**Biosketches - Frequently Asked Questions**

**Reprinted from the NIH web site - (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq\_biosketches.htm#4567)**

Initial Posting: May 27, 2015, Last Revised: May 27, 2015

**I. General**

**[What biosketch format is used for NIH biosketches?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224567)**

NIH's general and fellowship [biosketch instructions](http://www.grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm#biosketch) provide detailed guidance on the required biosketch format.

NIH updated their biosketch format for applications due on/after May 25, 2015 (see [NOT-OD-13-030](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-13-030.html)). The new format applies to all programs (e.g., research, training, fellowship) and all types of applications (e.g., new, resubmission, revision, renewal, progress reports).

**[Where can I find sample biosketches?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224568)**

The [samples](http://www.grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm#biosketch) provided are simply examples of compliant biosketches. Applicants must follow [application guide](http://www.grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm#inst) instructions for pdf attachments (font, paper size, margins, etc.), as well as, the biosketch instructions themselves.

Biosketches created using SciENcv conform to all the application guide instructions and format requirements, though there are slight differences from the provided samples.

**[Can I update a biosketch post-submission to include new articles just accepted for publication or non-traditional application materials not previously available?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224569)**

No.  A new biosketch attachment is only allowed post-submission if it is related to a change in senior/key personnel due to the hiring, replacement or loss of an investigator. When allowed, the new format must be used on/after May 25, 2015.

Under some circumstances, news of a late-breaking article can be submitted following the guidelines in the Post-Submission Application Materials policy (see [NOT-OD-13-030](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-13-030.html)).Videos, products, and other non-traditional application materials (even if those materials became available after submission) are not appropriate as post-submission materials. The intention to submit those materials must be specified in the original application submission according to the instructions in [NOT-OD-12-141](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-12-141.html).

**II. SciENcv**

**[Is there a tool that can help me prepare my biosketch in the NIH format?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224570)**

The Science Experts Network Curriculum Vitae ([SciENcv](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/)), which serves as an interagency system designed to create biosketches for multiple federal agencies, supports the new NIH biosketch formats. Within SciENcv, you can easily transform an existing biosketch from one format to another (e.g. old NIH format to new NIH format, NIH format to NSF format). See [technical bulletin](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/techbull/jf15/jf15_biosketch.html) for details.

A [YouTube video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PRWy-3GXhtU&feature=youtu.be) provides instructions for using SciENcv.

**[Is the use of SciENcv required?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224571)**

Not at this time.

Although SciENcv can be used to create biosketches in the NIH format, applicants can also use other programs to create NIH formatted biosketches and convert them to PDF format on their own.

**III. Citations**

**[Are the DOI (Digital Object Identifier), PMID (PubMed reference number), and PMCID (PubMed Central reference number) required with each reference in the biosketch?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224572)**

NIH does not require a DOI (Digital Object Identifier) or PMID (PubMed reference number) with each reference in the biosketch. However, NIH does require a PMCID or other evidence of compliance with the [public access policy](http://publicaccess.nih.gov/index.htm) for papers that [fall under](http://publicaccess.nih.gov/policy.htm#Applicability) the policy and are authored by the applicant or arise from an applicant’s NIH award. Please see <http://publicaccess.nih.gov/include-pmcid-citations.htm> for more details.

NIH encourages applicants to use [SciENcv](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/) to generate their biosketches.  SciENcv quickly formats everything, including citations, according to NIH rules.

**[Is it acceptable to use ‘et al’ in citations?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224573)**

Applicants may use ‘et al’ in lieu of listing all authors in a citation.

**IV. Contributions to Science**

**[What advice do you have for new scientists filling out their scientific contributions?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224574)**

It is a little early to tell how each discipline will judge its new scientists. You might want to consult with your colleagues who serve as reviewers in your area of science. In general, reviewers base their expectations for contributions based on the seniority of the person filling out the biosketch. A scientist with one publication may want to summarize the key finding of the paper and its importance in a short contribution. Scientists with no publications may wish to provide a contribution describing their efforts on other peoples’ papers and projects (e.g., I used this method, I conducted the literature review for this paper, I care for all the animals in this lab, etc.). If a new scientist has *no* actual research or thesis experience, they might just want to list one contribution about their training to date.

**[Can I include links in my biosketch attachments?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224575)**

The biosketch ([NOT-OD-15-032](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-15-032.html)) allows applicants to include a link to a full list of their published work (both peer-reviewed, non-peer reviewed and accepted for publication) as found in a publicly available digital database such as [My Bibliography](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/myncbi/collections/mybibliography/). No other links are allowed within the biosketch.

