

Refining Your Proposal: A Trouble-Shooting Checklist Haas Scholars Program Guidelines

If you check yes for any of the questions below, use the suggested tip to strengthen your proposal.

#1: Is your Statement of Purpose too long (more than one concise paragraph)?
Yes ___ No ___

Tip: Move context for your purpose to Background and Justification section.

#2: Is your project proposal too long (more than five double-spaced pages)?
Yes ___ No ___

Tip: Don't try to include everything you know about your topic. Instead, selectively provide your audience with a sufficient amount of background information to evaluate your purpose, the need for the project and the broader implications of your work.

#3: Does your proposal assume an overly specialized audience? Yes ___ No ___

Tip: Define key terms in the background section if they are specific to a particular academic specialty or sub-specialty.

#4: Is your project plan overly ambitious, unfeasible or vague? Yes ___ No ___

Tip: In detailed, specific and concrete terms, describe the procedure you will follow during the project time period to accomplish your goals. Imagining the particular steps you will take will help you arrive at a realistic and doable project plan. Remember more is not always more impressive!

#5: Are you proposing to do research in an area where access (to research subjects, to information, to facilities, etc.) may be difficult? Yes ___ No ___

Tip: Indicate preliminary groundwork you have undertaken to address issues of access. Include letters of support as appropriate from individuals or institutions who can help you solve problems of access and/or indicate how you will address such problems in your proposal.

#6: Have you failed to indicate sufficient preliminary groundwork to

accomplish project goals? Yes ___ No ___

Tip: In your project plan or other appropriate place, briefly describe preliminary work already undertaken that will contribute to the successful completion of your goals.

#7: Is your Resources and Qualifications section presented as a laundry list? Yes ___ No ___

Tip: Select experiences and skills to highlight based on the demands and requirements of your project. Attach a full resume as an appendix if desired.

#8: Do you lack direct experience in key skill/knowledge areas necessary for project? Yes ___ No ___

Tip: Indicate how you will gain the required skills or knowledge between now and the completion of your project and/or how you will make use of mentors or other personal contacts to provide you with experienced guidance in new skill or knowledge areas.

#9: Have you neglected to justify your budget in the project proposal? Yes ___ No ___

Tip: Make sure that your project plan is closely related to your budget and that the need for major expenses is fully explained either in the main proposal narrative or in the optional budget narrative section.

#10: Is your budget overly general or are specific line items over-estimated or under-estimated? Yes ___ No ___

Tip: Consult more experienced researchers or creative artists to accurately estimate the type and amount of expenses that will be incurred. Cost out actual expenses by getting price estimates from specific vendors (via web, phone, catalogs etc.).

#11: Do you have a new relationship with your faculty sponsor? Does he or she lack familiarity with your previous academic work? Yes ___ No ___

Tip: Include an additional letter of recommendation from another Berkeley faculty member who knows you better and whose area of expertise is relevant to your proposed project. Provide your additional recommender(s) with a copy

of your project proposal AND provide your faculty sponsor with additional background information about your past experience.

#12: Do you work most closely with a post-doc or graduate student rather than the faculty member in charge of your lab? Yes ___ No ___

Tip: Make contact with the faculty member and begin to establish a separate relationship with her/him. If this isn't feasible, have your supervising post-doc co-sign a letter with the faculty member.

Written by Cynthia Schrager, Ph.D.
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