FAQs about the 2027 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 updates emails to receive any urgent updates, as well as these FAQs when we update them.

Deadline for submission is Jan 20, 2027 at 4:59 p.m. EST

Summary of Notable Changes and Clarifications for 2027

Each year, the Foundation conducts a post-application cycle learning exercise to see where changes and improvements to the documents, application, and review process can be made. Here is a list of the changes made for this cycle:

- Clarification has been provided that **intention to teach is not a requirement to apply**. It is a requirement to be considered for some awards. Which awards require it has been clarified.
- **International students and candidates may now apply**, provided they will have a valid F-1 visa through the entire award year. The longstanding requirements that the applicant has a U.S. PT or PTA license and intends to conduct research in the U.S. remains.
- The Foundation explicitly encourages **first-year applicants,** as recent data analysis shows that they are being successful. The Foundation continues to support applications as a way to gain valuable reviewer feedback to gain essential grant-writing skills.
- The ability to name people in the mentor or training plans who are not identified as mentors in the Key Personnel section has been eliminated. Anyone providing any percent time to training should be listed as a mentor and all requirements of mentors followed.
- Reviewers have been instructed not to show bias toward non-traditional programs.
- **Part-time students and candidates** must now show how much time they are devoting to work.
- Each PODS guidelines now list all the awards that have been finalized as of October 13, 2027.
- The Use of Funds information is clearer and includes more uses of award funds.
- Sponsoring institutions can no longer act as agents to accept, disburse, and report on award funding.
- Budget detail instructions have been revised. An applicant can allocate any amount of their budget to themselves. The budget in the application is not final. An awardee can change how they allocate funds.

Foundation Funds Cannot be Used to Offset 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.

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

No. 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). *In 2027, the instructions clarify that reviewers will automatically consider the mentor providing the most time as the primary mentor.*

- **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.

- **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, as long as they are not named as a mentor.

- **I do not understand what I am supposed to enter for percent effort and why I have to repeat that information?**

This has been clarified in 2027 concerning your percent time. It is based on a 40-hour week. The percent time of mentors has been clarified. All the mentoring equals 100% of mentoring time, and their time, individually, is a percentage of that total mentoring time. There is some duplication to minimize reviewers having to move between application sections to understand and evaluate

information about percent effort.

- **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. It cannot be your student copy.

- **What if I do not receive my fall 2026 official transcripts before the deadline?**

Contact Mary Nusloch (MaryNusloch@foundation4pt.org) and agree on a date when you will be able to send them to her prior to February 1. You cannot submit your application without any transcripts. Upload all transcripts and your CITI training certificate to allow you to submit.

- **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.

- **Do I have to fill out a progress report?**

If you are in your first year, follow the directions for how to skip it. Second-year onwards must complete the progress report, regardless of whether you applied before or received an award.

- **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?**

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 2027. 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 or not. Each template must be completed again. Your progress report will be different. 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?**

Yes, they must provide the most current information.

- **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.

- **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, but we do not check that it is. You are allowed to change your research area or topic. If you do and it affects how developed your research plan is, explain that it changed 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.

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

Yes. The requirement is that at least one mentor be a U.S.-licensed PT.

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