FAQs about the 2026 Promotion of Doctoral Studies Scholarships

Note: We are providing this living FAQ compilation on our website to ensure that everyone has access to information we share when applicants ask us questions. We encourage you to sign up for our application newsletter to receive any urgent updates, as well as these FAQs when we update them.

Deadline for submission is Jan 20, 2026 at 4:59 p.m. EST

FAQs as of January 14, 2026

- **How should percentages be allocated in Section 5.1 (Support for the Training Plan table) if I have more than one named mentor?**

The 100% total represents all the mentorship time needed, not the percentage of a mentor's paid time as an employee. The number of mentors does not matter, so long as their total time commitment covers all training needs and equals 100%.

FAQs as of January 9, 2026

- **Am I supposed to use AMA or APA citation and reference style?**

The Foundation will accept either AMA or APA. Choose one style and do not mix them. Please be sure to follow instructions about when not to use citations, e.g., in your abstracts. We apologize for any confusion about which style to use.

- **Does an MD meet the academic doctoral degree qualification required of mentors?**

Yes, the Foundation accepts an MD as equivalent.

- **I have never applied for a PODS. I am in my second year. Do I have to complete the progress report section? It seems as though most of the questions do not apply to me.**

You must complete the first question as it best reflects your progress. Whether you answer any of the other questions is up to you. If you do not wish to fill them out, enter N/A.

- **Does my mentor have to use the new NIH biosketch form?**

No. The biosketch provided is the old version and that is fine. If they were to provide the information in the new form, it would be accepted.

- **My primary mentor is not a PT, but I have a PT mentor on my team. Is that acceptable?**

Yes. The Foundation changed the mentor requirements this year. You do not have to name a primary mentor. However, at least one mentor has to be a U.S. licensed PT.

- **I will be a pre-candidate when I apply. Can I apply for the candidate scholarship (PODSII)?**

As long as you are a doctoral candidate by September 1, 2026, you may apply for the PODSII award. We will check. If for any reason you have not completed all requirements by that date, your award will not be finalized and the award will be withdrawn.

FAQs as of November 24, 2025

Foundation Funds Cannot be Used to Offset Pre-doc Salaries or Stipends

Please note that **no** award funding shall be used to offset your institution's commitment to pay you a salary or stipend. **Make sure that this prohibition on the use of Foundation funds is acceptable to your institution before they sign your application and you submit it.** The Foundation will not make any exceptions. If an institution lowers an awardee's salary or stipend based in any way on an awarded PODS scholarship, the Foundation will have the right to disallow the award and seek the return of any funds wrongfully applied to salary or stipend obligations.

An awardee's institution has no legal standing to use a PODS award as a salary or stipend offset because they are not a party to the award contract. The Foundation does not consider salary or stipend offsets as an allowable school-related expense. If you or your grants office have any questions, contact info@foundation4pt.org as soon as possible.

Erratum: In the second FAQ on page 3, the section number has been updated.

- **My one PT mentor is also my program director. The instructions say that I should not provide a biosketch for the director. What do I do?**

You must have at least one mentor who is a licensed PT. Your director is, in this case, acting as a mentor and not in their administrative capacity. You should follow all the requirements for that person being a mentor, including listing them as a mentor, providing their biosketch, and that person will write a letter of support. You should have your department chair or other authorized signatory sign your proof of enrollment, not your department chair acting as a mentor.

FAQs as of October 24,2025

- **Do I have to name a primary mentor?**

No. Starting this year, we are trying a different approach. You do not need to name a primary mentor. However, in naming more than one mentor (all co-mentors), the one who provides the most support (percent time) is the one mentor who will complete the mentor award record template (required attachment).

- **Two of my mentors are providing the same level of support. Which one completes the mentor award record?**

The mentor whose record is the most relevant to your training and research plans. That mentor should also demonstrate sufficient award success.

- **Is there a limit on the number of mentors I can have?**

No. Your mentor(s) should cover the expertise, experience and opportunities you need. Gaps in support needs will scored negatively. However, reviewers will negatively score more mentors than they think are needed or that are a manageable distribution of support time and efforts.

- **Which mentor completes the Mentor Information and Support template?**

The template has been revised to allow relevant information from more than one mentor to be included in the template. Please be sure to follow the direction closely.

- **Can my mentor provide a blinded letter of recommendation?**

No. All mentors are required to provide a letter of support that reflects the instructions provided. If a mentor provides a blinded recommendation, it will be rejected.

- **Can my program director provide a blinded letter of recommendation?**

Yes.

- **In the budget section can I just put the whole award as payment to myself under personnel?**

Yes. For the purposes of applying for the award, it is fine to list the entire amount that way. However, should the applicant be awarded a scholarship, they will be expected to provide more details and breakdown if the money was used for any expenses that require approval or for which receipts are required. For example, equipment, travel, and childcare expenses.