When including an active/clickable link to published work in your biosketch, spell the URL out in full, beginning with ‘http://’ (e.g.,  <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm>). Do not include the link as hyperlinked text (e.g., [NIH Grants Web page](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm)) as eRA system processing will not retain the active link behind the hyperlinked text in the assembled application image in eRA Commons.

Web links should not be included in other areas of the application, such as the specific aims and research strategy attachments.

**[Is a link to a full list of published work required in the new biosketch format?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224576)**

No. The link to a full list of published work is allowed, but not required.

If users want to create this list and link quickly, we advise them to do so through My Bibliography (see http://publicaccess.nih.gov/communications.htm for more information). People can add papers to My Bibliography through PubMed very quickly by using the send function. Please see <http://publicaccess.nih.gov/my-bibliography-faq.htm#I.1.EnteringpublicationsintoMyBibliography> and its associated links for more information. To generate the URL to share, please see <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK53595/#mybibliography.Sharing_My_Bibliography_a> ]

[**What meets the criteria for a “publicly available digital database” to list all an applicant's published work, as mentioned in NOT-OD-15-032?**](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm#4577)

Per [NOT-OD-15-032](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-15-032.html), the new biosketch format allows applicants to include a link to a full list of their published work as found in a “publicly available digital database” such as [MyBibliography](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK53595/). The link is optional.

NIH cautions reviewers against accessing URLs that may compromise their anonymity. The NIH prefers applicants use [MyBibliography](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK53595/) because the NIH can assure reviewers that their anonymity will be protected if they review publications at that site.

Use of a publicly available database other than My Bibliography is at the discretion of the applicant, but applicants should bear in mind that reviewers are unlikely to click on unknown links.  These links must be accessible to the general public without registration and must not point to informational websites that may violate page limit rules ([NOT-OD-11-080](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-11-080.html)).

For these reasons, linking to a lab or researcher's site would be inappropriate.

**[Does the PD/PI need to be an author on a publication used to reference a contribution to science?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224578)**

No, the publication does not need to be their own. It is up to the applicant to describe their contributions. Listing a key publication that builds on their work is one way of doing so.

**[Can manuscripts still in the review process be included in the Personal Statement or Contributions to Science section of the biosketch?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224579)**

No. Only published or accepted for publication material can be included. Nothing in preparation or under review can be cited (but could be described in the narrative portions  - e.g. “ I am preparing a manuscript for Journal on my work about X”).

**V. Biosketch Compliance**

**[Do biosketches in NIH applications have a page limit?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224580)**

Biosketches using the new format are limited to 5 pages. See [Table of Page Limits](http://www.grants.nih.gov/grants/forms_page_limits.htm) for details and exceptions.

**[What application submission validations will eRA systems enforce for biosketches?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224581)**

eRA systems validate:

* + - Whether a biosketch is attached for each and every Sr/Key person listed in the application
		- That each biosketch is less than or equal to 5 pages
		- That your biosketch attachment is PDF format

Failure to meet these conditions will result in a submission error preventing your application from moving forward to NIH for consideration.

All other aspects of biosketch compliance are manually checked post-submission.

**[What does it mean to be compliant with the new biosketch policy?](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/faq_biosketches.htm%22%20%5Cl%20%224582)**

All biosketches included in applications submitted for due dates on/after May 25, 2015 must be formatted per the instructions in the [application guide](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm#inst) (and repeated in [online resources](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/index.htm#biosketch)), including:

* + - Completing each section (A - Personal Statement; B – Positions and Honors; C – Contributions to Science; D – Research Support or Scholastic Performance)
		- Including no more than 5 contributions to science with no more than 4 citations per contribution
		- Ensuring that if you include the optional link to a full list of your published work in a site like [My Bibliography](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK53595/) that the URL is public, accessible without providing any login or personal information, and doesn’t link to websites that may violate page limit rules
		- Refraining from including information, such as preliminary data, that belongs elsewhere in the application
		- Following NIH guidance on font type, font size, paper size, and margins (See section 2.6 of application guide)
		- Using PDF format for your biosketch attachment
		- Limiting the length of your biosketch to 5 pages or less

Failure to follow the policy means NIH may withdraw your application from consideration ([NOT-OD-15-095](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-15-095.html)).