

**GRAC GUIDELINES
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY**

GRADUATE RESEARCH ALLOCATIONS COMMITTEE

Purpose:

The purpose of the Graduate Research Allocations Committee (GRAC) shall be to promote the professional development of Biology graduate students (1) by facilitating students' efforts in attracting outside funding for their degree research and (2) by encouraging graduate student participation in professional meetings.

Goals:

1. Graduate students shall be successful in attracting outside funding for research in support of their degree.
2. Graduate students will present their research at professional meetings.

Objectives:

1. GRAC will help graduate students develop their grant proposal writing skills. This objective will be met by receiving research proposals, by reviewing and evaluating the proposals, by providing constructive criticism, and by authorizing the allocation of GRAC awards according to the Guidelines Governing the Distribution of GRAC Allocations.

2. GRAC, with the intent of increasing the ability of graduate students to attract outside funds, will make recommendations to the Department Chair for the provision of Departmental funds in support of students' degree research. This objective will be met (1) by insuring that the Department Chairman is aware of the supply and demand relationship of allocated funds on an annual basis and (2) by managing the distribution of GRAC awards.

3. GRAC will make recommendations to the Department Chairman for the provision of Departmental funds in support of students' participation in professional meetings. This objective will be met (1) by insuring that the Department Chairman is aware of the supply and demand relationship of allocated funds on an annual basis, (2) by receiving and evaluating student proposals for travel to professional meetings, and (3) by managing the distribution of GRAC awards.

Authority:

Final authority for matters concerning the administration of research proposals submitted to GRAC and the distribution of funds allocated to GRAC by the Department Chair shall remain with GRAC. This authority derives from BGSA approval upon the annual election of GRAC Members and the occasional approval of the Guidelines Governing the Distribution of GRAC Allocations. Although GRAC activities or decisions are not bound by BGSA, GRAC may seek advice or opinion concerning any matter from BGSA and should fairly consider this advice or opinion.

Organization:

The Graduate Research Allocations Committee shall be comprised of a Chair, who normally is not serving her/his first term, and at least three other Members. All Members are elected annually by the members of the Biology Graduate Student Association in accordance with the By-Laws of the Biology Graduate Student Association.

GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE DISTRIBUTION OF GRAC ALLOCATIONS

The following are to serve the GRAC as guidelines in the execution of its activities. Some constraints on Applicants and their proposals are included here, so these guidelines are available to members of the Biology Graduate Student Association for information purposes.

Structure:

1. GRAC allocations are obtained from Biology Department overhead money. Research and travel moneys are separate allocations, the amounts of which are determined by the Biology Department chairperson.

2. There shall be two funding periods each year, Fall and Spring semesters, with proposal deadlines to be determined by the GRAC Chairperson (usually on the fourth Friday of the semester).

3. Annual allocations are recommended to be disbursed 40/60 between Fall and Spring semesters. This distribution should reflect the recent pattern of funding requests.

4. Allocations shall not be denied to any particular graduate student based on any factors other than the quality of the proposal, compliance with the Guidelines Governing the Distribution of GRAC Allocations, and the availability of funds, however, a graduate student must be enrolled in 6 credit hours in the given semester.

5. The first priority in GRAC allocations shall be support of proposals of graduate student degree work. This includes support of degree-related research and support of student travel to professional meetings for the purpose of presenting information concerning degree-related research.

6. Applying to SRAC in the same semester will no longer be required, although additional points for additional funding sources will still be awarded in the research proposal.

7. The maximum allocation to any student shall be \$400 for research proposals per semester and \$150 for travel proposals to attend and present at meetings for any one semester. Therefore, the maximum total allocation per semester is \$550. These constraints reflect a compromise between quick establishment of "seed money" for students and the equitable distribution of limited GRAC funds among applicants. Note that travel expenses pertaining to research should be included in the applicant's research proposal not the travel proposal.

8. The lifetime limit of GRAC research allocations shall be \$1,000 (M.S.) and \$1,500 (Ph.D.). The limit for Ph.D. research shall not include funds awarded for Master's research. There shall be no lifetime limit for travel allocations to scientific meetings.

