



How to write a successful research proposal for an ICGEB fellowship

The research proposal is the backbone of your application as it will be read by the ICGEB Fellowships Selection Committee for assessment and constitutes the primary source to evaluate your suitability to undertake the proposed research path.

It should demonstrate why you are a suitable fellow for the research you propose and why the supervisor should take you on as a research fellow.

Your research proposal should include the following parts:

- **Title:** it should clearly state what you propose to accomplish.
- **Abstract** (maximum 200 words): a very brief and clear summary of your intended research. This is the first section of your research project read by the reviewers and not all the reviewers will be experts in your field of research or the techniques you propose. A concise, clear and organised text will help them to grasp/understand your project.
- **Brief description of your proposed research** (maximum 1,000 words): please write your proposed research project and timetable including: the topic/area, problem/hypothesis to be tested, methods/techniques to be used in the investigation, details of your previous work in the proposed field (if applicable), indication on how this links with current projects in the hosting laboratory. This project has to be agreed together with the ICGEB Group Leader contacted. Please add maximum one figure and/or table.
- **Specific aims** (maximum 200 words): indicate what you plan to achieve.
- **References** (maximum 200 words): a short essential bibliography.

Some useful tips

- Make sure that you have collected all the necessary data/material/literature to support your proposal.
- Make good use of each section; do not repeat concepts that already present in other sections (i.e. Abstract, Brief description etc.)
- Remember to present your idea and foreseen outcomes with clarity, highlighting what is the added value that your research will bring to your field of study, i.e. the potential outcome must be clearly indicated in the proposal. For short-term fellowship it is very important to frame the proposed project within the current work at your home institution with a clear follow up when back home.
- Provide full details on how you plan to carry out your research, including your approach and methodology. You should demonstrate to your supervisor that you already have a good understanding of the research methods to be used and how they will be applied to your proposed research.
- All the objectives must be clearly outlined, each one described in a logical order.
- Pay particular attention to the individual objectives you aim to achieve at each stage of your planned research, keeping in mind the total timeframe available (e.g., a PhD can take three to four years of full-time study to be completed while a short-term lasts few months).
- Keep in mind that your proposal must be flexible (some experiments may not work out as planned) and feasible; therefore a solid work plan is an essential component of your research proposal.



- Ask one of your colleagues or your current mentor/supervisor to read your proposal as you might receive useful feedback from them. It will also be useful to ask somebody from outside your area of research to have a look at your proposal, particularly at the abstract to verify that your summary is also understood by a non-expert in your field of research.

In a nutshell, a good proposal should:

- be concise
- present a clear hypothesis
- be realistic, proposing goals that can be achieved within the proposed time
- propose original, innovative studies

Proposals that are unclear or illogical, that are very descriptive or that are unrealistic in their objectives or in the time proposed will not be positively considered.