

NIH PEER REVIEW NOTES

February 1996

The Division of Research Grants publishes NIH Peer Review Notes three times a year, to inform NIH consultants and staff of new developments related to NIH grant application review policies and procedures. Comments may be sent to the Editor, NIH Peer Review Notes, Office of Information and Analysis, Division of Research Grants, National Institutes of Health, Suite 3172, 6701 ROCKLEDGE DRIVE MSC-7768, BETHESDA, MD 20892-7768, 301-435-0692.



E-mail: drginfo@drg.nih.gov.

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Effects of Furloughs/Blizzard on Receipt, Referral, and Review of Applications

Federal government furloughs in both November and December of 1995, as well as a blizzard in January this year, have affected the usual administration of NIH grant awards including receipt, referral, and

review of grant applications. NIH's Deputy Director of Extramural Research, Dr. Wendy Baldwin, has been updating the public about changes and delays affecting extramural programs via the news media, NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts, and the NIH Home Page (<http://www.nih.gov>). The following actions to reactivate the administration of NIH extramural research programs after the month-long shutdown have been implemented.

Issuance of Grant Awards

The NIH has given priority to actions most needed to prevent further disruption of ongoing research and research training programs. Staff have begun processing the substantial backlog of grant awards that were eligible to be paid after the October national advisory council meetings.

Before the next group of applications may be awarded, action is required by the national advisory councils that were scheduled to meet in January. NIH staff is exerting every effort to hold the council meetings as scheduled to minimize the impact of delayed awards on future year research administration.

Receipt and Referral of Applications

Because the November furlough disrupted the processing of the October 1 and November 1 submissions, the Division of Research Grants' (DRG) Referral Office was not able to maintain the usual schedule for the Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR), Individual National Research Service Award (NRSA), and Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant applications that arrived in early December. In addition, during the second furlough, applications arrived in response to Requests for Applications (RFAs) and for the standing AIDS receipt date early in January.

DRG staff adopted the following priority of work for the Referral Office. First, all applications received for the October 1 and November 1 receipt dates were processed. Next, applications submitted in response to RFAs before and during the furlough were processed; those received after the furlough continue to receive expedited handling. Then, AIDS-related applications received on January 2 were assigned to integrated review groups. The individual NRSA (fellowship) applications were the next group to be completed, followed by both SBIR and STTR applications that had been assigned for one council round later than usual (August 1996 rather than May 1996). However, review of many of these applications is expected to be completed in time for consideration for the May 1996 council meetings. Finally, the institutional NRSA (training grant) applications were processed and assigned. Because of inclement weather, the receipt date for these applications was extended from January 10 to January 19. It is expected that these applications will be reviewed on schedule for consideration at October 1996 council meetings.

Receipt Dates

The receipt date for REVISED applications (this cycle only) has been extended from March 1 to March 15.

The receipt date for COMPETING CONTINUATION and SUPPLEMENTAL applications has not changed. Applications must be submitted for the March 1 receipt date.

Referral Office policy regarding late applications remains unchanged throughout this period. Acceptance of late applications will be considered on an individual basis; the factors considered are the reasons for the delay and the ability of the appropriate study section to accommodate the application. Permission to submit a late application is not granted in advance. If not submitted on time, a cover letter explaining the circumstances for the delay must accompany the application.

Integrated Review Group Meetings

integrated review group meetings have been most affected by the furloughs, because the ability to receive, process, assign, print, and mail applications to reviewers in a timely manner has been limited. Consequently, many review meetings were postponed. The goal was to reschedule meetings to take place by March 30 so requisite material is available for the May round of council meetings. The postponements mean summary statements will be received by applicants later than usual.

For general information about recovery plans and actions, contact:

Wendy Baldwin, Ph.D. Deputy Director for Extramural Research email: DDER@nih.gov

Recruitment of the DRG Director

The period for the receipt of applications for the position of Director, DRG, closed November 1, 1995. The furlough of Federal employees delayed the recruitment process, but progress is underway again. The search committee is expected to complete the interviews of candidates and submit a list of recommended names to the NIH Director, Dr. Harold Varmus, near the end of February.

...from the NIH Home Page...

By January 30, 1996, less than 3 weeks after the shutdowns, NIH staff issued almost 1,700 awards for more than \$394 million. By February 14, almost 3,700 awards had been issued for more than \$898 million, with only a few more than 600 awards remaining to be issued from the backlog.



