



GRANT WRITING COURSES FOR SSH RESEARCHERS AT UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

Katja Ritari & Taina Tuori
Research Service Days 2025

HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO
HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

Presentation Name / Firstname Lastname

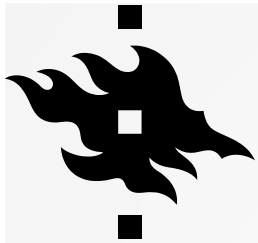
15/08/2025

1



Why a grant writing course?

- Identified need to offer additional support for postdocs
- Research Funding Services focus on EU, international, and major national funding; fewer resources for smaller national schemes
- Aims to enhance early career researchers' grant writing skills and foster a stronger funding culture
- Helps streamline our work when researchers later apply for ERC and similar grants
- Easy to organize annually using the same materials with minimal planning effort



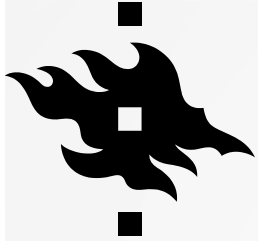
Basic course

- Target audience: Recently graduated PhDs (approx. 0–4 years post-PhD)
- Some participants have limited experience in applying for their own funding
- Piloted in 2022–2023; offered twice a year since then (moving to once a year)
- One in-person and one online session (20–50 participants per course)
- High demand, especially during initial offerings



Meeting 1: Finding the right funding scheme

- Bottom-up vs. top-down funding schemes
- Understanding the funder's perspective
- Exploring different types of impact
- Discussion:
 - Groups of 3–4 review different funding calls and present findings: ERC, MSCA-PF, RCF Fellow, Helsinki Collegium, SKR, SRC
 - Group discussion on impact



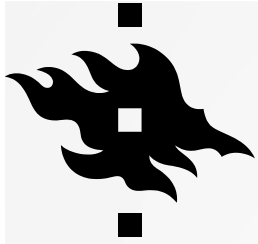
Meeting 2: The proposal structure

- How to structure a funding application
 - Key components of a research plan
 - In-depth look at the Academy Fellow proposal structure
 - Examples from other funding schemes
- Objectives:
 - What is an objective?
- Discussion
 - In pairs, read an ERC Starting Grant abstract and identify: aim, objectives, state-of-the-art, methods, implementation, and impact



Meeting 3: A closer look at writing applications

- Characteristics of a strong proposal
- Language, visualizations, Gantt charts, layout
- Review criteria
- Discussion:
 - Analyze a publicly available ERC winning proposal in pairs/groups:
 - Use of subheadings
 - Opening strategy
 - Visual aids
 - Layout and readability



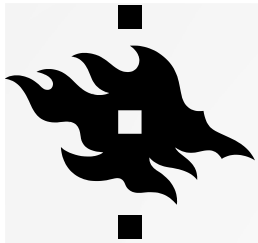
Meeting 4: Building your cv and other funding strategies

- Developing personal funding strategies
- CV, early achievements, ERC track record, RCF merits, and competencies
- Where to find support
- Coping with rejection
- Q&A:
 - Experienced researcher shares insights on building a CV and career/funding strategy



Advanced course

- Piloted in Spring 2025; offered annually in person
- For researchers with prior funding experience and/or basic course participation
- More space for discussion and experience sharing
- Answering the need to have a course where the participants can bring their own texts
- Max. 20 participants



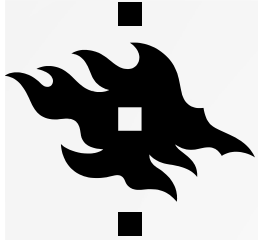
Meeting 1

- How to write a compelling research proposal?
 - Perspectives from grant coaches
 - Perspectives from reviewers (based on review reports)
 - How to capture the reader's interest: opening strategies
- Exercise:
 - In pairs, comment on the opening of each other's proposals



Meeting 2

- How to think about the impact of your research?
 - Guest specialist presentation
- Exercise:
 - Fill in an impact canvas based on your own research



Meeting 3

- How to write a convincing proposal?
 - Structure and writing style
 - Guest speaker with review experience
- Exercise:
 - Commenting each others' proposals (shared before hand in Teams to groups of 3 people)



Conclusion

- Positive feedback confirms the need for these courses
- Early career researchers become familiar with our services
- Participants applying for ERC and other grants found the course helpful
- Opportunity to develop our own expertise
 - Course preparation involved studying literature and other resources

THANK YOU!

