

Writing Suggestions for Proposals Submitted to the GAC

[for Rackham Predoctoral Fellowships,
Rackham One-Term Dissertation Fellowships,
SOE Dissertation Finishing Grants, and
SOE Mini-Grants for Student-Initiated Research]

In the competition, individuals who do not necessarily share either your perspective or your area of specialization will read and evaluate your proposal. Therefore, we recommend that you attend to the following suggestions:

- Try to avoid excessive "jargon." When possible, avoid the frequent use of technical terms. When you do use the terms, explain their meaning clearly so that non-specialists can grasp their meaning.
- After you prepare a draft of your proposal, it is helpful to ask a colleague whose focus is different from your own to read and comment on the proposal. This should help you identify points that need clarification or elaboration.
- It is important to include a timeline for your project or a statement about your plans to carry it out, especially if the award is contingent upon your finishing within a certain period of time. Committees look for feasible projects and evidence that awarded funds will be wisely spent.
- Proposers should review "The Art of Writing Proposals," an essay published by the Social Science Research Council and available at <http://www.ssrc.org/fellowships>. This essay provides advice on how to craft an effective proposal, including ways to convey clearly the main research question, explain why the question is important, describe methods to be used to gather and analyze evidence about the question, and test the validity of conclusions. Proposals without these key elements have a reduced chance of receiving funding.