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Attributes of a  
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application

Examples

General tricks

Q&A

# Grant Writing Workshop

Shelby Grossman  
Departmental Writing Fellow

December 2015

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## Outline

- 1 Introductions
- 2 What can I, the Departmental Writing Fellow, do for you?
- 3 General information about applying for grants
- 4 Finding a thesis advisor
- 5 Attributes of a strong grant application
- 6 Example(s)
- 7 General tricks
- 8 Q&A

# What can the Departmental Writing Fellow do for you?

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- Meet with you to give feedback on your writing for your thesis (including grant applications!) or Gov 94 paper
- Office hours Fridays from 2-5pm
- [sgrossm@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:sgrossm@fas.harvard.edu)

# General information

- Resources:

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# General information

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- Resources: Harvard Government site → undergrad program  
→ for juniors → thesis funding

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- Resources: Harvard Government site → undergrad program  
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- Resources: Harvard Government site → undergrad program → for juniors → thesis funding
- Area studies centers (e.g. Committee on African Studies); grants based on methods (e.g. Carol K. Pforzheimer Student Fellowships, for theses that will make use of certain archives at Harvard libraries);

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- Resources to support research in Cambridge (Harvard College Research Program; The Saloma Fund for Undergraduate Research)

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- Area studies centers (e.g. Committee on African Studies); grants based on methods (e.g. Carol K. Pforzheimer Student Fellowships, for theses that will make use of certain archives at Harvard libraries); grants based on topics; go through the list very carefully
- Resources to support research in Cambridge (Harvard College Research Program; The Saloma Fund for Undergraduate Research)
- **Apply broadly!** Small marginal costs for every subsequent application after the first

# Timing

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- The Centers have the first deadlines (e.g. Jan. 29)

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- The Centers have the first deadlines (e.g. Jan. 29)
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- The Centers have the first deadlines (e.g. Jan. 29)
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- If you miss the deadlines for the Centers, don't give up!  
HCRP has a slightly later deadline

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  - You can apply without a thesis advisor

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HCRP has a slightly later deadline
- Saloma Fund has the latest deadline
- Almost all applications require both a topic and a thesis advisor
  - You can apply without a thesis advisor
  - Talk to a TF or professor you have taken a class with about your thesis, then ask for letter

# Thesis advisor

- Identify list of potential thesis advisors

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# Thesis advisor

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- Identify list of potential thesis advisors
  - Talk to George Soroka or Cheryl Welch! (they are both around this week and next week) They can also connect you to people who know your country.

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  - Consult Gov website

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  - Consult Gov website
- Start interviewing thesis advisors early

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  - Consult Gov website
- Start interviewing thesis advisors early
  - Use the interview as an opportunity to get help on your topic
  - Is the potential thesis advisor helpful?



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- Identify list of potential thesis advisors
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  - Consult Gov website
- Start interviewing thesis advisors early
  - Use the interview as an opportunity to get help on your topic
  - Is the potential thesis advisor helpful?
- Have your thesis advisor read you grant application at least once

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- Identify list of potential thesis advisors
  - Talk to George Soroka or Cheryl Welch! (they are both around this week and next week) They can also connect you to people who know your country.
  - Consult Gov website
- Start interviewing thesis advisors early
  - Use the interview as an opportunity to get help on your topic
  - Is the potential thesis advisor helpful?
- Have your thesis advisor read your grant application at least once
- **I can also read your grant application!** But I provide different advice than your thesis advisor.

# Clear research question

- Coming up with a good research question is the hardest part of the thesis. Get advice from your thesis advisor and others. Then do your best.

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# Clear research question

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- Coming up with a good research question is the hardest part of the thesis. Get advice from your thesis advisor and others. Then do your best.
- The big secret of grant applications: **Your research question can change.** Everyone knows this.

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- **The point is to signal that you know what a research question is.**

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- Coming up with a good research question is the hardest part of the thesis. Get advice from your thesis advisor and others. Then do your best.
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- **The point is to signal that you know what a research question is.**
  - Analytical, not descriptive

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- **The point is to signal that you know what a research question is.**
  - Analytical, not descriptive
  - Feasible to address in short time frame

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  - Not a yes or no question



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  - Not a yes or no question
  - Makes a contribution to existing political science scholarship

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- **The point is to signal that you know what a research question is.**
  - Analytical, not descriptive
  - Feasible to address in short time frame
  - Not a yes or no question
  - Makes a contribution to existing political science scholarship
  - Not about the future

# Other attributes of a strong grant application

- Clear justification for how the money will be used

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# Other attributes of a strong grant application

- Clear justification for how the money will be used
- Feasible research plan

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# Other attributes of a strong grant application

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- Clear justification for how the money will be used
- Feasible research plan
- **Detailed research plan** (e.g. what types of people will you interview, how will you identify them, what types of questions will you ask them)

# Other attributes of a strong grant application

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- Clear justification for how the money will be used
- Feasible research plan
- **Detailed research plan** (e.g. what types of people will you interview, how will you identify them, what types of questions will you ask them)
- Describe any progress you have already made (e.g. Do you already have contacts in the country? Have you taken a relevant course? Do you have any contacts around Harvard who will help you make contacts in the country?)

