Aquaculture Graduate Research Fellowship

eSeaGrant Instructions

OVERVIEW

Applications are due by March 13, 2020 at 5:00 pm Eastern Time. If you plan to apply, we strongly recommend notifying Virginia Sea Grant (VASG) and registering for eSeaGrant at least two weeks in advance of the deadline. Please review the fellowship announcement (https://vaseagrant.org/) and refer to these instructions as a guide to submit your application using eSeaGrant.

REGISTERING FOR ESEAGRANT

Applicants can register for eSeaGrant by visiting the website (http://vaseagrant.ecsion.com), selecting the "Register" tab, and completing the required information. If you do not receive a "welcome" email with login credentials shortly after registering, please contact Sam Lake (contact information below). Once you login, you can change your password. To do so, click your name in the upper-right corner of the screen, and select "My Profile.”

CREATING A FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION

To start an application, or edit an existing application, click on "Current Tasks" on the banner head, and select "Add Fellowship Application" under "VASG-NEFSC Aquaculture Graduate Research Fellowship."

Once you have added the fellowship application to your Current Tasks, progress down through the sequence of application sections ("Start Here" through "Submission Preview") listed on the left side of the window to submit your application. Guidance related to these sections follows, in sequence. Please note - some sections may require additional pop-up pages. Please allow your browser to display pop-up windows and enable JavaScript.

eSeaGrant provides sections to upload your signed title page, resumes/CVs, career and professional development goal statement, undergraduate and graduate school transcripts, project narrative, and budget and budget justification. These documents must be converted to PDFs. To preserve confidentiality, letters of recommendations must be uploaded directly from the referees to VASG through eSeaGrant. Applicants must identify and submit requests to their referees through eSeaGrant, by entering their referees’ names and email addresses in the corresponding section. Applicants must click the "Submit” button in the "Submission Preview" section to complete their application.

All elements, including recommendation letters, must be submitted by the deadline. VASG will not accept late applications under any circumstances. Please allow ample time to submit your application. Confirmation of the application and recommendation letters will be automatically generated and sent by eSeaGrant. If you do not receive confirmation shortly after submitting your application, please contact Sam Lake.
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

For full details on the application guidelines, required elements, and review and selection process, please download the VASG-NEFSC Aquaculture Graduate Research Fellowship announcement. The information included below should not be considered a comprehensive guide. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the additional guidance documents and related templates available at: https://vaseagrant.org/

Signed Title Page (two-page maximum)

The title page must list the project title, identify and provide contact information for the prospective fellow and faculty advisor(s). The start and end date (09/01/2020 - 08/31/2022), and the total amount of VASG-NEFSC and matching funds being requested for each project year must also be listed. Required institutional endorsements must be included on the title page (at a minimum a representative from the university's Office of Sponsored Programs/Research and the student's primary faculty advisor's digital or handwritten signature). These are often provided by institutional sponsored program offices or equivalent to verify that the institution has reviewed the application. A template can be found on the VASG website.

In addition, include a list of funders (agency, organizations, university programs, etc.) and funding amounts that are supporting any proposed research. Separate research funding is not a requirement or selection criteria for Aquaculture Graduate Research Fellowship support. Although students will need to demonstrate the feasibility of implementing the proposed work. Please indicate if the funding program(s) peer-reviewed the associated proposal/research work plan.

Career and Professional Development Goal Statement (two-page maximum)

The statement should describe your educational/professional goals and ambitions, and professional growth interests and objectives. Include how these goals relate to broader societal needs in the coastal and marine aquaculture context. The statement should emphasize how past experiences and competencies contribute toward your short- (1-5yr) and long-term (>5yr) goals and in particular, how this fellowship would contribute toward those goals.

Speak to your leadership potential, communication ability, industry or other stakeholder engagement interests or experience, and include any pertinent information that provides insights into your past choices and future interests. Illustrate what motivates you today and moving forward with your research and its application. A section of the statement should include a timeline of activities and professional competencies you hope to achieve over the duration of the fellowship, i.e., the initial outline of an individualized professional development plan that will be fleshed out with your NEFSC professional mentor and VASG's Professional Development Coordinator, after the fellowship has been awarded.

Letters of Recommendation

Two letters of recommendation should be submitted in support of the student. To maintain confidentiality, VASG requires that letters are NOT submitted with the student's application. There is no page limit for letters, but VASG recommends that letters not exceed two pages and not include attachments.

The student's primary faculty advisor or appropriate faculty member (who is the PI on the research award the applicant will be working on during the fellowship) must provide one letter of recommendation. Co-advisors are encouraged to submit a joint letter.