- **I do not understand what I am supposed to enter for percent effort when I provide information for my key personnel in that section.**

The effort information should reflect the amount of time during the scholarship that the mentor will be directly providing support the applicant to advance in their doctoral program.

- **Are copies of my transcripts considered official transcripts?**

Yes. By official, we mean that a copy you provide must be a copy of the transcript your school would generate. It cannot be a certified copy that is locked. It does not need to come directly to us.

- **What if I do not receive my requested official transcripts before the deadline?**

If you only have unofficial transcripts on hand, upload them with a PDF covering note explaining that you will submit the official versions by January 31. Please remember, we do not require certified versions. They can be copies of official versions.

- **I have a certified PDF of my transcript. I cannot upload it to my application. What do I do?**

Unfortunately, ProposalCentral cannot accept protected document formats. You need to convert it to a regular PDF format by saving it without protections. That will create a PDF version that says Copy of Transcript, which is okay. We do not require certified transcripts (see also next). There are several ways you can create or save PDFs. One that works is to use the printer menu to save the file as a PDF.

- **The instructions say that we must submit official transcripts. Does that mean I have to have my registrar send a certified copy directly to you?**

No. By official we mean a copy of your transcripts that you can have sent to you directly. You can then upload them into your application. We accept that you are not supplying a certified version and that it is a copy.

- **I am in my first year. Do I need to fill out the progress report section?**

No. However, you must put N/A in any required boxes (red asterisk) in order for ProposalCentral to validate your application prior to submission.

- **In my biosketch, in section D, can I just put the credit hours since they are the same as hours?**

While many people use hours and credit hours interchangeably, we are asking for two different types of information. For hours, we are asking for the total amount of hours taught that compose the course. For credit hours, we mean the amount of credit you will receive.

- **In section 5.3.* of Mentor Information and Support, the definition of mentees active in research is that they have received at least one grant as PI or co-PI. What if my mentor's mentees are all postdocs who have not yet met that definition?**
  *Corrected. Originally referenced section 4.2.

Your mentor should list five mentees, even if they do not yet meet that definition. It will be helpful if the mentor explains their status, so that the reason is clear to the reviewers.

- **I currently have a PODS and am applying for one for 2026. Do I have to repeat information that I provided last year or just provide updates to what I submitted previously?**

Each annual Promotional of Doctoral Studies (PODS) application is considered new, whether you currently have an award. Each template must be completed again. All letters need to be submitted again, and they should reflect your current application. Do not ever ask a reviewer to see previously submitted information. They have no access to previous applications.

- **I want to use the same people to write letters of support and blinded recommendations that I used last year. Should I tell them just to update what they provided before?**

Each year, applications are reviewed by independent reviewers who may have no knowledge of previous applications. Reviewers are instructed to review only the information in the application in front of them. Anyone providing a recommendation should provide the information requested in the instructions. If that means updating what they wrote before, that is fine.

- **Does the scholarship cover research or study equipment expenses and travel expenses to conduct dissertation research?**

There are no changes to what the award can cover, which is any cost directly related to ensuring that you can conduct your coursework or your dissertation research. Travel expenses now require supporting documentation and are subject to rules about how it can be spent, e.g., only economy air travel. Contact the Foundation (info@foundation4pt.org) to receive a copy of the current expense reporting instructions. Awardees will have to submit any equipment expenses projected to be at least $1,000 to the Foundation for prior approval. Failure to get any required approvals will disqualify that expense from being covered with Foundation funds.

- **Should the application attachments be double spaced or single spaced?**

The application attachments should be single-spaced and follow all instructions about font size, formatting, and length.

- **In my application, I sent a request to complete a blinded letter of recommendation to one of my professors. He just told me that the link that ProposalCentral provided in the email does not work. What do I do?**

When you designate someone, they receive an email with instructions about what to put in the letter and how to upload it. The email contains an upload link from ProposalCentral. **That link is valid for only three clicks on it.** Once the link has been accessed three times, it will expire. When that happens, you will have to go to Section 6 in your application and follow the instructions to resend the invitation.

If your referee continues to experience issues after you have resent a new invitation email and link, please contact pcsupport@altum.com.

- **I am applying for a doctoral candidate (PODSII) scholarship. Does the Foundation expect me to submit the same or a different research topic and plan from the one I used in applying as a pre-candidate (PODSI)?**

We would expect you to submit a more developed plan for the same research area. You are allowed to change your research area or topic. If you do, indicate clearly and with sufficient detail about why you made this change. Demonstrate that you have sufficient mentoring support and have had or will be getting needed training related to the change.

If any of these answers does not meet your information needs or you have new questions, please send a message to info@foundation4pt.org.