General Reviewer Guidelines for Graduate School Internal Grants

Roles of the Reviewers

The University Research & Development (R&D) Committee and the University Research and Projects Advisory Board (RPAB) members are elected to review applications to Graduate School internal grant programs and to make recommendations for funding to the Graduate Dean. In the case of the R&D Committee, the Committee leads the review of applications in specific disciplinary subpanels and can make recommendations to change proposal budgets (STEP, Research Equipment &Tools, Assigned Research Time, and Multidisciplinary Research Awards). The RPAB reviews proposals to the Vaughnie Lindsay New Investigator Grant, the Hoppe Research Professor Award, the Paul Simon Outstanding Teacher-Scholar Award, and the Research Grants for Graduate Students (RGGS). Ad hoc reviewers are also recruited for STEP and other internal programs that review according to disciplinary affiliation or require specific expertise.

While it is the reviewers' role to evaluate proposals on the basis of stated program goals and guidelines, it is the applicants' role to make strong and clear arguments that their project fits these goals and guidelines. Reviewers should gain answers to any of the review criteria and question about the project from the proposal only; that is, the proposal should be considered "the world of the project." Knowledge outside the text of the proposal should not be considered in its review.*

Applicants will receive a copy of the individual reviewers' scores and comments as well as a summary of the panel discussion. Consequently, reviewers need to consider that their scores and comments are the main source of feedback for applicants. Reviewers need to be careful to write constructive comments. Scores need to be directly linked to the comments, and comments need to justify the reviewers' overall recommendations in a way that is transparent to fellow reviewers and applicants.

Panel Summary (for programs under the R&D Committee): Subpanelists are responsible for assisting in the production of one-page review summaries for each applicant. These summaries will serve as a cover page for the returned reviews and provide a short summary of the panel discussion. As in the guidelines above, comments must match the scores and provide justification for the final recommendation. Summaries focus on the main topics of discussion and the main reasons for the final panel decision. Any minor issues need to be indicated as such.

In extreme cases in which an individual reviewer has outside knowledge that he/she feels should be considered in the review of the proposal, the reviewer should contact the Graduate School to discuss the matter before bringing it to other reviewers.

Confidentiality

Reviewers are expected to maintain confidentiality about the review process and the content of discussions during review. Only the names of elected R&D Committee or the RPAB members are available to the general campus community. All other reviewer names are kept confidential to protect the integrity

of the process. Please do not share the contents of review discussions with anyone outside your committee. This may lead to an undermining of the process.

<u>Conflict of Interest</u>

If any reviewer feels a conflict of interest reviewing one or more proposals, that person should inform the Graduate School as soon as possible. One should disclose such relationships as having worked with someone on a project in the (relatively near) past, but this may not necessarily constitute a conflict of interest. We will work with you to manage these issues. However, if you personally feel a conflict and cannot objectively review a proposal, please contact the Graduate School.

<u>Guiding Questions for the Review</u>

- Has the applicant followed the basic guidelines for pagination and formatting?
- Does the applicant meet the basic eligibility requirements?
- Does the applicant make a strong argument for the project's alignment with the goals of the program?
- Does the proposal make a strong argument for the significance of the research question?
    - Is it clear that this proposed project is filling a gap in the research and can make a significant contribution?
    - Is there a strong argument for impact on field, on other fields, and/or on society in general?
    - Is there an adequate supporting literature review?
- How does the project fit within the applicant's larger research agenda? (question of sustainability)
    - To what is this project leading?
    - Does it have a life beyond just the project period?
    - Is there a potential for a longer-term research trajectory?
    - If the project is funded by another grant, does the applicant include a plan to keep the scope of work in this portion of the project distinct from the scope of work funded by the other project? In other words: what is the plan to avoid "double-dipping"?
- Does the project have clear, concrete, and significant deliverables?
- Has the applicant's previously-funded projects (internal or external) led to significant concrete outcomes, including publications, presentations, external grant proposals and awards?
- Is the information or data collection method clearly justified? Does the applicant make the argument that this is the best method?
- Is there a clear and reasonable justification of the budget?
    - Are project costs reasonable to the scope of work?
    - Did the applicant "pad" the budget?
    - Has the applicant clearly outlined his/her math in calculating totals?
    - Course buyout and summer salary need to be justified for the time period requested.
        - Lit review: a very strong argument needs to be made for including time for supporting literature review (should have been done before this project, why not done during academic year).

- Multiple course buyouts and/or consultants: the proposal should include a strong justification for the time/budget requested for personnel on the project.
- Is there a clear and practical timeline?
- Given the method, budget, timeline, is this a feasible project? Can the applicant deliver on what is promised?

Please give us your feedback!

The Graduate School appreciates your input in improving our resources for reviewers and applicants. We would like your comments about how useful this Guide has been in reviewing the proposals for this competition. Please provide your suggestions for a) improving this general guide for reviewers across our programs, and b) developing a "grant-writing tip sheet" for applicants. You may enter your suggestions below, provide your name (optional), and return at your subpanel meeting or send to pgraybi@siue.edu. (Attach additional pages as necessary.) You may also make notes directly on the above guide and return to Patience.

Reviewer Guide Suggestions
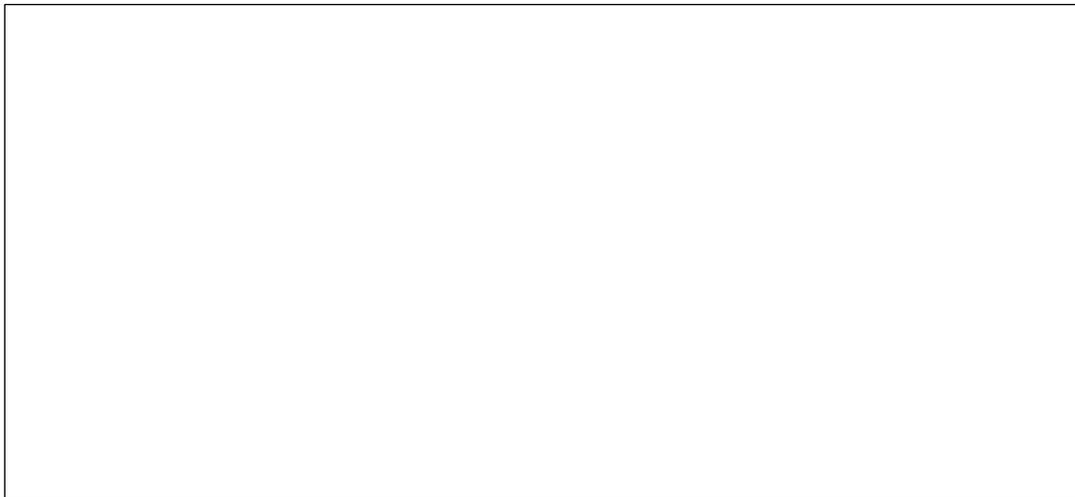
Grant-Writing Tip Sheet for Applicants (Input from experienced reviewers to applicants):