

NASA Earth and Space Science Fellowship (NESSF) Program  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

In NSPIRES, Errors (✖) indicate problems that will preclude proposal submission to NASA. Errors must be corrected in order to submit.

Warnings (⚠) are meant to be used as guidelines for checking a proposal prior to submission to NASA. They indicate potential discrepancies, based on general requirements for research proposals that are somewhat different from NESSF submissions. Any actions taken to ignore warnings are at the applicant's discretion.

Q1. If I have previously been a participant in the NASA Graduate Student Researchers Program (GSRP), can I apply for additional support under the NESSF?

A1. No. Regardless of whether you participated in the GSRP or the NESSF, the award is still a NASA graduate fellowship, and you may receive no more than a total of three years of support.

Q2. Are foreign students eligible to apply?

A2. Foreign students who are enrolled full-time at accredited U.S. institutions may apply to the NESSF. However, there are special restrictions regarding, e.g., students who retain an affiliation with organizations in the People's Republic of China.

Q3. Who is responsible for authorship of a NESSF application?

A3. The student is expected to be the principal author of the application, with minimal assistance from the faculty advisor. By submitting the application for consideration, the student and faculty advisor certify that the student was the principal author of the application. Likewise, a progress report authored by the student must be submitted for fellowship renewal.

Q4. What does the proposal page limit of six (6) include?

A4. Within the six-page proposal length limitation (using an easily read font of no more than ~15 characters per inch [typically 12-point font] with at least 1 inch margins on all sides) must be included: a description of the research project proposed and figures and tables, as appropriate. This page limit does not include the proposal cover page, the student's degree schedule, vitae, faculty advisor letter of recommendation, transcripts, or references. If a proposal exceeds the six-page length limit, reviewers are under no obligation to review and/or base a recommendation on any information contained in any additional pages.

Q5. May I submit more than one application?

A5. No, only one application may be submitted per student per solicitation cycle.

Q6. How do I submit the NESSF budget?

A6. The NESSF budget requirement is addressed in the NESSF Program Specific Questions on NSPIRES and must be submitted as items 7 through 9. That information populates Section IX – Program Specific Data of the NSPIRES Proposal Cover Page. The fields for budget in Sections I and X of the NSPIRES Proposal Cover Page are not used for NESSF proposals and, thus, will not display the budget information for your proposal. As stated above, that is provided in the Program Specific Questions.

Note: The NESSF supports graduate education and does not provide University overhead.

Q7. How do I itemize Student and University Allowances?

A7. Since the structure of tuition, fees, and research expenses varies from campus to campus and from project to project, please work with your advisor and the university office of sponsored research to propose a budget allocation that is most sensible from the points of view of your university and the proposed research project.

Q8. What can the NESSF allowance funding be used for?

A8. Allowance funding may be used for such items as tuition; fees; travel in support of the research investigation to conferences, symposia, or collaborative meetings; books; expendable laboratory supplies; page charges for journal articles; printing of a thesis; health insurance policy; and similar charges. Equipment, including computers, may NOT be purchased with NESSF funds. A NESSF budget should include itemization of the anticipated use of the grant funding.

Q9. What transcripts are required?

A9. Unofficial, legible, and clearly unaltered undergraduate and graduate transcripts (provide an explanation if the transcripts are not current or recent) are required and must be uploaded along with other required proposal elements as a single .pdf document for submission on the NSPIRES site. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** If all or part of the student's Social Security Number or Date of Birth appears on the transcript, this **MUST** be blocked out prior to submission. This is the only alteration permitted to a transcript.

Q10. What if my faculty advisor wishes to transmit my letter of recommendation confidentially?

A10. All required proposal elements, including the signed faculty advisor letter of recommendation on institutional letterhead, must be uploaded as a single .pdf document for submission on the NSPIRES site. The faculty advisor letter of recommendation included in the single .pdf document must include the name of the student, the name of the proposing institution, and the NESSF proposal title.

Q11. May I apply for NASA provided High-End Computing (HEC) Resources?

A11. The NESSF is now accepting requests for High-End Computing Resources.

For further information about NASA provided High-End Computing resources, contact Tsengdar J. Lee via email at [Tsengdar.J.Lee@nasa.gov](mailto:Tsengdar.J.Lee@nasa.gov) or via telephone at: 202-358-0860

Q12. What is the format for the progress report for my renewal application?

A12. There is no prescribed format for a renewal application. For information on what is required to be included in a renewal application, refer to Section 8. Application Procedures for New and Renewal Applicants of the NESSF 2018 solicitation, which is posted on NSPIRES.

NESSF program managers, as well as appropriate disciplinary program manager(s), in the Science Mission Directorate, review progress reports. There is no penalty for brevity, but you want to do yourself justice, particularly if you have done good work.

Q13. May I utilize funds from a NESSF grant for travel in support of my research investigation?

A13. Domestic and non-U.S. travel in support of a NESSF research investigation does not require approval if it is considered by the student's faculty advisor and institution as a reasonable expenditure of grant funds.

Q14. For the Proposal Project Summary, why do I get a "Warning" at 300 words, yet I can continue entering my summary?

A14. In order to briefly summarize the research investigation being proposed, it is recommended that the Proposal Project Summary field be limited to 300 words (the field will accept up to 4000 characters, including spaces and returns). At that point, a system "Warning" will be displayed. Warnings (⚠) are meant to be used as guidelines for checking a proposal prior to submission to NASA. They indicate potential discrepancies, based on typical proposal requirements. Any actions taken because of warnings are at your discretion.

Q15. Is it possible to request a no-cost extension of a NESSF grant?

A15. Prior to its termination date, the institutional office of sponsored research or similar campus organization may make a request to no-cost extend a grant in order to utilize any balance of remaining funding. The request must include a brief justification for the request, the grant number, the names of the student and the faculty advisor, an estimate of the funds remaining, and the length of the extension requested (three, six, nine, or twelve months). After review and concurrence, the request is transmitted to the NASA Shared Services Center, which issues the official grant modification. The request should be directed to Claire Macaulay via [claire.i.macaulay@nasa.gov](mailto:claire.i.macaulay@nasa.gov) if the award is about Earth Science or to Marian Norris [via mnorris@nasa.gov](mailto:via mnorris@nasa.gov) if the award is about Heliophysics, Planetary Science, or Astrophysics.

Q16. Is it possible to transfer the fellowship award?

A16. It is possible to transfer the fellowship award if the student is transferring to a different institution. NASA approval is required and a decision will be made on a case-by-case basis.