

# Assessing Rackham Merit Fellowship Eligibility

---

This guide is intended to help graduate chairs and admissions committees identify newly admitted students who may be nominated for the 2020-2021 (Fall, 2020 Cohort) Rackham Merit Fellowship (RMF) program. Deciding which students to nominate requires a holistic evaluation process: information found in different parts of the Rackham Admissions Application can help graduate chairs and admission committees determine which students are best qualified for an RMF. Faculty may ask admitted students for additional information that may help determine eligibility for an RMF award, but it is important to note that information about race, ethnicity, gender, and national origin may not be used to justify nominating a student for an RMF award.

A faculty panel reviews each RMF competition nomination, and makes recommendations for the awarding of fellowships. It is important that nominations provide an explanation with as much detail as possible to establish grounds for considering a student eligible for an RMF. RMF allocation submissions are also reviewed by Rackham to ensure it meets at least one of the eligibility criteria. This guide will help graduate chairs and admissions committees use the Rackham Admissions Application and supporting materials to decide whether a student is eligible, and to provide as complete a nominating statement as possible for the review panel.

## Eligibility Criteria

Once an applicant has been admitted to a program, the graduate chair and admissions committee may seek to determine whether the applicant is eligible for an RMF award.

The RMF is open to newly admitted students in a Rackham graduate program who:

- have a record of superior academic achievement;
- are U.S. citizens or permanent residents;\*

And meet one or more of the following additional criteria:

1. come from an educational, cultural, or geographic background that is underrepresented in graduate study in your discipline in the United States or at the University of Michigan;
2. have demonstrated a commitment to diversity in the academic, professional, or civic realm through their work experience, volunteer engagement, or leadership of student or community organizations. By diversity, we mean efforts to reduce social, educational, or economic disparities based on race, ethnicity, or gender, or to improve race relations in the U.S.;
3. have experienced financial hardship as a result of family economic circumstances;
4. are first generation U.S. citizens or first generation in their families to graduate from a four-year college.

\*Undocumented students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) are considered permanent residents for the purposes of the RMF.

## Indicators of Eligibility

The following information is intended to help guide you to appropriate sources of data to determine RMF eligibility. We recognize that there is more than one way of meeting the criteria, and we encourage a holistic review of the applicant to determine eligibility.

### Requirement 1

**Have a record of superior academic achievement.**

- Superior academic achievement could be defined in many ways. Some examples captured on the **Rackham Admissions Application form** include:
  - Grade Point Average (self-reported on page 2);
  - Awards/Scholarships Information (page 3);
  - Activities Information (page 4).
- **Curriculum vitae/résumé**
- **Official transcript**
- **Official Grade Point Average** (captured in M-Pathways)
- **Official Graduate Record Examination score** (captured in M-Pathways)

### Requirement 2

**Are U.S. citizens or permanent residents.\***

Applicants are required to indicate their **citizenship status** on the Rackham Admissions Application form (page 1).

<b>Citizenship Status</b> <u>U.S. Citizen (or Permanent Resident)</u>
<b>Country of Citizenship</b> _____ (Permanent Residents and Non-U.S. Citizens Only)
<b>U.S. Permanent Resident Registration Number A</b> _____

\*Undocumented students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) are considered permanent residents for the purposes of the RMF.

## Criteria 1

**Come from an educational, cultural, or geographic background that is underrepresented in graduate study in your discipline in the United States or at the University of Michigan.**

### *Educational Background That Is Underrepresented in Graduate Education*

Within the Education Information section of the Rackham Admissions Application form, the student is asked to indicate the **type of institution** from which the student received a degree (page 3). To establish eligibility under this criterion, the student must select at least one of the following options:

**For U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents only**  
**Additional College or University Information**  
Indicate whether you received or will receive a degree from any of the following institutions in the U.S.: (select all that apply)

- Community or Junior College
- Historically Black College or University
- Predominantly Latino or Latina-Serving College or University
- Single-Gender College
- Tribal School or College
- None of the above

### *Cultural Background That Is Underrepresented in Graduate Education*

This refers to a culture, a broad range of experiences and backgrounds, that enables a student to bring new or different approaches and expertise to the University community, that is not typical in your discipline. It cannot, however, be explained on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, or national origin.

- **Personal statement;**
- **Letters of recommendation** may include a description of the student's experience that could enrich the university community.

### *Geographic Background That Is Underrepresented in Graduate Education*

This refers to how the applicant's geographical background created an educational disadvantage for the student, as opposed to the location of where an applicant is from (e.g., city or region) being underrepresented among current graduate students. We are especially supportive of nominations of students from isolated rural areas or from inner city neighborhoods.