9. GRAC allocations shall assist graduate students **presenting** their research at professional meetings by funding direct transportation, registration and lodging costs. When a Biology Department van is available for travel to a scientific meeting, several students are attending that meeting and no other source of funds applies, GRAC will fund the flat cost of using the van. Preference will be given to students traveling in a Departmental van to a particular meeting, so students should indicate their use of the van. Automobile transportation will be funded at \$0.255/mile. Other forms of transportation will be considered. Applications for registration

reimbursement must be accompanied by a xerox copy of the applicant's completed registration form or registration receipt.

Funding Priority:

10. GRAC awards will only be granted on a fully funded basis. No partial awards will be given. Moneys available to GRAC as of Spring 2009 allow for 5 full research awards in the Fall and Spring semesters each as well as 5 completely funded travel awards (recommended to be 2 in the Fall, 3 in the Spring but the distribution should reflect the recent pattern of funding requests).

11. Highest priority is for the funding of work directly related to the completion of the student's degree, whether it be Ph.D. or Masters.

12. Applicants submitting proposals to GRAC for the first time and applications for new projects which have not been previously funded by GRAC shall receive more favorable status during the ranking of proposals.

13. For Research Proposals: priority is given to the purchase of expendable goods applied to the student's research. Requests for food, motels, and publication costs will not be granted.

14. Applications for GRAC funding may be submitted twice per academic year. After all proposals are ranked and are assigned a funding category, all proposals submitted for the first time during an academic year will be considered for funding before any other proposals which previously received funding that same academic year. This means GRAC shall allocate funding to annual first requests first and, to the extent that funds are available, shall allocate funds to annual second requests second.

15. All applications will be reviewed by three GRAC readers, after which the GRAC chair will compile the top 50% or top 10 applications (whichever is fewer). The chair will determine if a second review is necessary to better distinguish between closely scored applications. If so, these applications will be sent out to for one additional GRAC reader for a total of 4 reviews on which the GRAC committee will make award decisions.

Readers:

16. In order to avoid having the same few individuals reading GRAC applications each semester, 10% of the total points will be added to the applications of those individuals that have or will read. These points will be added to the application of those individuals that read in the previous two semesters or plan to read in the current semester or upcoming two semesters. For the purpose of accountability, those who fail to read in the pledged time-frame will lose GRAC application eligibility for one year.

17. Readers must justify, in writing, any low scores (3 or lower) they give to an application.

Products:

18. Non-expendable equipment purchased with GRAC allocations shall remain the property of GRAC. Upon the completion of the funded project, the identity and location of GRAC equipment must be reported to the GRAC Chair in writing. Non-expendable equipment purchased with GRAC

money shall remain within the lab of the original purchaser after completion of the project; this with the understanding that other students requiring the equipment will be given reasonable access to it.

19. Non-expendable equipment costs shall not exceed the amount requested for funding (maximum \$400).

20. One copy of all publications resulting from projects funded by GRAC must be submitted to the GRAC Chair. These publications are the most important record of GRAC effectiveness and will be used to justify allocation of departmental funds to GRAC.

21. The University of New Mexico, Department of Biology, Graduate Student Association, Graduate Research Allocations Committee should be acknowledged for complete or partial funding in all publications resulting from projects funded by GRAC.

Proposals:

22. Only current Application Packets (the most recent version found on the UNM Biology website) are to be used when submitting research or travel proposals. Applications not using current forms will not be considered for funding. The purpose of this requirement is to allow GRAC to evaluate all proposals with the same set of instructions and format.

23. Proposals shall conform to the GRAC Application Instructions included in the GRAC Proposal Application Packet.

24. The allocation period for Fall GRAC awards applies to activities occurring after the previous May to that planned through December of the same year. For Spring GRAC awards, funded activities must take place between September of the previous calendar year and August of the same calendar year.

25. All money awarded must be claimed by August of the following year (Fall awards) or of the funding year (Spring awards).

