# New/Initial and Competing Proposal Submissions Business Process

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Document Owner: Proposal Review Team Manager

## Overview

This process outlines how to review and submit a new/initial or competing proposal to an external sponsor, including the following high-level activities:

* How to assign proposals to Proposal Review Team members
* Minimum documents required from the department to trigger the proposal review process
* Using the proposal checklist as a guide for a full proposal review
* Hand-off to Awards Management Team after proposal submission
* How to handle a proposal that has already been submitted to the sponsor, but was never locked and routed through GMAS (“retro” proposals)

## Scope

This document details how a proposal is assigned once it has been locked and routed in GMAS, the review criteria employed by proposal reviewers, and final documents that should be uploaded to GMAS once the final proposal has been submitted.

There are instances in which a department administrator may contact the Proposal Review Team for advice/questions about a proposal, prior to locking and routing the proposal in GMAS. In these instances, the proposal will be pre-assigned by the Proposal Review Team Manager via email prior to formal submission in GMAS.

## Roles & Responsibilities

**Department Administrator (DA) or equivalent:** completes the GMAS record; assigns all required department and school reviewers in the approval route; uploads draft proposal documents (incorporating all required proposal elements including but not limited to: draft budget and budget justification, statement of work, and sponsor guidelines) for OSP review; ensures changes recommended by the SGCS have been made prior to proposal submission to the sponsor.

**Assigner – Proposal Review Team Manager (Manager):** monitors GMAS for new/initial or competing proposal submissions; assigns proposal record to SGCS for proposal review.

**Reviewer – Proposal Review Team Sr. Grants & Contracts Specialists (SGCS):** reviews the GMAS record and draft proposal documents; recommends changes to DA to ensure smooth and compliant proposal submission; submits final proposal to sponsor; uploads final proposal documents to GMAS.

## Additional Resources

* [View Proposal Submission Deadlines](https://osp.finance.harvard.edu/proposal-submission-deadlines)
* [View Guidance on Preparing a Proposal](https://osp.finance.harvard.edu/preparing-a-proposal)
* [View Proposal Review Checklist](https://osp.finance.harvard.edu/proposal-review#NewCompeting)
* [View Provost Approval Criteria](https://osp.finance.harvard.edu/files/provost_criteria_june_2013.pdf)
* [View RAS Review Criteria](https://research.fas.harvard.edu/ras-review-criteria)
* [GMAS Document Guidelines](https://osp.finance.harvard.edu/organizing-files)
* [University Proposal Submission Policy and Exception Request Form](https://osp.finance.harvard.edu/5-day-exception-request-form)

## Process Steps

### Lock and Route GMAS Record:

The DA creates a GMAS record, answers compliance questions, and uploads (at a minimum) the following documents:

* Budget (If a department does not have a budget template, they should use the budget and budget justification templates located [on the OSP Budget webpage](https://osp.finance.harvard.edu/budget).)
* Budget Justification
* Statement of Work/Proposal
* Sponsor Guidelines
* All administrative and programmatic elements as required by the sponsor
* Any other forms/documents such as representations and certification that are required by the sponsor and require institutional signature

The OSP review will not begin until the minimum required documents are received from the DA.

#### Retroactive Proposals “Retros”

While discouraged, there are instances in which the DA has a need to submit a “retroactive” (or “retro”) proposal. A retro proposal is one that has already been submitted to the sponsor, without OSP review and/or approval. In addition, there are some cases in which a PI may have conversations with a sponsor and a funder makes a verbal or written (via draft contract or email) guarantee of funding. Retros and any documentation previously signed by the PI or equivalent are non-binding and invalid by Harvard University standards.

In all cases involving retros, the DA should create a GMAS record, answer compliance questions, and upload the minimum required documents (as outlined above) to trigger OSP review. If sponsor guidelines are not available (i.e., funding is based on conversations between the sponsor and PI, not a formal funding announcement), the DA should upload any relevant correspondence between the PI and sponsor or the draft agreement (if applicable).

### University Proposal Submission Deadline Policy:

**Policy Statement**: The complete and final proposal, accompanied by the necessary School-level approvals, as well as any other attachments or approvals required by the sponsor or the University, must be received by the submitting office at least five (5) full business days prior to the sponsor's due date.

An exception to the five-day policy is required for proposals that are locked and routed to OSP less than 5 full business days prior to the sponsor deadline. In these instances, the Principal Investigator will submit an [Exception Request Form](https://osp.finance.harvard.edu/5-day-exception-request-form) to continue with the process.

**FAS/SEAS Exception Process:** The exception request is received in the OSP Five Day inbox. The Manager or SGCS reviews the submissions already in queue, complexity of the late submission, including impact to other reviewing officers such as OVPR or RAS, and makes a recommendation to the requisite Divisional Dean as to whether OSP will be able to review the proposal, and advises on potential risk or impact of an expedited review and submission.

The Dean decides as to whether the PI may proceed with the proposal and communicates the decision to OSP. Note: The Dean’s approval is not a directive to OSP to submit, nor a guarantee that the proposal will still be submitted on time. OSP reserves the right to not advance any proposal based on risk, proposal non-compliance, or inequity to the queue.

The Manager or SGCS communicates the final decision to the DA and PI. If the proposal is allowed to continue in the process, the DA will lock and route the proposal in GMAS.

