NRC Research and Fellowship Programs
Applicant Guide

This guide provides step-by-step instructions for applicants to the NRC Research Associateship Programs (NRC RAP) and the Air Force Science and Technology Fellowship (AF STFP).

All application components – including transcripts (Postdoctoral applicants only) and required letters of recommendation – must be complete and submitted by 5:00 PM Eastern Time (ET) on the application deadline in order to be considered for review. Extensions will not be offered, and applications missing components will be deemed incomplete. It is recommended that applicants contact their letter writers *at least two weeks in advance of the deadline* to ensure they have ample time to submit their letters.

Please note that all application materials become the property of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and will not be returned. Applicants should retain copies of all submitted application materials for their personal records.

Register an Account (New Users) or Sign In (Returning Users)

1. New users:
    a. Visit https://ofell.nas.edu/RAPApplicants20/Appl_Registration/ModulePage.aspx?Nav=Register
    b. Enter your email address, complete the Registration pages, and set up your account credentials.
2. Returning users: Sign in at https://ofell.nas.edu/signin

Complete Profile Information Section Pages

1. Select **Profile Information** in the left navigation menu and enter information for the **Email**, **Phone**, **Address,** and **Confidential** tabs. *This information will not be shared with reviewers.*

2. Select **Education History** and enter the required information: institution, enrollment dates, degree type, degree date awarded/expected, and research field for all undergraduate and graduate institutions attended or currently attending as of the current review cycle. Refer to **Prepare and Upload Required Documents/Transcripts** in this document for detailed information on required transcripts.

3. Select **Employment History** and **Honors & Awards** in the left navigation menu and enter information (optional).

4. Refer to **Prepare and Upload Required Documents/Profile Uploads** in this document for detailed information on the formatting and content of the Dissertation Abstract (Postdoctoral applicants only), Previous and Current Research, and Publications and Presentations.

PLEASE NOTE:
Applicants must first complete the Confidential tab on the Profile Information page and the Education History page in order to determine eligibility and to select a Research Opportunity in the Applications Section of the online application.

Complete Applications Section

Applicants must first enter and select a Research Opportunity number associated with an agency participating in the current review in order to populate the tabs referenced below.

1. Select **Applications** in the left navigation menu.
2. Enter the number of the Research Opportunity you wish to apply to in the field provided, select the Research Opportunity from the populated list and select **choose**.

   Applicants will:
   a. Not be able to choose opportunities for which they are not eligible.
   b. Not be able to choose opportunities from agencies not participating in the current review.
   c. Be able to select up to three opportunities; however, each must be from a different agency.
   d. Be able to add or delete opportunities until they submit an application. Opportunities can no longer be added after the application has been submitted.

3. Select **Agency: [Agency name]** in the left navigation menu.

   a. Select and confirm information on the **Opportunity** tab:
      i. Research Adviser
      ii. Tenure Length
      iii. Field of Proposed Research
      iv. Prior communication with the Research Adviser of the proposed Research Opportunity regarding potential research projects and funding availability
      v. Current or prior agency affiliation
      vi. Involvement in the Professional Research Experience Program "PREP" (NIST applicants only)

   b. Provide information about the proposed research on the **Research Proposal** tab.

      Applicants must:
      i. Enter a Research Proposal Title.
      ii. Provide a Research Proposal Abstract that includes a clear statement of the problem to be studied and its importance to the host agency.
      iii. Detail any Anticipated Research Needs to complete the proposed research.
      iv. Select three to five keywords (overly specific keywords should be avoided) that will facilitate matching the application to expert reviewers.
      v. Upload a Research Proposal that reflects the applicant's thinking and design of an original research project that is within the scope of the Research Opportunity being applied to. Refer to **Prepare and Upload Required Documents/Research Proposal** in this document for detailed information on the formatting and content of the Research Proposal.

   c. Enter contact information for a minimum of three (maximum five) letter writers on the **References** tab.

      The following letter writers should be included:
      i. Dissertation Adviser (required for Postdoctoral applicants)
      ii. Individuals (at least two) who have recently worked with the applicant in the applicant's major field.
      iii. Individuals who are acquainted with the applicant's academic and professional background.

Letter writers:

i. May not be employed in any capacity or any location of the agency to which the applicant is applying unless they have served as mentors or collaborators on research performed while the applicant was a student, postdoc, or faculty member. Research Advisers are not permitted to submit letters of recommendation in support of applications to their own Research Opportunities. Applicants who select a letter writer who is employed at the agency to which they are applying must send an email to rap@nas.edu to explain the selection of this individual and their relationship to this letter writer.
ii. Will receive a link to the instructions on the content of their letters in the notification sent by the applicant through the online application module.
iii. Must upload their letters via the online application module by the application deadline.
iv. Should not send hard copy letters or letters sent as email attachments prior to or after the application deadline.

Notify Letter Writers

It is the applicant's responsibility to notify each letter writer of the letter request through the online application system.

