is always helpful)

### Additional criteria for F32

- Publications from undergraduate work (Number of publications and quality of journals)
- Is post-doctoral training sufficiently different from your graduate training?
- Define your career goals in sufficient detail – Research, Industry, Teaching, .....?
- How many years you have been as post-doc and the productivity?

# SCORED REVIEW CRITERIA

## 1. Fellowship Applicant:

### c. Reference letters:

- Your dissertation committee (F30/F31) should be formed before applying for fellowship
- Letters from committee members or from those with whom you have closely worked.
- Reference letters should be specific to candidate's strength and weaknesses and potential to become a successful scientist.

# SCORED REVIEW CRITERIA

## 2. Sponsors, Collaborators, and Consultants:

**Sponsor**: Reputation of the sponsor in his/her area of research- Publications/funding history

**Mentoring history**: Graduate and post-doctoral fellows previously trained by the mentor?  
How previously trained students and post-doctoral fellows have moved in their career?  
If your sponsor is a new investigator, include an experienced/established investigator as co-sponsor.

**Funding**: Does the sponsor has funding to support the candidate's research training?  
There should be enough funding to support your research training because F mechanism does not provide funds for your research work.

**Co-sponsor**: Having co-sponsor/collaborators/consultants is always plus.  
Integrate their role in your training plan.

**Mentoring Committee**: Although not common but it is good to have a committee even for post-doctoral fellows (F32) which can monitor candidate's progress and guide in his/her career path.

# SCORED REVIEW CRITERIA

## 3. Research Training Plan:

- Well-defined specific aims. Highlight significance and impact of the proposed research
- Clearly written hypotheses and include potential pitfalls and alternative approaches
- **Don't Copy and Paste** your mentor's R01 grant even though it has some overlap
- Research should be innovative but should not be too ambitious
- Get your research plan thoroughly reviewed by your mentor.  
(Too many typos and grammatical errors reflect weakness in mentorship)
- Research training should be within the expertise of sponsor(s) and/or collaborator(s)
- Explain clearly what new assays and technologies will be learnt during the fellowship
- Can you get quality publications and degree (F30/F31) from the proposed research?

### Additional criteria for F32

- Is your proposed research training sufficiently novel and thorough that it will lead you to an independent faculty position in academic institution?

# SCORED REVIEW CRITERIA

## 4. Training Potential:

- Will new technical skills and experimental design/approaches beyond what is already learnt?
- Do training activities match candidate's stated career goals?
- Does individualized training addresses current weaknesses and career development for the candidate
- Do the proposed research and other training activities provide sufficient individual and supervised experiences that will develop her/his research skills for future independent career?

### Important points to include in training part of the application:

- Lab environment (Number of students and post-docs, journal clubs etc.)
- New skills and techniques during the fellowship training.
- Conferences and presentations (~2 conferences per year; poster presentation, scientific networking)
- Mentoring opportunities (Train junior researchers and high school students)
- Teaching (Good to have opportunities for class-room teaching or TA position)
- Development of manuscripts and grants writing skills
- Getting involved in writing IACUC and IBC protocols

# SCORED REVIEW CRITERIA

## 5. Institutional Environment & Commitment to Training:

- Reputation of the institution for graduate and undergraduate training
- Seminars at the host institution
- Equipment/Facility in sponsor's and collaborators' laboratory
- Potential for collaboration within and outside the institution
- Core facilities at the institution to support candidate's research
- Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. It is now required to have this information. (Quite helpful in professional development and resolution of COI in some situations)



# ADDITIONAL REVIEW CRITERIA

## 1. Protections of human subjects

## 2. Vertebrate animals

- Same as for R series applications
- Insufficient details can affect chances of your success

## ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Responsible conduct of Research (RCR)

- Format of RCR course (online/class room)
- Subject matter (what was taught?)
- Faculty participation
- Duration of RCR course
- Frequency (discussion during lab meetings, formal course every 2-3 years etc)

**Questions?**