For the second letter of recommendation, VASG encourages applicants to consider someone who might know you from a different perspective than your academic advisor (e.g., former employer, mentor from a previous relevant internship, someone you worked with on an outreach or policy project). It is most important to select someone who will write a strong letter for you, but an "outside" perspective helps to demonstrate your breadth and will likely highlight different strengths and experiences.
**IMPORTANT** - To maintain confidentiality, letters of recommendation should be submitted directly from the referee to VASG through eSeaGrant and must be submitted by the application deadline to be considered. Please address letters to Dr. Troy Hartley, Director Virginia Sea Grant. Candidates are encouraged to work with referees to meet the deadline.

**Resumes/CVs (two-page maximum per Resume/CV)**

A brief CV or resume should be included for the student and primary advisor(s). Do not include the CVs of committee members, other associated project participants, or others.

**Project Narrative (four-page maximum, including figures, tables, and other graphics but excluding literature cited and data management plan)**

Project title and name of student must be included in the header. The narrative is intended to be a brief summary of your proposed thesis or area of study, and how you will leverage those activities to achieve your proposed outreach plan. The final research proposal, professional mentorship, and outreach plans will be developed and launched in collaboration with Dr. Lisa Milke and the VASG Professional Development Coordinator, Michelle Rodriguez. Applicants should not contact Dr. Milke or Michelle Rodriguez prior to applying.

The narrative should include sufficient detail to evaluate the appropriateness and relevance of your research topic, and how the project aligns with NOAA aquaculture priorities, the VASG Strategic Plan, and the major research areas (e.g., shellfish aquaculture, aquaculture-environment interactions, ocean acidification) of the Milford Laboratory. The narrative should include the following subsections: Introduction, Research Rational and Relevance, Draft Outreach Plan, Outcomes and Broader Societal Impacts, Draft Professional Mentorship Plan, Timeline, Team and Coordination, Literature Cited, and Data Management Plan. Refer to the fellowship announcement for detailed guidance on each of these subsections.

**Budget and Budget Justification**

The purpose of the Aquaculture Graduate Research Fellowship is to fully support the student’s academic expenses. Up to $40,000 per year for up to two years for full-time graduate, professional degree or Ph.D. students can be requested for eligible fellowship-related expenses (defined below).

**Eligible Costs:** student stipend; fringe benefits; tuition; enrollment, university and graduate program fees; health insurance; indirect costs; VASG Graduate Symposium and conference fees, expenses and travel; and travel to the Milford Laboratory to participate in professional development and outreach activities.

**Ineligible Costs:** research and lab supplies; research and field work travel; sample processing; research-related service fees; laboratory and field equipment (expendable supplies and permanent equipment); and other expenses needed to conduct research activities.

Ideally, the budget will include, at a minimum, support for the fellow to travel to the Milford Laboratory, to attend one to two VASG meetings per year around Virginia (e.g., VASG’s Graduate Symposium in Richmond, Fellowship Orientation Meeting, and Professional Development Workshops), and attendance at one professional conference.

VASG-funded projects require a 50% funding match (i.e., budgets must show $1 of match for every $2 of Sea Grant funding requested). Only non-Federal funds may be committed as matching contribution. In-kind contributions, unrecovered F&A and tuition, non-federal research expense, start-up funds, faculty salaries, travel support (research, conference, professional development, etc.), partial stipend and tuition are all examples of match.

Historically, common methods used to meet the match and full support requirements have included: 1) providing partial support for the stipend and/or tuition as part of the required match (although that partial support cannot come with other responsibilities, e.g., teaching assistantships), or 2) the academic institutions volunteering to waive overhead on
the federal dollars. To date, VASG partner institutions have chosen the latter option and have used the foregone overhead to make up most or all of their match requirement.

Budgets should be developed in the 90-4 budget worksheet (available on the VASG website). The budget justification must be a detailed description of each cost item in the 90-4 budget; additional guidance is available on the VASG website. VASG strongly encourages students to begin working early with their institution’s research administration or sponsored programs office to develop their budgets.

Undergraduate and Graduate School Transcripts

Unofficial copies are acceptable, but must clearly indicate the name of institution, degree program, courses taken, and GPAs. Transcripts should be included in reverse chronological order (i.e., newest transcripts first). All personal identification numbers (social security, student ID, etc.), personal email addresses, mailing addresses, etc. should be redacted prior to submission.

IMPORTANT

All Virginia university students applying for the joint VASG-NEFSC Aquaculture Graduate Research Fellowship must have their fellowship applications approved by their home institution’s sponsored programs/research office prior to submitting to VASG. Each institution may handle this differently, although all will have an internal deadline for submitting applications to their sponsored programs/research office for their review and approval prior to VASG’s deadline.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

These instructions, VASG’s fellowship announcement, application templates, and additional resources can be found at: https://vaseagrant.org/fellowship-research-funding/fellowships/research-fellowships/virginia-sea-grant-graduate-research-fellowships/.

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