1. Select **notify** next to each letter writer's name. Taking this action will send each letter writer an email containing a unique link directing them to a page where they can upload their letter.
2. Contact letter writers personally to advise them that they will be receiving an email notification from rap@nas.edu. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to confirm the letter writer's receipt of the notification email once it has been sent to ensure that the minimum number of letters are received by the deadline.**

Monitor Letter Submissions

Applicants and letter writers will receive an email confirmation once a letter has been *successfully* submitted. Submissions can also be monitored on the **References** tab of the Agency page and the **Data Review** page.

Applicants can update and re-notify letter writers at any time until the application deadline. Applicants who edit an email address must select **notify** to re-send the notification to the letter writer.

Prepare and Upload Required Documents

Applicants should review all formatting and upload guidelines prior to uploading any documents.

General Formatting and Upload Guidelines

- Save all documents as .pdf files prior to upload.
- Do not secure, or password protect, or encrypt files as reviewers will not be able to view them.
- Do not include Personal Identifying Information (PII) in any files. ***Applicants should redact, cover, or remove Social Security numbers, date of birth, and/or facial image*** prior to uploading a document with this information.

- Double-space and use a standard 12-point font.
- Set margins at 1" (top and bottom) and .5" (left and right sides).
- Do not exceed the maximum page limits as specified for each document.
- Do not exceed the maximum file size limit (4 MB).
- Do not include headers or footers (this includes your name, document titles and page numbers) as these will be auto generated for complete, submitted applications.
- Prepare all materials in English.
- Ensure the file has "succeeded" status under the Result header after upload has been selected.
- Open and review each document after uploading to verify file accuracy, completeness, and legibility.
- If needed, replace files prior to application submission.

Transcripts

Postdoctoral applicants must upload transcripts (unofficial transcripts are acceptable) from all undergraduate and graduate institutions attended. GPA is not required but may be entered. ***Senior applicants are not required to upload transcripts.***

All transcripts must:

- Be up-to-date and include all coursework (including any in-progress coursework) as well as the degree being pursued.
- Include the date of the degree awarded if the degree has already been earned.

Transcripts from **non-U.S. institutions** must:

- Be accompanied by a certified translation into English if issued in a language other than English.
- Include a description of the institution's grading system.

Postdoctoral applicants who are pursuing or hold a degree from a **non-U.S. institution that does not issue transcripts and/or does not require coursework for obtaining the degree** must upload proof of their degree (e.g., a degree certificate, if the degree has already been obtained) accompanied by an official letter from their institution including the following information:

- Statement that the institution does not issue transcripts and/or does not require coursework for obtaining the degree.
- Applicant's dates of enrollment at the institution
- Degree applicant received and date it was awarded or confirmation that applicant is currently enrolled in a doctoral program and anticipated award date.

To upload transcripts:

1. Select **Education History** in the left navigation menu.
2. Select **Edit** under the Actions header.
3. Select the **Choose File** button and select the document from your device.
4. Select the **upload** button to add the file to your application.
5. Repeat the steps above until all required transcripts have been uploaded and the upload result status is "succeeded."

Profile Uploads

1. **Dissertation Abstract**
   Maximum 1 page, *not required for Senior applicants.*

2. **Previous and Current Research**
   Maximum 4 pages

   Applicants should provide a concise, narrative description of all research investigations conducted within the past five years, including information on where, when, and with whom these investigations were carried out.

3. **Publications and Presentations**
   Maximum 2 pages, single-spaced within each entry and double-spaced between entries.

   Publications and presentations should be:

   - Only from the past five years
   - Only the most important publications if the document exceeds the maximum specified length.
   - Formatted using the following section headings for each type of publication:
     - Peer-reviewed journal articles and refereed conference proceedings
     - Non-refereed articles, including books/book chapters, proceedings, technical reports.
     - Patents
     - Presentations

   - Cited with the following:
     - Author(s)
     - Year of publication (or Accepted, Under Review, Submitted, In Preparation)
     - Title of article
     - Full name of journal, book, proceedings, etc.
     - Volume number or date of publication, if applicable
     - Page number(s), if applicable

To upload profile documents:

1. Select **Profile Uploads** in the left navigation menu.
2. Select the **Choose File** button and select the document from your device.
3. Select the **upload** button to add the file to your application.
4. Repeat the steps above until all required files have been successfully uploaded.

Research Proposal

The Research Proposal must:

- Be no longer than 10 pages, including citations, graphs, figures, and photos.
- Be innovative, technically sound, and feasible to complete in a 2–3-year period of time.
- Detail any anticipated and innovative outcomes that can be published in the peer-reviewed literature, furthering knowledge in a field of science or engineering.
- Represent the applicant's own intellectual effort (the proposed Research Adviser may suggest revisions to improve a proposal's scientific/technical quality or to provide better integration into the research mission of the agency or center).
- Include the following key elements identified with the following headings:

Statement of the problem

- Provide a clear and concise statement describing the subject area of your research and what you hope to accomplish.

