

ODYSSEY FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION GUIDELINES AND INSTRUCTIONS

ELIGIBILITY:

Odyssey Fellows must have a doctoral degree (Ph.D., M.D., D.Phil. or equivalent). Must have a postdoctoral appointment less than two (2) years before funding starts (September 1st) if the postdoctoral appointment has always been at MD Anderson, or less than three (3) years total at any combination of institutions. Must also not be supported by any fellowships at the time the funding starts or agree to forfeit the current funding. Applicants must either have an appointment at MD Anderson, or have been provided an official offer letter from MD Anderson, and plan to take the position before or at the time funding starts (September 1st), in order to be eligible to apply. Once appointed into the Odyssey program, fellows may not officially affiliate in any organized fellowship that is in conflict with the Odyssey Program's mission. A maximum of two Odyssey Fellowships per PI at any one time will be awarded.

REVIEW CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

Applications are reviewed by the Odyssey Advisory Committee in the March or April prior to the funding start date, following the general format and approach used by NIH Study Sections dealing with fellowship (F32, K99/R00) applications. Review criteria will include Significance, Applicant/Candidate, Innovation, Approach, and Environment/Training Potential. The reviewers will prepare critiques to be communicated to the applicant. Each proposal will be reviewed by two or three members of the Odyssey Advisory Committee. Additional faculty may be requested to participate in application review on an ad hoc basis, as necessary.

1. Quality of the Applicant

- a. Publications - quantity and/or quality. Is the applicant a first author or a major contributor to the paper? Has the applicant published in top-tier journals?
- b. Letters of recommendation
- c. Career Statement

2. Quality of the Proposal

- a. Experimental Plan - Is the approach reasonable?
- b. Training Potential - Will the candidate obtain new training in this lab?
- c. Innovation - Is the proposal innovative?
- d. Feasibility of completing a research plan in 3 years

3. Quality of the Mentoring Statement from the sponsoring PI

- a. Did the mentor write a detailed plan about how he/she will develop the career of the candidate?
- b. The statement should include specifics e.g. training to improve presentation and writing skills; opportunities to present at national/international meetings; statements on how the mentor will guide the postdoc applicant's career.

LENGTH OF APPLICATION AND PAGINATION:

All pages must be typed using 10-12 point font size; ¾ (0.75) inch side, top and bottom margins; and numbers at the bottom. Applications not adhering to this guideline will be returned.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

1. Odyssey Fellowship Application Form – 1 page
2. Biosketches in NIH format for the applicant and the advisor – 5 pages maximum for each
3. Letter from the advisor indicating willingness to mentor and outlining a training plan – 1-2 pages
4. Summary of Proposed Research with literature cited - 5 pages, not including the references
5. Two recommendation letters
6. Up to three published/accepted manuscripts

Research Plan Components

Specific Aims: (Recommended: 1 page)

Introduce the topic, state what is known about the topic, and state what is not known (the gap in knowledge as related to the objective of your overall proposal). State the central hypothesis that you propose to test or the purpose of the overall proposal. It should be related to the gap in knowledge. List the specific aims by which you will test the hypothesis or accomplish your purpose. State your long-term goal. Identify the aspect—central hypothesis or one of the specific aims—for which you must develop preliminary data and explain why it is critical.

Background and Significance: (Recommended: ½ page)

Briefly sketch the background of the proposal and critically evaluate existing knowledge.

Experimental Plan: (Recommended: 2 pages)

Describe the experimental design and the procedures to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the work described in the application. Describe the protocols to be used and tentative sequence of the investigation. Describe how the data will be analyzed and interpreted. Describe new methodology and its advantage over any existing methodology. Discuss the potential difficulties and limitations of the proposed procedures and alternative approaches to achieve the aims. Point out any procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to personnel and the precautions to be exercised. Include a brief description of physical resources available, if appropriate.

Statement of Innovation: (Recommended: ½ page)

Describe how your proposal challenges existing research or seeks to influence clinical practice, if applicable. Explain any new or emerging theories, approaches, methods, instruments, or interventions. Describe why they are more advantageous than existing theories, methods, or tools.

Training Potential: (Recommended: ½ page)

Describe a training plan necessary to conduct your proposed research and develop the knowledge for professional development skills. Describe the potential of the Odyssey Fellowship to serve as a sound foundation that will facilitate your transition to the next career stage and enhance your ability to develop into an independent and productive research scientist.

Career Statement: (Recommended: ½ page)

Provide a brief summary of your past research and future career plans.

Mentor Letter

Mentor should state that they intend to mentor the applicant for the three years of the Odyssey Program and briefly describe the mentor's commitment to participate in Odyssey program-specific activities.

Mentors should also outline a training plan individually tailored to the applicant. The plan should describe activities such as seminars, scientific conferences, and opportunities for interaction with other scientists. Training in career skills, such as grant writing, lecturing, and giving scientific presentations, is encouraged.

Please note that the mentor letter weighs heavily in the scoring process.

Recommendation Letters

The Odyssey Fellowship Application form requests information on two referees, neither of them the advisor. Use the Odyssey Reference Form and attach a detailed letter using the recommender's letterhead. It is the responsibility of the applicant to download the Odyssey Recommendation Form, send these forms to their referees, and follow up whether our Odyssey Program received the letters. Letters received past the deadline will not be included in the packet and incomplete submissions will be disqualified.