26. Mileage costs should be based on a rate of \$0.255 per mile.

SUGGESTIONS FOR WRITING A GOOD GRANT PROPOSAL

GENERAL: Make sure your proposal is complete; carefully read and follow all guidelines. It is strongly recommend that you read “Guidelines Governing the Distribution of GRAC Allocations” in the GRAC Information Package. Your proposal must clearly communicate to the reviewers your research objectives, rationale, methods, and its significance to the reviewers. Reviewers are generally your peers, but they may know little or nothing of your research area. Therefore, avoid technical jargon and trendy phrases. Write in a professional style, and consult references on scientific writing if you need to. Remember, the easier you make the reviewers’ job, the easier it will be to give you a good rating. There is no excuse for spelling or grammatical errors. Finally, provide references to relevant literature whenever necessary.

ORGANIZATION: The best proposals are organized with the use of sub-headings (e.g., Introduction, Objectives, Methods, Significance/Relevance, etc. – see evaluation sheet).

INTRODUCTION: This section should spark the reviewer’s interest with the questions being considered, as well as provide justification for the use of your particular study system. The relevance of your topic/question should be addressed here, providing a framework upon which your research will build. A general introduction to the field, followed by greater detail as it pertains to your focal area and focal system, often works well.

SUMMARY OF OBJECTIVES/QUESTIONS OF INTEREST: summarize the intent/objectives of your research clearly. Include what is motivating your research and why you are doing this project.

METHODS: Provide sufficient detail so that reviewers understand what you will do and how it addresses the questions, hypotheses, and objectives you stated previously in the proposal.

IMPLICATIONS OF RESULTS: You must convey this to the reviewers. What is the significance and importance of this study to you and to the scientific community as a whole? What contributions can it make to our understanding of the topic area, and why is that important, useful, or helpful? Assume that we do not know what to you may seem blatantly obvious.

LITERATURE CITED: Citations not only document the statements you make in the text, but demonstrate your grasp of the relevant literature. Be sure that all citations in the text are included in the Lit. Cit., and vice versa. You may wish to use a numbering system rather than standard "name, date" style to conserve space.

EXPLANATION OF PREVIOUS USE OF GRAC FUNDS: If you have received GRAC research funding in any previous semester, reviewers will want to know that the money has been spent wisely and that the associated research is progressing at a reasonable pace. Convince the reviewers that you have made good use of GRAC money in the past.

BUDGET: It is critical that your budget be easy to understand. Subheadings (e.g. Travel, Equipment, Chemicals) are helpful. If you provide a budget for your complete project (highly recommended!), provide a listing of the materials being funded by GRAC (see example format on reverse). If your laboratory determines experimental costs on a per unit basis (e.g. \$35.00/animal,

\$9.00/gel), be sure to include the cost per unit, number of units required, and who determined the cost. See example budget below.

Budget

Total Budget

Category 1.	
Item 1 (price/unit x # units)	\$ \$\$\$.\$\$
Category 2.	
Item 2 (price/unit x # units)	\$ \$\$\$.\$\$
Item 3 (price/unit x # units)	\$ \$\$\$.\$\$
TOTAL	\$ \$\$\$.\$\$

Funds requested from GRAC

Category *.	
Item x (see above)	\$ \$\$\$.\$\$
Item y (partial payment for . . .)	\$ \$\$\$.\$\$
TOTAL	\$ \$\$\$.\$\$

Note: This is one budget format that has proven clear and concise. Your budget must include explicit information on funding you have requested elsewhere. Please note if it is from a UNM source and write out the full name of the funding source (e.g. GRD should read UNM Graduate Research Development Fund, DDIG should read National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant). Note if the award is pending or accepted. Rejected funding need not be included. Additionally, the GRAC committee finds that a summary of where other funding sources will be used is helpful in interpreting how critical GRAC requests may be. This may be as simple as using asterisks (*) to indicate moneys requested from SRAC, etc.

Revised: 3 February 2009, dmso & es