**All other Cambridge Campus Schools Exception Process**: The request is received in the OSP Five Day inbox. The Manager or SGCS receives the request and evaluates whether OSP will be able to review the proposal, based on the number of other proposals in the queue, the complexity of the late proposal, and impact to other reviewing offices such as OVPR.

The Manager or SGCS communicates the final decision to the DA and PI. If the proposal is allowed to continue in the process, the DA will lock and route the proposal in GMAS.

### Manager Assigns Proposal Record for Review:

The Manager monitors GMAS for initial records for new/initial and competing proposal submissions. When a new record appears in GMAS, the Manager determines who on the Proposal Review Team will review the proposal, based on current workload and availability.

The Manager sends an email to the following individuals, indicating the proposal has been received and to whom the proposal has been assigned:

* Assigned SGCS, i.e., the “Central Reviewer”
* DA
  + Individual who locked and routed the proposal
  + For HKS, also include the individual who uploaded the documents

### SGCS Reviews Proposal:

The SGCS reviews the proposal and GMAS record in accordance with the [proposal review checklist](https://osp.finance.harvard.edu/proposal-review#NewCompeting). The SGCS sends the DA a list of recommended and required changes to the proposal record, utilizing but not limited to, the categories in the proposal checklist to draft the email.

The SGCS includes additional individuals in the route, depending on the type of proposal. The following are common scenarios that require additional approvers to be added:

* ***Grants and Contracts Officer (GCO)*** – If the sponsor requires Harvard to agree to terms and conditions, as part of the proposal submission, the proposal must be reviewed and approved by the OSP GCO. In this case, the SGCS will open a ticket in JIRA and request GCO approval.
* ***Provost*** – If certain criteria are met ([view Provost Review Criteria](https://osp.finance.harvard.edu/files/provost_criteria_june_2013.pdf)), the proposal must be routed to the OVPR for approval.
* ***Research Administration Services (RAS)*** - For proposals within FAS and SEAS, if certain criteria are met ([view RAS Review Criteria](https://research.fas.harvard.edu/ras-review-criteria)), the proposal must include the RAS Dean/Designee for approval.

During the SGCS review, if it is determined that one of the following criteria are met within the GMAS proposal record, the record will be retracted by the SGCS or DA and sent back to the DA for resubmission:

* **Research Team** members listed are incorrect and require additional personnel to be added
* **Cost Sharing** was not originally included in the proposal, but should have been, or was incorrectly completed
* **The International Collaboration Activities** section was not completed or was completed incorrectly
* **The subcontract module** was not completed when a subcontract is included in the proposal
* Addition of **Interfaculty Involvement**
* Substantial edits to the **Proposed Budget Module,** i.e., beyond simple adjustments of a few dollars. Edits to multiple years or edits due to revised costing categories or indirect cost calculations will result in retraction.

### DA Revises Proposal:

The DA receives the recommended and required changes and updates the GMAS record and/or uploads revised documents.

### Proposal Submission:

In most instances, the SGCS will submit the proposal through the sponsor’s system. There are some cases, however, when the DA will submit the proposal if the PI is required to submit through the sponsor’s system. In these cases, the DA will submit the proposal once the SGCS has approved the proposal record in GMAS and email the sponsor notification of receipt of the proposal to the SGCS.

The SGCS will upload the final documents to GMAS:

* Final Submitted Proposal
* Current/Pending Support Report used during proposal review, when applicable
* Correspondence with review comments and any other one-off emails where final decisions were made
* Submission confirmation when applicable
* Communicate any lingering issues or points of concern which were not resolved as part of the submission either due to late receipt of proposal precluding complete resolution, or issues to be revisited and resolved if awarded, to the portfolio owner via the Central Administrator comments box

The SGCS will change the status of the GMAS record to **Submitted to Sponsor**.

The proposal submission process is now complete.

### Correspondence after Proposal Submission:

There are instances in which the sponsor will require revised documents or have questions post-submission. In these instances, all questions or requests received by the sponsor prior to an award being made will be handled by the Proposal Review Team. Once an award has been made, all questions and requests will be handled by the Awards Management Team.

### Monitoring Activities:

To ensure success of this process, the Proposal Review Team Manager will engage in periodic monitoring activities. The purpose of these monitoring activities is two-fold: 1) monitoring will ensure full adoption of the new process and use of new tools and 2) monitoring should catch inconsistencies early, allowing the Manager to alter the process as needed or provide additional training to team members. Below are suggested monitoring activities for this process:

* Periodic review of SGCS proposal review comments to ensure they are adhering to the proposal review checklist
* Periodic review of proposals escalated for Provost review to ensure they met criteria or if criteria was complex, pull these examples for full team review and training
* Input from high-touch schools and departments to understand if greater transparency (via the proposal checklist) is creating clearer expectations from OSP

## Document History

Table 1 Document History

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Version | Date | Author | Rationale |
| 1.0 | 07/13/2021 | J. Lee | Initial |
| 2.0 | 08/16/2021 | J. Lee | Incorporated changes/revisions from Colleen Shanahan. |
| 3.0 | 08/18/2021 | J. Lee | Incorporated changes/revisions from Colleen Shanahan. |