

The Dean's office has received requests for a description of how Mellon Fellowships are awarded. This summary of recent practices/procedures is presented in an attempt to address frequently asked questions regarding Mellons. Please share this general information about the Mellon Fellowship with your graduate students.

1. Departmental Nominations for Mellon Fellowships:

All candidates for Mellon Fellowships must be nominated by their department. Each department can nominate two more candidates than the highest number of Mellons it received in any of the past 5 years. Departments are required to rank their candidates, provide a summary statement of each candidate's strengths, and explain the basis of their ranking to the Mellon Committee in A&S. Departments' procedures and criteria for determining their Mellon nominees vary.

Departments are free to decide the appropriate year in which to nominate candidates in accordance with their programmatic needs. Departments may choose to nominate students holding a Mellon Fellowship for a second-year renewal, at their discretion. In the case of nominations for second-year renewals, the Mellon Committee looks, specifically, for professional accomplishments and scholarly productivity during the student's first year of Mellon support - beyond making normal academic progress towards the degree. The inclination of the Mellon Committee has been to distribute Mellon Fellowships to as many deserving students as possible, as opposed to renewing Mellon Fellowships automatically. (In cases where students receive a Mellon Fellowship during their first year of graduate study, the department may nominate them for a second Mellon year sometime later in their degree program, but not during their second year of graduate study.)

2. Composition of the A&S Mellon Committee

At the A&S level, the Mellon Committee consists of one faculty member from each of the 3 divisions in A&S – humanities, natural sciences, social sciences (departments providing the Committee members rotate each year within each division). In addition, the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and the Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies in A&S serve on the Committee. All five members have one vote. The Committee is chaired by the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies.

3. Committee Procedures/Practices

Each committee member reviews all Mellon nominees, across all the A&S

Divisions (including nominations from their own department). Each committee member evaluates every candidate on a scale from 1-5 on the basis of summary statements provided by departments, candidates' academic record within their graduate program (grades in graduate coursework, milestones, progress towards degree, etc.) letters of support from faculty for the Fellowship, the quality of the candidate's research statement, and publications and presentations at professional meetings (or other types of professional validation) outside the department and the university. The committee also considers overall progress to the degree in relation to years of prior fellowship support.

Most departments nominate students at the dissertation stage of their graduate work for the Mellon Fellowship. Given the competitiveness of the Mellon Fellowships, such candidates should have demonstrated professional achievement beyond work within their department and the university – publications, presentations at professional meetings, performances, etc. The greatest challenge to the Committee involves comparisons among candidates at different stages of their graduate programs who might not have professional records comparable to those of nominees engaged in their dissertation research.

A rank order of all nominees is produced by aggregating the scores assigned by the five Committee members, acting independently. This rank-ordered, aggregated list provides the starting point for an intensive discussion among all the Committee members regarding their individual evaluations and any anomalies or second thoughts that may emerge about the position of any candidates on the list. Through this process the committee fine-tunes the order of the candidates near the cut off point for awarding fellowships, and determines the list of alternates.

Department rankings of their Mellon candidates are taken very seriously by the Committee, but Committee members are free to order candidates as they evaluate the materials submitted in the dossiers. The number of Mellons awarded to departments is a function of competition with other candidates across the School of Arts and Sciences on an individual basis. The outcome is not driven by the number of Mellons obtained within/among departments in prior years.