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Study of IRGs to Encompass All DRG Review Committees

The DRG is continuing its efforts to enhance the ability and opportunity for teams of scientific review administrators to optimize the responsiveness of NIH initial peer review to the dynamics of contemporary biomedical and biobehavioral research. In January 1996, DRG implemented a pilot operational structure for the entire Referral and Review Branch (RRB) that encompassed the 18 pilot independent integrated review groups (IRGs) and realigned administrative and managerial responsibilities of its senior staff ([see chart](#)). In the configuration of review functions, all review staff members in "special review" have been assimilated into one of 18 IRGs based on the scientific subject matter reviewed. This integration will better serve review activities throughout each review cycle. Each IRG will have a coordinator, who serves in three roles:

- scientific review administrator in the subject matter of the IRG;
- referral officer for application distribution within the IRG's purview; and
- team leader for the management of the IRG.

In May 1995, DRG initiated the Pilot Independent IRG Study (PII). The study design was built upon the foundation established in January 1994 when more than 85 separate and diverse study sections were regrouped into 18 broadly constituted, cohesive scientific entities as chartered IRGs. At the DRG Advisory Committee meeting in November 1995, RRB staff members presented their experiences with the 8 IRGs in the PII--Biobehavioral and Social Sciences; Cell Development and Function; Endocrinology and Reproductive Sciences; Genetic Sciences; Immunological Sciences; Nutritional and Metabolic Sciences; Oncological Sciences; and, Pathophysiological Sciences. After extensive discussion, the advisory committee strongly recommended that the PII concept be expanded to all IRGs as soon as possible.

In the forthcoming months, the RRB will further develop this flexible referral and initial peer review structural model, with the intent of being more immediately responsive to changes in peer review procedures and emerging areas of science.



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Grants Information Office Reorganized

Recently, the DRG Grants Information Office (GIO) was reorganized, with the trans-NIH extramural programs functions being transferred to the Office of Extramural Research (OER), Office of the Director, NIH. Ms. Judith Grover, deputy chief, GIO, and Ms. Darlene Jackson and Mr. Matthew Burr, information specialists, were transferred to the new Office of Extramural Outreach and Information Resources, OER.

Dr. Samuel Joseloff and Ms. Lynne Williams remain with the DRG. For information and publications related to DRG and the receipt, referral, and review of applications, contact:

Mr. James Tucker
Chief, Office of Information and Analysis
301-435-0692
email: tuckerj@drg.nih.gov

Ms. Lynne Williams
Public Affairs Specialist, Office of Information and Analysis
301-435-0694
email: williaml@drg.nih.gov

Dr. Samuel Joseloff
Assistant Director for Special Programs
301-435-0691
email: joselofs@drg.nih.gov

For information about NIH extramural programs and to request copies of a grant application kit and program guidelines, contact:

Extramural Outreach and Information Resources Office
Office of Extramural Research
6701 ROCKLEDGE DRIVE MSC 7910
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20892-7910
301-435-0714 fax: 301-480-8443
email: asknih@odrockml.od.nih.gov

In addition, information about the NIH extramural programs is available through the NIH website (<http://www.nih.gov>).



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DRG Executive Officer Retires

Mr. James M. Pike, Executive Officer, Division of Research Grants (DRG), retired recently after 36 years of Federal service spent at the NIH. "I have been in the Federal Government my whole career," he said, "and I have enjoyed, in particular, the team spirit and enthusiasm of the NIH, National Heart, Lung,

and Blood Institute, and DRG families."

A native Washingtonian, Mr. Pike received his B.S. from the University of Maryland in 1960. After graduating, he came to NIH as an indexer in the DRG, working with what is now known as the CRISP system (Computer Retrieval of Information on Scientific Projects).

In 1961, he accepted a position in the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute where he was promoted to more senior levels of responsibility in the grants management field and was appointed Chief, Grants Operations Branch within the NHLBI's Division of Extramural Affairs.

In 1986, he left the NHLBI to join DRG as its executive officer to conduct the management of the division's fiscal, administrative, and personnel functions, as well as its information and communication activities. Dr. Jerome Green, former DRG Director, praised Mr. Pike's management skill, loyalty, and allegiance to the corporate structure of NIH. He also remarked, "Jim became a major figure in grants management activities at NIH." A colleague praised him for his "...wonderful ability to defuse tense situations with his sense of humor. He is the ultimate consensus builder." Another admired his "easy-going, yet highly respected and effective management style...sincere interest and concern regarding his coworkers, which comes through quickly and clearly."

During his career, Mr. Pike received several awards including the NIH Director's Award, Public Health Services' Special Recognition Award, a Special Achievement Award, and Sustained High Quality Performance Awards. In 1978, he received the Association of American Medical Colleges' Academic Achievement Award. Also, he was a member of the National Council of University Research Administrators.

Mr. Pike plans to take some time to relax, but will very likely be off and running with the next phase of his career. His top-flight expertise and insight will surely be missed by DRG staff and colleagues throughout the NIH community.



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Tuition Costs, New NRSA Policy

Recently, the NIH announced a new policy related to tuition costs for National Research Service Award (NRSA) research training grants and fellowships. This policy, announced in the NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts (Volume 25, No. 2, February 2, 1996), is based on recommendations from the NIH Task Force on Tuition Policy, which held a public forum on tuition costs at the NIH on June 5, 1995. First, the policy is designed to establish uniformity for NIH reimbursement of tuition costs on training grants and fellowships, which previously varied considerably across the NIH institutes and centers. The second

objective is to lend some predictability, so training institutions will know in advance how much of these training costs will be covered by the NIH.

For the purposes of this policy, tuition includes the costs associated with tuition, fees, and self-only health insurance that may be required for graduate students and postdoctorates supported by an NRSA. The new tuition policy begins with fiscal year 1996, new and competing continuation awards for training grants and will be phased in for fellowships in fiscal year 1997. Tuition costs on noncompeting continuation training grants and fellowships will be reimbursed according to policies in effect at the last competition.

Under the new policy, the NIH will reimburse 100 percent of the cost of tuition up to \$2,000 and 60 percent of tuition costs above \$2,000 for each predoctoral trainee and fellow as well as each undergraduate trainee supported by an NRSA training grant. This policy applies to training grants made under the Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) and Career Opportunities in Research (COR) programs, but does not include the Minority Fellowship Program of the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

This policy applied to postdoctoral trainees even though support for postdoctoral tuition costs is limited to the cost of self-only health insurance and the specific courses in support of the approved research training program. Such costs for postdoctorates require prior approval on a case-by-case basis. This policy also will apply to postdoctoral fellowship awards beginning in fiscal year 1997. In the future, noncompeting award tuition costs will be reimbursed in the amount paid in the previous award year, unless there is a change in research training scope.

Other policies regarding carryover and rebudgeting of training funds remain unchanged. For example:

- carryover of unobligated training grant funds is permissible only with the prior written approval of the NIH awarding institute or center;
- the awardee institution retains full authority to rebudget funds into or within the stipend and tuition cost categories of an institutional training grant; and
- rebudgeting funds into the trainee travel and the institutional cost categories, however, requires the prior written approval of the NIH awarding component.



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Revised Fellowship Application Kits

The revised version of the Individual National Research Service Award (NRSA--fellowship application), PHS 416-1, and the Individual NRSA continuation application, PHS 416-9, are now

available. The new application forms will be accepted for the April 5 and August 5, 1996, receipt dates and must be used for the receipt date of December 5, 1996. The PHS 416-1 (revised 8/95) and 416-9 (revised 8/95) supersede all previous editions.

The revised application kit contains form pages separate from the instruction booklet, so applicants can use one instruction booklet for several application submissions. The instruction booklet contains instructions for completing the application, sample form pages, and general information.

To request copies of the PHS 416-1 and a PHS 416-9, revised 8/95, (specify instruction booklet and/or form pages), contact:

Extramural Outreach and Information Resources Office
Office of Extramural Research
6701 ROCKLEDGE DRIVE MSC 7910
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20892-7910
301-435-0714 fax: 301-480-8443
email: asknih@odrockm1.od.nih.gov



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Thirteenth Meeting of the DRG Advisory Committee

The thirteenth meeting of the DRG Advisory Committee took place on November 13 and 14, 1995, at the Rockledge 2 Building, the DRG's new headquarters. In a lively and open discussion, the committee members, DRG staff, and other NIH staff covered a wide range of topics. These topics included, among others: an update on the various NIH reinvention activities; the proposed reorganization of the division's integrated review groups and study sections; flexibility in the review of individual postdoctoral fellowship applications; joint workshops and study section meetings; ways in which study sections respond to changes in science; scientific review administrators' outreach activities to the scientific community; interactions with the NIH institutes and centers; appointment of study section members; ways to enable scientific review administrators to travel more frequently to professional meetings; possible new ways to rate grant applications; and the celebration of the DRG anniversary and 50 years of peer review.

Fortunately, the participants were able to complete the agenda just before the first Government furlough. It was definitely a historic meeting.

If you wish to receive the minutes from the meeting, contact:

DRG Committee Management Office
National Institutes of Health
6701 ROCKLEDGE DRIVE, Room 3016
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20892
301-435-1124

The next DRG Advisory Committee meeting is planned for May 20 and 21, 1996, in the Natcher Conference Center, Room F, NIH main campus.

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50th Birthday Celebration for DRG and Peer Review

The peer review system at NIH marks its origins with the establishment of the NIH Research Grants Office in January 1946. NIH and the Division of Research Grants will celebrate the 50th anniversary of this event on June 20, 1996. On that day, there will be a symposium at the Natcher Conference Center highlighting the past, present, and future of peer review. There will be no fee for attendance at the symposium, but registration is required.

[More information](#) will be available from DRG scientific review administrators.

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NIH Extramural Trends Published

The DRG recently published the latest volume of 10 year data on the National Institutes of Health extramural programs entitled [NIH Extramural Trends, Fiscal Years 1985-1994](#). Produced annually, this publication provides data analyses, yearly changes, as well as significant long-term trends in NIH support to institutions throughout the United States and foreign countries. A summary of the fiscal years 1985 and 1994 NIH extramural budget is also included.

To receive a copy, contact:

Extramural Outreach and Information Resources Office

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6701 ROCKLEDGE DRIVE MSC 7910
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20892-7910
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email: asknih@odrockml.od.nih.gov



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Personnel Update

NIH

Departure:

Ms. Lily Engstrom, Assistant Director, Office of Extramural Research, Office of the Director (OD), joined the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Retirement:

Dr. George Galasso, Associate Director for Extramural Affairs, Office of Extramural Research, OD

DRG

Appointments:

Mr. John Jones, Acting Executive Officer

Dr. Kathleen Michels, Scientific Review Administrator, Neurological Sciences 2 Study Section, Referral and Review Branch (RRB)

Dr. Jules Selden, Scientific Review Administrator, Toxicology 1 and 2 Study Sections, RRB

Retirements:

Dr. Joseph Kaiser, Scientific Review Administrator, Pharmacology Study Section, RRB

Mr. James T. Lowrie, Chief, Systems Analysis Section, Information Systems Branch



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[Mr. James M. Pike, Executive Officer \(see article \)](#)



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Grant Applications Reviewed

Presented below are the numbers* of competing applications reviewed by NIH integrated review groups for the February 1992 and 1996 meetings of the national advisory councils and boards. These statistics were obtained from the IMPAC database.

From February 1992 to February 1996, the number of applications reviewed by NIH increased 12 percent, from 11,066 to 12,445. The direct costs (requested) reviewed in applications for research grants increased 14 percent, from \$1,644.4 million in February 1992 to \$1,908.6 million in February 1996.

	February 1996	February 1992
Applications reviewed.....	12,445	11,066
DRG.....	9,249	7,829
Institutes/Centers.....	3,196	3,237
Research grant applications.....	11,110	9,954
Research projects.....	8,172	7,324
Small Business/Technology Transfer.....	1,262	766
Research centers.....	136	121

Other research.....	1,540	1,743
Training applications.....	1,264	1,091
Fellowships.....	936	829
Training grants.....	181	262
Other applications.....	71	21
Applications amended.....	4,064	2,943
Percent of total number reviewed.....	33	27
Applications responding to RFAs.....	495	47



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Fiscal Year Annual Totals for Applications Reviewed

The total number of competing applications received by the Public Health Service (PHS) increased from 37,826 applications in FY 1992 to 44,342 in FY 1995. Listed below are the total applications received, and of those applications, the ones reviewed by NIH and within DRG for fiscal years 1992 through 1995.

FY	Received by PHS	Reviewed by NIH	Reviewed by DRG
92	37,826	31,145	24,708
93	39,968	38,447*	26,178
94	43,394	41,739	28,033
95	44,342	41,899	29,203

Growth	9.4%	9.0%	11.6%
93-95			

*In 1993 and subsequent years, includes applications for the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institute on Drug Abuse, and the National Institute of Mental Health when these institutes joined the NIH organizationally.

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Notes to PRNotes!

NIH Peer Review Notes would like to hear your comments about articles published and suggestions for topics of future articles. Please help us by filling out this form and submitting it.

I found the following article(s) in this issue of interest/not of interest.

I would like to see an article about:

Optional Information

Name and title:

Organization:

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NIH Peer Review Notes Now Online

In addition to being available from the DRG home page (<http://www.drg.nih.gov>), NIH Peer Review Notes is also available from the [NIH Gopher server](#). To access the text only, tunnel from your local Gopher to the NIH Gopher server (<gopher.nih.gov>).

To access NIH Peer Review Notes from the NIH Grant Line use either a PC and modem or the Internet.

PC:

1. Configure the terminal emulator at 2400 or 9600 baud, even parity, 7 data bits, 1 stop bit, half duplex, terminal emulations VT100 or VT102 (but not ANSI).
2. Using procedures specified in your communication software, dial 1-301-402-2221.
3. When a connection is made, type ,GEN1 (comma mandatory) and press ENTER.
4. At the INITIALS? prompt, type BB5 and press ENTER.
5. At the ACCOUNT? prompt, type CCS2 and press ENTER.
6. After reading the introductory message, type F, then D, to list the directories. Select the directory, NIHINFO, which will list NIH Peer Review Notes as a file within that directory.

Internet:

To access the NIH Grant Line in an interactive Internet session, Telnet to <Wylbur.cu.nih.gov> and, when a message is received that the connection is open, type VT100. At the INITIALS? prompt, type BB5 and at the ACCOUNT? prompt, type CCS2. This puts the user into the NIH Grant Line.



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