Instructions for writers:

* Writing samples should be submitted with a cover message to readers (see examples below), in which you outline where you feel you are with the project and where you think you need the most help in guiding your revision (this is not the same as a cover letter to an editor). Adjust the tone of the letter based on the level of feedback that is desired. In writing this, it may be useful to address some of the following:
* The main point of your document.
* The biggest problems you’re having at this point in the writing process.
* Which idea or point do you feel you’ve made most successfully, and which you feel you’ve made least successfully.
* The main aspect of your document (i.e. thesis, structure, use of evidence, persuasiveness, etc.) that you’d specifically like comments on.

Instructions for reviewers:

* Read the submitted project before the workshop and be prepared to provide feedback:
  + First state what you like about it,
  + then state what could/should be improved.
* Be critical but friendly and constructive. Remember that constructive criticism is the only way to learn!
* Feedback to the writer will be provided during the workshop.
* The writer will take these comments home and use as s/he sees fit.

**Sample cover message**

**Example #1**

Hello workshop members,

I am in the process of writing a fellowship application and would like feedback on a draft of my specific aims page (attached). I am particularly interested in your insight into how well I discuss the problem and knowledge gap that I am addressing. I want to make sure the need is clearly specified. In addition, does the presentation of the data that support my hypothesis make sense?

Thanks,

Jen

**Example #2**

Dear Writers’ Workshop members,

Attached is a draft of my introduction for your critique.  I am aiming for an introduction of about 400 words in length.

Specific areas of feedback that would be helpful:

* Please consider the overall organization and if the story flows well.  I tend to be a bit wordy in my writing, so let me know if there are parts that could be condensed.
* This section may be a touch too long.  Any advice on how to make it shorter would be appreciated.
* I am a bit concerned with how the pieces are put together.  I feel that I may be lacking some transition sentences.  Do the points I am trying to make flow together nicely, or do I need to try to tie them together more?   Are there pieces of background information that I am missing that would be helpful to you as a reader?
* I am wondering if I describe too much of the results in the last paragraph of the introduction?
* I’d appreciate feedback on the flow.

And please feel free to address any points, not just those mentioned above.

Looking forward to your comments!

Jen

**Sample of Feedback**

**Example #1**

**Strengths**

* Sufficient background information
* Logical progression from sentence to sentence
* Pretty clear specific aims
* Strong conclusion with a reinforcement of the importance of the research and its potential benefits

**Areas for improvement**

* Citations should be added
* Link sentence subjects more frequently to improve flow and clarity
* There are specific areas where concepts could be conveyed more concisely (annotated in document)
* Introduction seems to be dominated by discussion of Aim 2, with far less attention paid to Aim 1. A more balanced approach might help the reader understand Aim 1 better.
* Aim 2 results - are these in mice or humans? Both? If you found promising results in mice, how would you examine their translational capacity in humans?

**Example #2**

**Strengths**

* This is a great draft of your SA page! You have included most of the main components that are needed. They just need some refining (as is always the case with SA pages).
* The proposed studies address an important problem and would have broad implications for the trauma patient population.
* Overall well written.
* I like that you include a rationale statement for your proposed studies in your second paragraph. It helps remind the reader of the importance of the study after having filtered through your preliminary data.

**Areas for improvement**

* I had trouble with the first paragraph. There was a lot of information, but I had trouble connecting the different pieces together. I made suggestions for re-ordering some of the information in the document.
* Make sure to include an overall objective. What is the main goal that you are planning to achieve as a result of these studies? This is very important to include. It is not sufficient to only have a hypothesis. This is because your hypothesis should be your best guess as to how you will achieve your objective. Having an objective leaves open the possibility that your hypothesis might be wrong but that doesn’t mean you won’t be able to achieve your objective (can come up with new hypotheses).
* I’m not sure I entirely understand the use of *underserved* in your central hypothesis. I know what it means, but it is unclear to me in this context. Is it necessary?
* There were some vague statements that I don’t totally understand their meaning. See the annotated text for details.
* Consider including a broad impact statement that indicates that your study could have an effect on policy changes or institution-specific changes that could improve patient outcomes.

**Other comments**

* You don’t need to indent paragraphs if you are including a space between them. It will save you a little space to not do this. In addition, I think it actually makes the page look a little busier when the paragraphs are indented.