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# Grant-Writing Skills for Early-Career Researchers: Remote Learning Workshop



**Dr. Julia Staykova-McKinnon**

**Target group:** postdocs, junior group leaders applying in the near future; graduating PhDs are welcome but must have a future project proposal to work on

**Format:** 8 podcast sessions of ~15-25 minutes each (~150 min. listening time), group assignments for peer review, online Q&A module, and final 1.5-hour live group Q&A session.

**Free materials:** link to podcast sessions active for 1 week after registration; PowerPoint slides (in PDF), packet with home assignments with instructions for peer review.

**Language of instruction:** English

**Quick description.** Grant reviewers often say that many wonderful projects don't get funded because the idea was not communicated clearly enough. Excellent science is not enough for writing a successful grant proposal. To get funded, you also need excellent grantsmanship. So how do you make sure the advantages of your work are understood and appreciated? In this workshop, you will learn how to:

1. Use strong structure in State of the Art, Objectives, and Methodology – the key scientific sections;
2. Provide clear, convincing answers to the key requirements of novelty, feasibility, and impact;
3. Write a compelling abstract that conveys all the key project strengths;
4. Make the most of your CV and boost it with a motivating personal statement.

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# Workshop Structure

## Week 1:

- We will hold a quick introductory live meeting (~20 mins) to set the agenda.
- You will listen to 8 podcast sessions (~150 minutes listening time) covering the following topics: “Introduction: persuasion in grant writing”; “State of the Art,” “Objectives,” “Methodological Programme,” “Novelty and Feasibility,” “Impact,” “The Abstract,” and “CV and Personal Statement”. After registering for the workshop, you will receive a link for the podcast series, which will remain active for one week.
- Home assignment: three summary statements for peer review. The workshop instructor will match you into mini-groups of four to hold peer review exercises. Each participant will receive feedback from three peers on the following:  
**Assignment 1:** Sketch out a project abstract (~2,000 characters incl. spaces)  
**Assignment 2:** Sketch out a personal statement (~2,000 characters).  
**Assignment 3.** Explain the strategic fit between you project and the host institution (1-2 paragraphs, ~350 words).  
These topics were selected to ensure that more sensitive information about your project is not shared. If you are comfortable submitting sections that describe your objectives or methodology in more detail, you can use these instead of the above statements.

## Week 2:

- Two-hour live group discussion session, with a 10-minute break after the first hour (total time 60+10+60 minutes). In this session, you can raise questions and the instructor will comment on common issues in the home assignments.
- Technology and backup: **We will connect via Adobe Connect or Teams.** If the session is disrupted due to connectivity issues, we will hold several Skype sessions in smaller groups. In this case, please be prepared to share your Skype name with your peer review group from the home assignments.
- Privacy: as our work together will be based on the Scriptorium website as a teaching platform, following the workshop all personal data that will be collected (e.g. anonymous questions asked in the Q&A forum and login details) will be deleted permanently from all Scriptorium devices. Your workshop organizing team will receive a written certificate in confirmation.

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## Julia Staykova-McKinnon, Ph.D.

### Scriptorium Founder



#### Profile

Julia has over fifteen years of experience as a lecturer and consultant in grant writing, research writing and communication, public speaking, and business proposals developed for private investors. She consults on proposals submitted to H2020, including ERC (StG, CoG, AdG, SyG), Erasmus+ Actions, Marie S. Curie Actions, FET/RIA. She also assists on proposals submitted to national agencies, including DFG (Germany), ANR, PIA3 (France), FWO/FNRS (Belgium).

**Academia:** Julia teaches workshops at research institutes and doctoral schools across Europe. She works mainly in life sciences, sciences, technology, and engineering. A selection of her clients includes Charité-Berlin, German Cancer Research Centre (DKFZ)-Heidelberg, German Centre for Neurodegenerative Diseases (Bonn), Grenoble Neurosciences Institute (GIN), Institut Curie-Paris, Institute of Clinical and Experimental Research (IREC)-Brussels, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL), Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine (MDC)-Berlin, Max Planck-Potsdam, University of Bordeaux, University of Grenoble-Alpes (UGA), University of Zurich and Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (UZH-ETHZ)-Zurich.

**Excellence Cluster and consortia:** Einstein-Berlin, NeuroCure, Neurasmus, MoveAge, Image Processing and Computer Vision (IPCV), Immunoshape, among others.

**Industry:** Julia has consulted and taught at Eli Lilly Pharmaceuticals, Hengeler Mueller Partners in Law, HVB Banking Group, KPMG, and Servier Laboratories. With Janssen Pharmaceutica, she developed an innovative training programme implemented at KULeuven's Doctoral School.

#### Academic Background

Visiting Assistant Professor, University of Amsterdam (2010-11)

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow, Los Angeles, California (2009-10)

Post-Doctoral Fellow, University of British Columbia, Vancouver (2007-09)

Ph.D. in Shakespeare and Renaissance culture, Oxford and Sofia (2007)