

Research-Grant Writing: From Principles to Practical Skills

The course aims to help participants understand how research funding decisions dictate the content and structure of a grant application. It includes practical exercises on how to design highly fundable research projects and how to develop the writing skills to present those project effectively for any research funder.

1. Funding decisions, how they are made and how that helps a grant-writer. Participants will understand:-
 - (a) The four propositions that are the basis of a funding decision and how they dictate the content of the case for support.
 - i. Importance
 - ii. Success
 - iii. Value
 - iv. Competence
 - (b) How the nature of the research funding decision demands that the case for support have four essential properties:-
 - i. Speed-readable
 - ii. Easy to read quickly in detail.
 - iii. Easy to remember
 - iv. Easy for a non-expert to reconstruct.
 - (c) How the structure of a grant application endows the case for support with the four essential properties.
2. Designing projects that are both realistic and attractive to funders. Participants will learn:-
 - (a) How to assemble a fundable project from pieces of research that you can actually do.
 - (b) How to test your project before you begin to write your grant application.
 - (c) How to assemble a batch of fundable projects.
 - (d) How to work backwards from the research that you will actually do to the 'big question' that argues that it should be funded.
 - (e) The project outline: essential information about a research project that will be needed for a grant application.
3. How to describe a research project in a way that is accessible for a grants committee, most of whom are not expert on the topic of the grant, and all of whom work under immense time pressure. Applicants will understand:-
 - (a) The twelve key sentences that define a grant application.
 - (b) How to write for a 'speed reader'
 - (c) How to write for an expert in a hurry
 - (d) How to make it easy for a reader to remember what your project is about and why it is important.
 - (e) How to make it easy for a reader to explain your project to somebody else so that both of them understand it and think it's important.
 - (f) How to describe your project in a way that convinces the reader that the resources you are requesting are both necessary and sufficient.
 - (g) How to describe your project in a way that convinces the reader that you are capable of carrying it out.
4. Practical exercises in writing and editing.
 - (a) How to draft the 12 key sentences quickly.
 - (b) How to use the 12 key sentences to generate other parts of the proposal.
 - (c) How to use the project outline for checking your proposal.
 - (d) How to use the 12 key sentences concept to improve a badly written proposal.
 - (e) How to use the 12 key sentences to write the summary and the introduction.

Presenter



Andrew Derrington has in-depth experience of the research funding process. His first research grant was a Beit Memorial Fellowship for Medical Research, which he obtained in 1978. His research was continuously funded by fellowships, project and programme grants for the next 30 years. He served on research grant committees for several UK research councils and the Wellcome Trust. The approach to grant writing that he teaches is based on his analysis of how grants committees make funding decisions.

Andrew has worked in eight different Universities including two in the world top ten. He has led a Department of Psychology and a School of Biology in a Faculty of Science, Agriculture and Engineering. He has been Dean of a Faculty of Social Sciences and Pro Vice Chancellor of a Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Andrew has also worked as a journalist. He won a Science Media Fellowship, which enabled him to work full-time at the Financial Times for 3 months. Then, over several years he wrote two successful columns in the Financial Times. *The Nature of Things* was about science – from astrophysics to zoology. *Psych Yourself Up* was a guide to the different kinds of psychotherapy available in the UK.

Testimonials

Andrew's workshop provides a clear road-map for developing successful grant applications. Our senior researchers were so impressed by the concepts and routines around which Andrew builds his training programme that we introduced them as a core component in the University's experience-sharing network (ProposalNet) for early-career researchers.

Prof Howard Rush, Centre for Research in Innovation Management, University of Brighton

Andrew's clear guidance on how to rewrite our failed application led to success, which we have repeated several times by following the same guidance. As a result, the group's grant income has grown by over 400%.

Prof Paul Flecknell, Newcastle University

I attended one of Andrew's workshops when I was a senior lecturer. The hands on advice about how to structure my applications in a really appealing fashion enabled me to win a grant of nearly £600K the next year. I still implement the advice that I received in that workshop, and pass it down to junior colleagues. I find that Andrew's advice has a high success rate!

Prof Theresa Gannon, University of Kent

I still use the tips you gave me for my successful Wellcome SRF application. Your advice on "12 key sentences" is spot-on and helps people focus on the aspects of the proposal that are critical to success instead of getting bogged down in reams of text.

Prof Mark Baxter, Mount Sinai School of Medicine

Andrew's grant-writing workshops teach you how to convince the world that it needs your research. They are the most useful training events I have ever attended. His advice about how to sell the big idea without compromising on the science was critical to the success of our £9.3 million ESRC application.

Prof Julian Pine, University of Liverpool