- **Personal statement.**

## Criteria 2

**Have demonstrated a commitment to diversity in the academic, professional, or civic realm through work experience, volunteer engagement, or leadership of student or community organizations.**

By commitment to diversity, we mean efforts to reduce social, educational, or economic disparities based on race, ethnicity, or gender, or to improving race relations in the U.S.

- **Personal statement;**
- **Curriculum vitae/résumé; and**
- **Awards/Scholarship Information (page 3);**
- **Activities Information (page 4)**

### Activities Information

Since graduating from high school, have you pursued any volunteer activities, work experiences, or leadership of student organizations that were specifically related to reducing social, educational or economic disparities based on race, ethnicity or gender, or to improving race relations in the U.S.?

Yes  No If yes, describe briefly. (limit 500 characters)

---

---

---

---

### Criteria 3

#### Have experienced financial hardship as a result of family economic circumstances.

The specific circumstances will vary for each student and it is up to the nominating program to determine the extent of the financial hardship, given the full range of experiences among the applicants. This could be inferred from the applicant's:

Participation in a **program** (page 4) that supports students who experience a financial hardship. For instance, criteria 5 would be met if the student participated in at least one of the selected programs:

**For U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents only:**  
If you attended a U.S. college or university, indicate whether you have participated in any of the following programs that encourage students to pursue graduate education: (select all that apply)

- Bridges to the Baccalaureate
- Committee on Institutional Cooperation: Summer Research
- Opportunity Program (CIC – SROP)
- Gates Millennium Scholars Program
- Graduate Engineering and Science Fellowships for Minorities (GEM)
- Institute for Recruitment of Teachers (IRT)
- Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP)
- Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship
- Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC)
- Post-baccalaureate Research Education Program (PREP)
- Project 1000
- Ralph Bunche Summer Institute
- Research Initiative for Scientific Enhancement (RISE)
- Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program
- Public Policy and International Affairs Program (PPIA)
- Western/National Name Exchange (NNE)
- None of the above

- Reply to the questions within the **Financial Assistance Information** section (page 4).
  - Receiving a **Pell Grant** (a Federal grant for undergraduates with a high level of financial need). Any student receiving a Pell Grant automatically meets criterion 5;
  - An applicant may meet criterion 5 if he or she indicates:

**Financial Assistance Information**

1. During your undergraduate study, did you receive a Pell Grant from the U.S. Government? (For U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents only)

Yes

\_\_\_\_\_

2. While you were an undergraduate student, did you work to pay at least some of the cost of your undergraduate tuition, books and housing? (Do not include work you did to pay for other expenses such as meals, transportation or entertainment.)

\_\_\_\_\_

3. How much financial hardship did you or your family experience to pay for the total cost of your undergraduate education (tuition, housing, books)?

\_\_\_\_\_

- **Personal statement;**
- **Letters of recommendation** may include reference to financial obstacles the applicant may have had to overcome to attain his or her educational goals.

#### Criteria 4

*Are first-generation U.S. citizens or first-generation in their families to graduate from a four-year college.*

##### *First-generation U.S. Citizen*

Within the Personal Information section of the Rackham Admissions Application form, there is a series of questions under **Citizenship Status** (page 1). A first-generation U.S. citizen is defined as someone who is a U.S. citizen or permanent resident whose parents were not citizens or permanent residents at the time the applicant was born. A student must have the following responses in order to demonstrate that he or she is a first-generation U.S. citizen:

<b>For U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents only</b>	
Parent #1 was a citizen or a permanent resident of the U.S. at the time I was born	No (or Unknown)
<hr/>	
Parent #2 was a citizen or a permanent resident of the U.S. at the time I was born.	No (or Unknown)
<hr/>	

##### *First Generation in Their Families to Graduate from a Four-year College*

Within the Personal Information section of the Rackham Admissions Application form, there is a series of questions on the **highest level of education completed** by the applicant's parents (page 2).

<b>Parent's Education Information</b>	(One of the four options below)
Parent #1 highest educational level completed	<hr/>
	(One of the four options below)
Parent #2 highest educational level completed	<hr/>

To establish eligibility under this criterion, any combination of the following options must be selected for **both parents**:

- Some high school or less;
- High school diploma or equivalent;
- Associate's degree or equivalent; or
- Unknown.

#### Contact

For questions regarding this document and other matters about the Rackham Merit Fellowships, please contact Donna Huprich ([dhuprich@umich.edu](mailto:dhuprich@umich.edu); 734-615-3680).