

Self-Assessment Rubric for GRFP Applicants: Critique Your Drafts and Online Application Form

Instructions: The purposes of this rubric are to help you (a) improve the quality of your draft statements and (b) reflect on the strength of your overall application packet. Competitive statements will rate at least a “2” in each row. However, to become *highly* competitive, your complete application packet *must* include elements from the “3” column. Feel free to share this rubric when you ask others for feedback. It will help them look for ways you can improve your statements and address gaps with your online application form. Note: These are *only* suggestions and illustrative examples! This is NOT an official document. Follow the official GRFP instructions precisely.

	Statements Not Competitive		Competitive Statements	Highly Competitive Packet
Areas to Examine	0 (major revisions needed)	1 (revisions necessary)	2 (shows potential)	3 (from statements + application)
1. Content				
a. answer the questions in their entirety	did not follow instructions; lacks clarity; digresses	some sections lack detail; repeated information	exactly followed instructions; clear; adequate details	both statements align with NSF goals & desired societal outcomes
b. intellectual merit (your potential to advance knowledge)*	too many research interests; illogical; unrealistic; omitted academic and career goals; general approach is wrong	topic lacks potential to advance knowledge; no citations; low GPA or poor grades not addressed	rigorous methods; appropriate citations; acquired research skills; access to adequate resources; academic honors	published articles; collaborates across disciplines; international collaboration; poses novel or intriguing concepts; discovery
c. broader impacts (your potential to benefit society and contribute to specific, desired societal outcomes)*	failed to address societal benefits of topic; includes assertions or assumptions; no past/current BI activities; promises too much	societal benefits of research not supported by literature; BI activity not connected to research or BI has a “trickle down” effect (too passive)	efforts to improve public’s scientific literacy; study or service in US/abroad; research benefits society; engaged with underrepresented individuals	research has far-reaching societal benefits; public engagement with science & technology; proposes sustainable BI activities; impressive career goals
2. Professional Characteristics and Abilities (inferred by reviewers from statements <i>and</i> reference letters)				
a. characteristics and abilities	flippant or arrogant tone; passive voice; generic or lukewarm reference letters	too modest or statements sound negative; letters did not stress potential for IM & BI	ethical; confident; dependable; shows initiative; persistent; team leader; collaborates	articulate; insightful; achieves excellence; innovative or visionary; 3 exceptional letters
b. potential to establish a research career	research not included as a career goal; no engagement in research or scholarly activity	lacks detail; does not connect skills learned with future plans; team skills unclear	solid team work; learns from mistakes; problem solver; perseverance despite setbacks	range of research & outreach skills; write proposals; can self-assess research progress; collegial
c. intellect & disciplinary knowledge	did not describe scientific knowledge or acquired skills; no self-directed learning outside of classes; lacks direction	lacks examples of problem solving abilities or creativity; no explanation of poor grades; references fail to cite abilities	uses discipline-related terms; scholarly writing; innovative; solid GPA; rigorous courses; impressive institutional choice	references confirm higher order thinking skills; understands STEM issues/trends; plans research agenda <i>across</i> disciplines;
d. potential for leadership within or across disciplines	failed to address leadership skills and experience in any type of setting; a loner	mentioned volunteerism or service, but no clear plans for future leadership roles	describes skills gained from leadership experiences; plans for STEM leadership/advocacy	<i>active</i> in disciplinary organization; peer mentoring; letters document strong leadership/team abilities
3. Writing Mechanics				
a. format and page limit	did not follow formatting instructions; omitted key sections in the statements	exceeds page limit; overused bold or italics; hard to locate IM & BI sections	exactly followed instructions; consist format and font; citations included; no errors	effective use of white space and bold face or italics; uses subheads for each section; clean look
b. readability	grammatical errors; jargon; malapropisms; typos; rambling; awkward wording	boring; repetitive; weak verbs; too many sentence begin with “I”; no transitions; wordy	error free; highly understandable; good flow; transitions between paragraphs; succinct	scholarly use of discipline-related terms; statements complement one another; compelling writing

*Discussion of review criteria http://www.nsfgrfp.org/how_to_apply/review_criteria