# Other attributes of a strong grant application

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- Clear justification for how the money will be used
- Feasible research plan
- **Detailed research plan** (e.g. what types of people will you interview, how will you identify them, what types of questions will you ask them)
- Describe any progress you have already made (e.g. Do you already have contacts in the country? Have you taken a relevant course? Do you have any contacts around Harvard who will help you make contacts in the country?)
- Clear explanation of contribution to literature – include citations and bibliography (bibliography should focus on theoretically-relevant citations from political science journals)

# Budget

- **Ask for the money you need.** Research is expensive. People know that.

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# Budget

- **Ask for the money you need.** Research is expensive. People know that.
  - Even if it is over the cap – other funding agencies can look at the budget and consider helping with the top off

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# Budget

- **Ask for the money you need.** Research is expensive. People know that.
  - Even if it is over the cap – other funding agencies can look at the budget and consider helping with the top off
  - But: Be reasonable. Staying for a month in a \$200/night hotel will not look good.

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# Budget

- **Ask for the money you need.** Research is expensive. People know that.
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  - But: Be reasonable. Staying for a month in a \$200/night hotel will not look good.
- Look at budgets (and applications) from current seniors who did similar research to yours. Meet with them. Ask them for advice.

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  - But: Be reasonable. Staying for a month in a \$200/night hotel will not look good.
- Look at budgets (and applications) from current seniors who did similar research to yours. Meet with them. Ask them for advice.
- Don't include lavish, unnecessary budget items (e.g. overweight luggage fees).

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- **Ask for the money you need.** Research is expensive. People know that.
  - Even if it is over the cap – other funding agencies can look at the budget and consider helping with the top off
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- Look at budgets (and applications) from current seniors who did similar research to yours. Meet with them. Ask them for advice.
- Don't include lavish, unnecessary budget items (e.g. overweight luggage fees).
- If you think you will need the maximum amount allowed by a grant application, ask for it.

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- **Ask for the money you need.** Research is expensive. People know that.
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- Look at budgets (and applications) from current seniors who did similar research to yours. Meet with them. Ask them for advice.
- Don't include lavish, unnecessary budget items (e.g. overweight luggage fees).
- If you think you will need the maximum amount allowed by a grant application, ask for it.
- Main point: Convince the funder you aren't going to waste their money

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## Example

*The relationship between a right to education, student achievement, and inequalities: Case studies of state and federal governments in the United States and Finland*

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the title?
- How easy is it to figure out what the research question is?
- Are potential hypotheses easy to find?
- What is author's relevant preparation?
- How detailed is the author's research plan?
- Is the theoretical contribution of the research question clear?
- Is the application professionally written?
- Does the budget seem reasonable?
- Is the budget sufficiently detailed?

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## Example

*The relationship between a right to education, student achievement, and inequalities: Case studies of state and federal governments in the United States and Finland*

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**The author ended up changing his research question!**  
Communicated with funder.

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# Example

*The secret bureaucracy: Tracing the Church Committee's impact on the foreign policy decision making process for covert operations*

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the title?
- How easy is it to figure out what the research question is?
- How easy is it to figure out what the author's potential hypotheses are?
- What type of preparation does the author have to conduct this project?
- How detailed is the author's research plan?
- Is the theoretical contribution of the research question clear?
- Is the application professionally written?

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# General Tricks!

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**General tricks**

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- Have a title that tells the reader what your research question is

# General Tricks!

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**General tricks**

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- Have a title that tells the reader what your research question is
- Follow all instructions

# General Tricks!

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- Have a title that tells the reader what your research question is
- Follow all instructions
- Be detail-oriented, typos are bad

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- Have a title that tells the reader what your research question is
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- Signal awareness of IRB process, what you are doing to get IRB approval [irb.harvard.edu](http://irb.harvard.edu)

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- Be detail-oriented, typos are bad
- Adjust grant applications based on different requirements of funders; when appropriate, explain why your research fits the mission of the funder
- Signal awareness of IRB process, what you are doing to get IRB approval [irb.harvard.edu](http://irb.harvard.edu)
- Work put into grant proposal will be useful for many things
- Do the best you can (everyone is in the same boat)

# Q&A

Questions!

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