
Writing Research Applications and Grant Proposals: Workshop for Early-Career Researchers



Dr. Julia Staykova-McKinnon

Number of participants: 15-20

Duration: 2 days, 10:00-17:00 + home assignments

Target group: third- and fourth-year PhDs & postdocs

Excellent science is not enough for writing a successful research application. To get funded, you also need excellent grantsmanship, or grant writing skills. Reviewers often say that many wonderful projects don't get funded because the idea is not communicated clearly enough. So how do you make sure the advantages of your work are understood and appreciated?

This workshop will train you in the **rhetorical and communication skills specific to grant writing**.

You will learn how to:

- Tell your research story in clear, convincing language;
- Make your project interesting and persuasive;
- Write a strong personal statement and project aims;
- Talk about the significance and broader impacts of your research;
- 'Read between the lines' in calls for proposals, and tailor your project to the vision of the funding agency.

All examples in this workshop come from funded grant proposals.

Note: This is a participatory workshop. You will be expected to provide feedback on your peers' projects and share your own writing samples. This is why the workshop is suitable for researchers who are already developing their next proposals and have samples to share.

Workshop Programme

Before the workshop

Grant-writing questionnaire. Participants raise the questions they want answered in the workshop.

Day One. 10:00-17:00 + 3 coffee breaks & lunch break

10:00-12:00. “Meet a reviewer: the review process on the inside,” a talk by a senior professor.

Info session on funding agencies of interest, the Research Coordination Office.

12:15-13:00. Introduction: best practices in grant proposal writing

13:00-13:45. LUNCH BREAK – 45 mins

13:45-14:30. Standard structure in a grant proposal

14:30-14:40. COFFEE BREAK – 10 mins

14:40-15:30. Write strong project aims

15:30-15:45. COFFEE BREAK – 15 mins

15:45-17:00. Research gaps in state of the art

Day Two. 10:00-17:30 + 3 coffee breaks & lunch break

10:00-11:00. Peer review: project aims & state of the art

11:00-11:15. COFFEE BREAK – 15 mins

11:15-13:00. Significance & broader impacts

13:00-13:45. LUNCH BREAK – 45 mins

13:45-15:00. Persuade with your personal statement

15:00-15:10. COFFEE BREAK – 10 mins

15:10-16:00. Language skills: short sentences & strong verbs

16:00-16:15. COFFEE BREAK – 15 mins

16:15-17:00. Lessons learnt, conclusions

/formal part finished/

17:00-17:30. Instructor answers questions one-on-one

Home Assignments

Before Day 1:

What to bring to class:

- Choose 2 project samples, including personal statement, project aims, state of the art, and statements on impact, significance, and valorization.
- Print 2 copies of each sample, so 2 colleagues can give feedback on your writing.
- For PhDs: you can choose both past and future research applications.

Before Day Two:

Assignment 1: Revise project aims & state of the art

- Based on prior samples, rewrite your project aims statement.
- Refine your statement on state of the art and research gaps.

Assignment 2: Editing exercises

- Complete the exercises on passive verbs and sentence length from the course booklet.

Julia Staykova-McKinnon, Ph.D.

Scriptorium Founder

Profile

Julia has fifteen years of experience as a lecturer and consultant in grant writing, business writing, and public speaking. She has consulted extensively on grant proposals for public-sector funding agencies and business proposals developed for private investors.



She has taught workshops and developed collaborative training initiatives for academic institutions and research consortia in Belgium, Germany, France, and Switzerland. Her current clients include Charité Berlin, Université de Bordeaux, KU Leuven, VU Brussels, ETH/UZH Zurich, the German Cancer Research Centre-Heidelberg, and the Erasmus Mundus Programme.

Outside academia, Julia has instructed research and business development teams at Eli Lilly, Hengeler Mueller Partners in Law, HVB Banking Group, KPMG, and Servier Laboratories.

Academic Background

Visiting Assistant Professor, University of Amsterdam (2010-11)

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow, Los Angeles, California (2009-10)

Post-Doctoral Fellow, University of British Columbia, Vancouver (2007-09)

Ph.D. in Shakespeare and Renaissance culture, Oxford and Sofia (2007)