Welcome to the GUMC Mock Study Section

Thank you for your interest in the GUMC Mock Study Section. The purpose of this program is to increase the likelihood of extramural grant funding success by providing comprehensive, study section like feedback to applicants on their complete grant application prior to grant submission. The program is modeled after similar resources offered within individual units at GUMC and longstanding GUMC wide programs providing feedback on specific grant application pieces (e.g., specific aims). It is intended as a resource for faculty of all ranks (instructor, assistant, associate, and professor), tracks (e.g., tenure track, research track, medical educator track), and stages of career experience. It is also intended to provide training in the peer review process (e.g., operation of a study section) to those not yet familiar.

This document provides an overview of the process and specifies information that is needed from you and the timing to submit it relative to grant application deadlines in order for us to arrange the mock study section review of your grant application.

Are Mock Study Sections Offered Only for NIH Grant Applications?

The Mock Study Section program and guidelines focus on NIH grant applications because they are the most familiar to investigators and reviewers at GUMC. However, the intent is to be as flexible as possible to accommodate review of applications to other federal (e.g., DoD, NSF) and private (e.g., foundations) funding agencies as well. For funding agencies for which the Mock Study Section faculty organizers and support staff are less familiar with the peer review process, we will strive to arrange for a review that mirrors the funding agency’s process as closely as possible.

Organization of Mock Study Sections

Mock study sections are organized just like extramural grant peer review committees, but they are designed to provide constructive, individualized feedback to the applicant. The mock study section is scheduled as a 1 hour in person meeting. The first 30 minutes are designed as a typical study section. A designated chairperson manages the discussion and the peer reviewers discuss their feedback on the grant application in order of the reviewer assignments. Initial scores are given prior to the discussion, and final scores are given after the discussion is complete in accordance with the NIH or other funding agency scoring procedures. During this time, the applicant is an observer only.

The second 30 minutes are reserved for discussion of questions and issues between the applicant and reviewers. This portion of the meeting diverges from the typical study section, but it is intended to provide an opportunity for the applicant to engage with reviewers, ask questions, and ascertain suggestions and guidance on next steps.

If you are new to the NIH peer review process on which the program is based, an overview can be found here.
Initiating the Mock Study Section Review

The following information is needed at least 8 weeks before the deadline to submit your grant application to the funding agency. Note that 8 weeks in advance is the minimum requirement. Earlier is preferred, such as 10-12 weeks in advance of the deadline to submit your application to the funding agency to ensure sufficient time for the mock study section review. Please submit this information using the GUMC Mock Study Section Review Request Form:

https://goo.gl/forms/jtfFCjvaXsDAB44W2

Principal Investigator

Name, department, and email address.

Principal Investigator CV or NIH Biosketch

Full CV or NIH biosketch (instructions). A similar brief biosketch may be substituted depending on the funding agency and mechanism. For NIH grant applications, the final application to be reviewed must include an NIH biosketch for all key personnel.

Application Title

Please follow NIH guidelines, available here. Titles over 81 characters are truncated in grant applications and will not be as informative to reviewers.

Funding Opportunity Announcement

Name, number, and web link

Sponsor

Please provide the name of the sponsor, i.e., if it is a grant application to the NIH, another federal agency, or private funding. Note that review is limited to extramural grant applications only. Applications such as internal or institutional pilot proposals will not be reviewed.

Type of Grant

For NIH grants, this is also known as the activity code (e.g., R03, R01, K series). For other agencies, please be as specific as possible regarding the type of grant. This helps use to provide information on the amount of scientific content to be reviewed when inviting peer reviewers.

Project Summary/Abstract

Please follow NIH guidelines, available here. This description should be no more than 30 lines of text and should convey the major objectives and aims of the proposed project, the public health significance, and importance of your work. For non-NIH grants, please provide a similar abstract or brief synopsis of the proposal. This provides us with the scientific context to invite potential reviewers, including experts in your field and those from other relevant areas. Please summarize your
project so those arranging for the mock study section review and candidate peer reviewers who may not be deeply familiar with your specific area of investigation can understand your work.

List of Co-investigators, Collaborators, and Other Key Contributors
Provide names and contact information (email address) for all other key contributors who are involved in the proposed research. This helps us avoid contacting those who are already involved in your application as potential reviewers.

Suggested Reviewers
Similar to the NIH grant review process, we need input from you on the reviewer expertise that is appropriate to evaluate your proposed science. Please suggest names of 3 to 5 potential reviewers from the Georgetown University community (University or MedStar faculty). If you are new to Georgetown and need help to identify candidate reviewers, please first consult online resources such as the University Directory, Google, PubMed, Google Scholar, NIH RePORTER, and Grantome. We will assist to identify additional reviewers as needed.

Materials for Review

Complete Application
Your complete application, routed through the GUMC Office of Research Development Services (RDS), is due no later than 6 weeks before the deadline to submit your final application to your sponsor. For example, if you are submitting a new R01 application to NIH on Cycle II with a standard due date of June 5, your complete application must be submitted by April 24. We advise that you contact RDS staff early to initiate the internal routing and review process of administrative pieces of your application (e.g., budget, justification).

Please follow the check list of all necessary materials provided by RDS staff. All materials must be submitted for the Mock Study Section Review. RDS staff will assist in preparing your full application package as a single PDF (e.g., using NIH ASSIST). The full application is needed to provide as comprehensive and realistic peer reviewer feedback as possible. Although some application pieces (e.g., budget, human subjects protections) are not necessarily “score driving,” these are reviewed and commented on by NIH study sections and may indirectly affect reviewers’ evaluation of your proposed science.

We are cognizant of confidentiality and will redact information that may be considered to be sensitive (e.g., institutional base salary for key personnel). If there is specific information that you consider to be potentially sensitive, please indicate this to us in the process of submitting your materials in “Other Comments/Information” of the Mock Study Section Review Request Form.

Review Schedule
If the above information is submitted on schedule, we will arrange the Mock Study Section Review meeting at least 4 weeks before your application is due to the funding agency. This timing is based on our experience to date of the scope of feedback you will receive. It will allow adequate time for you to incorporate the reviewers’ feedback and work with RDS to finalize and submit your application to the sponsor by the deadline.

Questions or Concerns

Please contact Darren Mays (dmm239@georgetown.edu) or Priscilla Furth (paf3@georgetown.edu) with any questions or concerns.