Grading Criteria for Graduate Student Grant Proposals
Molecular Ecology
Fall 2006

1. Your proposal should be concise and clear. Come up with a one or two major hypotheses and/or objectives and gear your entire proposal toward addressing these.
2. Focus should be on valid use of molecular techniques in ecological research.
3. Use multiple sources in your introduction and literature review. You have a dual intention here: demonstrate mastery of the subject matter, and convince your reviewers that you are addressing important and timely issues with your proposed research.
4. Your proposal should be written so that other scientists can easily understand it. You can assume that the reader has a basic understanding of ecology and molecular genetics.
5. Use a clear and logical writing style. It is fine to try and make the proposal interesting and entertaining, but keep it professional as well.
6. Use correct grammar and spelling. Errors in this area can seriously compromise your credibility in a proposal.
7. Make sure your facts are accurate and your arguments are logical.
8. Support all factual statements with citations from the literature, personal communications, or preliminary data. The latter is a key component of most competitive proposals!

Length: 5-10 pages, 1 inch margins, 1.5 spacing, 12 point font.

Title Page: Title of the proposal, author, and a project summary of 250 words or less. Summary should provide objectives, general approach and the overall significance of the study. (not included in page limit)

1. Introduction (2 to 4 pages):
   a. Importance of your research question
   b. What is known about your chosen system
   c. What needs to be known
   d. Justification for your approach
   e. Objectives and hypotheses

2. Methods (2 to 4.5 pages):
   a. Organize methods according to your objectives and hypotheses
   b. Include approximate sample sizes and timelines
   c. Provide enough technical detail so reviewers can assess the soundness of your approach (but not TOO much)

3. Significance (1 page)
   a. Why your work is worthy of funding
   b. How your field will be advanced as a result of this study

4. Timeline and Milestones (0.5 page)
   a. State exactly what you will do and when. Usually works best as a table.

5. References Cited (not included in page limit)
6. Budget and Justification (not included in page limit)
   a. Provide enough details so reviewers can assess adequacy and appropriateness
   b. See online examples
Grading

____ Statements supported with logical arguments and appropriate citations. (5 points)
____ Uses a clear and logical writing style. (5 points)
____ Clear hypotheses or objectives. (5 pts)
____ Covers valid use of molecular techniques in ecological research. (5 pts)
____ Introduction demonstrates mastery and sets context for proposed research. (5 pts)
____ Proposed methods are appropriate and well-defended. (5 pts)
____ Significance and importance of the work cogently described. (5 pts)
____ Budget and timeline are reasonable. (5 pts)
____ Uses correct grammar and spelling. (5 points)
____ Concise. Little unnecessary text or filler language. (5 pts)

____ Total Score

Specific Comments: