Study Section and research proposal critiques

Available on the class website
- Proposal review sheet
- Sample critique (Long chain FA proposal)
- Scoring guide for Study Section

Nancy will send you 2 proposals for you to write critiques
Nancy will also send you the Abstract/Specific Aims page for the other proposals reviewed during the study section
You will attend one study section on either May 4, May 5 or May 6, from 1:00 until finished

Zoom meeting information for your Study Section will be sent later this week

Study Section and research proposal critiques

Purpose
- Improve your ability to derive hypotheses on a circumscribed biological process and formulate experimental approaches to test the hypotheses
- Advance your ability to write proposals
- Develop your skills in critical evaluation of scientific writing
- Begin to get a sense for how the peer review process works
Study Section and research proposal critiques

As a graduate student and as a scientist, you will be continuously evaluated on your written and spoken work. The feedback you receive is constructive criticism:
- Process and think deeply about the feedback so that you can improve your work.
- The feedback may seem harsh, but you need to adjust your perception about constructive criticism so that you can use the information to advance your work.
- Rarely (1% of the time) feedback is not given in a constructive way. Have an experienced individual read the feedback to determine if it is out of bounds; you are too close to the situation.

Study Section and research proposal critiques

Critiques

You are using the pre-2009 format of NIH research proposal critiques.
You are using the post-2009 scoring system, 1 - 9 to rank the proposals.
Your proposal critique will have no bearing on the grade of the proposal; the two faculty Study Section members will write an evaluation of the proposal and give a letter grade for the student author.
Your proposal critique will be given to the student author as feedback.
Critiques, continued

Read the proposal carefully, think about the science, and compare and contrast with the proposal that you have written. Consult the literature when necessary to make sure that you understand the research area and experimental approaches that are new to you.

Critique has three parts

Description section – An objective description of the biological questions, hypothesis, and the experimental approaches that will be used to test the hypotheses. Present what you understand to be the investigators views.

- For the student critique of your proposal, if the Description content does not agree with what you tried to present, then think about how you could have a more effective presentation in the future.

Critique section

Your evaluation of the proposal. Consider feasibility, originality and significance. Is this a significant problem/area? Does the author understand the area? What are the hypotheses and do they make sense? Do the experiments address the hypotheses? Is the genetics correct?

Summary section – In a few sentences, summarize your overall enthusiasm for the proposal and give a score on the 1 - 9 scale. Mentally you want to compare the two proposals so that they are relatively ranked, as well as with the Abstract/Specific Aims of the other proposals.
Study Section and research proposal critiques

At the Study Section

- For each of the proposals, the two students assigned to the proposal will give oral presentations of their critiques. Then faculty and students in the Study Section will ask the two presenters questions about the proposal. After the discussion is completed, then the Study Section members will determine a score.

- Know well the two proposals that you read for your oral presentation of the critique. Plan the oral presentation for ~5 min. The faculty and students in the study section will ask follow-up questions, potentially on any aspect of the proposal.

At the Study Section, continued

- As it a happens at a real Study Section, if you believe that you’ve read a very strong proposal, you need to be an advocate for that proposal.

- Alternatively, if the proposal has issues, particularly with the genetics, you need to point those out. But don’t get stuck on small points.

- The two faculty members will help guide the discussion and will bring up areas that have not been brought up in the oral presentation.

- It typically takes ~30 min to fully discuss a proposal.
Study Section and research proposal critiques

At the Study Section, continued

- Most study sections will have 6 proposals and 6 student reviewers, and 2 faculty members. You will be sent the Abstract/Specific Aims pages of all the proposal that are to be discussed. Read over the Abstract/Specific Aims pages so that you can ask questions of the reviewers and are able to rank all the proposals.

Confidentiality

- All discussions during the Study Section and the identity of the reviewers of each of the proposal should not leave the Zoom meeting and remain confidential.

- In most cases the faculty member will not know whose proposal they are reviewing, unless you were in their Discussion section. However, you will know the faculty reviewers, so that you are able to contact them with questions about their review.
Study Section and research proposal critiques

Return of critiques to proposal authors

- Faculty critiques, with grade, and the two student critiques will be emailed to you on ~May 11 or 12.

- Read over all the critiques and think deeply about the comments and how the proposal could be improved. When you write your next proposal, think about these comments.

- If you have any questions or want clarification of what the faculty reviewer meant, it is highly recommended that you reach out to the faculty member for these points.