

Self-Assessment Rubric for the GRFP Essays: Critique Your Drafts

Instructions: This is NOT an official document. Rather, the purpose of this rubric is to help you improve the quality of your essay drafts. After you have completed your essays, think about the overall impression you will make with reviewers. To meet requirements, each row must rate at least a “2.” However, to become highly competitive, your essays *must* include elements from the “3” column. Suggestion: When you ask others for feedback on your draft essays, you can share a copy of this rubric. It will help them focus on how you might improve your essays in order to have a highly competitive application packet.

	Not competitive		Competitive	Highly competitive
Areas to Examine	0 (major revisions needed)	1 (revisions necessary)	2 (meets requirements)	3 (elements of top essays)
1. Content				
a. answer the questions in their entirety	did not follow instructions; lacks clarity; digresses	some sections lack detail; circular discussion	exactly followed instructions; clear; adequate details	novel or intriguing approach; matches NSF’s priorities, goals
b. intellectual merit *	hypothesis or research questions unclear; illogical; unrealistic; wrong methods	need for the research not well argued; methods lack detail; pitfalls	necessary skills; access to adequate resources; rigorous methods; appropriate citations	will advance knowledge; potentially transformative; international collaboration
c. broader impacts *	failed to address; includes assertions or assumptions; no past/current efforts	lacks specifics; too loosely connected to scope of work; promises too much	current outreach & teaching efforts; pubs & presentations; future plans well reasoned	interdisciplinary implications; benefits to society; engages diverse groups; partnerships
2. Personal Qualities (confirmed by strong reference letters)				
a. characteristics	personality and characteristics do not emerge; cutesy; indifferent reference letters	too modest or brags; needs tangible <i>examples</i> of skills; generic reference letters	motivated; ethical; confident; dependable; shows initiative; determination; good letters	insightful; strives for excellence; solid performance; articulate; exceptional letters
b. potential to establish a research career	no discussion of having acquired prerequisite skills	lacks detail; does not connect related skills learned in other settings	team work; learns from past mistakes; problem solver; perseverance despite setbacks	range of research & outreach experiences; a leader; ability to monitor & assess self; grants
c. intellect & discipline-specific knowledge	fails to describe knowledge gained through college, work or life lessons	discusses educational experience only	essays are thoughtful & solidly constructed; discipline-related terms; scholarly	understands issues/trends in discipline; articulates a research agenda; analytical
d. potential for leadership in within or across disciplines	failed to address leadership	mentioned volunteerism or service, but did not address leadership skills	describes skills gained from leadership roles at school, in community, or other outreach	<i>active</i> in national organizations; commitment to discipline; peer mentoring; professionalism
3. Mechanics				
a. format and page limit	did not follow instructions exactly; omitted keywords or title on proposed research	research plan has missing section or is out of order; overuse of bold, italics, etc.	exactly followed instructions; consist format and font; citations included	effective use of white space, and bold face or italics; uses subheads for each section
b. readability	grammatical errors; jargon; malapropisms; typos	repetition; too many clauses in a sentence; wordiness; awkward wording	error free; highly understandable; good flow; transitions between paragraphs; succinct	scholarly use of discipline-related terms; essays complement one another

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