Background and relevance to previous work

- Briefly review the relevant literature as it pertains to your stated problem.
- Describe how previous work—by you and others—has led to the research that you propose to perform.
- Discuss any technological developments that have contributed to the state of knowledge that will allow you to conduct this research.

General methodology

- Provide sufficient detail of your plan of work such that knowledgeable reviewers can evaluate whether the work you plan is technically sound.
- Whenever possible, refer to published methods.
- Include analytical methods that will be used to interpret or evaluate results.
- If the proposed research involves the use of animal or human subjects, include a statistical discussion of the number of animals (or human subjects) relative to the validity of the results.
- Provide an overall timeline for completion of the research within the projected length of the research project.

New or unusual methods

- If your research will include new methods or methods that are not likely to be generally known in the discipline, provide additional detail that documents the feasibility of these methods in the context of your proposed research.

Expected results and significance.

- Describe the results that you hope to obtain, including any contingencies that might apply if unexpected results are obtained or methodologies fail.
- Describe the significance of these results and how they might be used in practical application to problems of interest to the agency to which you are applying.
- If your proposed research does not have obvious practical applications, explain how the work will advance knowledge in the field that will eventually lead to practical application.

Literature cited (may be single-spaced)

- Provide citations to all published work that is cited your proposal.

To upload the research proposal:

1. Select **Agency: [Agency name]** in the left navigation menu.
2. Select the **Research Proposal** tab.
3. Select the **Choose File** button and select the document from your device.
4. Select the **upload** button to add the file to your application.

Review Application Completeness

1. Select **Data Review** in the left navigation menu.
2. Select **Review/Edit** for any page that requires completion or revision.

PLEASE NOTE:
The National Academies have a culture of transparency, accountability, and shared responsibility. Generative AI tools should be used to *enhance* rather than replace your essential voice. If generative AI Tools were used in the development of this application, we are relying on you to review and verify all AI supported content to ensure factual accuracy, relevancy, and to avoid plagiarism and copyright infringement.

Validate and Submit Application

1. Select **Validate and Submit** in the left navigation menu.
2. Confirm that all required sections of the application are complete.
    a. **Green check:** Page is complete.
    b. **Yellow triangle:** Page may be missing information, but the application may still be submitted.
    c. **Red X:** Page is incomplete, and application cannot be submitted until corrections are made.
3. Check the box to confirm that you are satisfied with the content of your application.
4. Select **Submit**.

PLEASE NOTE:
Applications with an insufficient number of letters of recommendation or missing the Dissertation Adviser letter (Postdoctoral applicants only) will be deemed incomplete and will not be considered for review. **Letter writers must successfully submit their letter via the online portal by 5:00 PM ET on the application deadline. The portal cannot accept letters after this time, and extensions will not be made for late letters sent via email. It is recommended that applicants contact their letter writers *at least two weeks in advance of the deadline* to ensure they have ample time to submit their letters.**

Access Reviewer Feedback

Approximately six weeks after the application deadline, applicants will be able to view the status of their application as well as reviewer feedback.

1. Sign in to the online portal: https://ofell.nas.edu/InfoRAP20/Home/signin.aspx?C=RAPApplicants
2. Select **Applications** in the left navigation.
3. Select **view this application** for the review cycle under the Application History header.
4. Select **Review Scores & Comments**.

Application Status Descriptions

NRC Review Complete

- Application passed the NRC review.
- Applicant is eligible to be further considered for an award.

Not Recommended by NRC Panels

- Application was reviewed by NRC panels and the average score was below that required to be considered for an award.
- Score of 60-69.9: Applicant may reapply to any Research Opportunity in any subsequent review cycle.

- Score below 60: Applicant cannot be considered for an NRC RAP or AF STFP award and must wait one year before reapplying.

NRC Offered Award

- Agency has authorized an award.
- Applicant has been or will be contacted by the Office of Fellowships with award details*

No Offer - Award Not Authorized by Lab

- Agency is not able to offer an award.
- Applicant may reapply to any Research Opportunity in any subsequent review cycle

Reviewer Scores and Comments

All applications are evaluated by at least three reviewers. Scores for each section of the application are averaged and weighted for the Category Score.

Await Award Decision

Award decisions are based on the applicant's rank among other applicants and the availability of funding.

The timing of award decisions varies by agency. In some cases, decisions may be made shortly after the review concludes, while in others, especially where funding is being determined, it may take additional time. There is no fixed deadline for laboratories to make award decisions, but the Office of Fellowships aims to get award offers out to applicants as early as possible.

Please note that reviewed applications can be considered for award offers for up to one year. Your point of contact during the application and review process is the Research Adviser of the opportunity you applied to, so please request they contact the Laboratory Program Representative(s) regarding any questions on the status of an award. The Office of Fellowships is **not** able to provide details regarding the status of funding decisions.

*Applicants will be notified by the Office of Fellowships regarding an award offer unless they applied to a NIST Research Opportunity, in which case the notification will come directly from NIST.