

# GSS Awards-Blinding Guideline

*A general guide to the blinding process required for the Graduate Student Senate International Travel Award and Research Award.*

## **What does it mean to “blind” a document?**

- For the purposes of GSS Awards (i.e., Research Award, International Travel Award), blinding a document means removing **all** instances of your name and/or appearance from the document.
- The Graduate Student Senate requires that all documents submitted as part of an award application package to be blinded to ensure that all evaluations of the application are impartial and based solely upon the quality/completeness of the application.

## **What documents need to be blinded?**

- Your course schedule, CV/Resume, and your proposal document will require you to actively blind them (redact your name/appearance). In addition, your name/appearance cannot appear on any of the documents.
- When blinding your CV/Resume and your proposal (when applicable), your name must be removed from any works cited. This includes publications listed on your CV/Resume.

## **Process for blinding your Flashline schedule.**

- In order to verify that you are enrolled as a graduate student during the semester in which you are applying for an award, you must submit a blinded copy of your official Flashline schedule. Schedules that you create yourself, either through copying information from your official schedule or through manual entry, will not be acceptable as these do not verify that you are actually registered according to the Kent State University Flashline system. **Failure to submit an official Flashline schedule may result in your application being considered incomplete.**
- For the Research Award and International Travel Award, **your Flashline schedule must be submitted as a pdf. document.** This means that you cannot just take a picture of your Flashline schedule, as this will result in a file type other than a pdf.
- As the Flashline schedule is often the document students find the most difficult to blind, it is recommended that applicants follow the steps below before submitting a schedule as part of the award packet.

1. Log-in to the Kent State University Flashline system by going to [www.kent.edu](http://www.kent.edu) and entering your Flashline username (the part of your official Kent State email address appearing before the @) and password.
2. On the left hand side of the page, click the student tab. From the drop-down menu, select Dashboard.
3. Within the Student Dashboard, locate the Course Registration section. This section should display the number of credits you are currently registered for. Next to this display are four smaller boxes. Select the bottom right box labeled "Print Schedule & Text Books".
4. Select the current term and click submit.
5. You should now see your schedule displayed on your screen. Select the "PRINT" button displayed above your name and Kent State ID #.
6. After selecting the "PRINT" button in Flashline, a print preview screen should appear. Change the print destination to "Local Destinations, Save as PDF"
7. Open the pdf that was saved to your computer. You will be using the highlighting feature to create a crude blinding of your document.
  - a. Go to View->Tools->Comment.
  - b. Change the Highlight Color to Black
  - c. Highlight your name so that it is no longer visible.
8. While your name is no longer visible, your name could still be accessed by a reviewer (either by removing the highlight or by copying the black-highlighted text and then pasting it somewhere else). Therefore, you will still need to take an addition step to ensure your document is truly blinded.
9. Print the copy of your document that has your name redacted.
10. Using an office printer, you will want to scan your schedule as a .pdf and email it to yourself. This will create a pdf document that cannot be unblinded.
  - a. Printers with this function are available at the Kent State University library and often in your local department office. If you are having difficulty, it is recommended that you ask assistance from one of the HelpDesk librarians in the library or your office secretary (depending on where you are attempting to scan the document).

## **I do not have ready access to a printer than can send a document as a pdf. What should I do?**

- It is **highly** recommended that, when possible, applicants use the blinding method given above. However, there is an alternative method for individuals who are able to use screen capture and have access to a pdf program.
  1. Follow steps 1-8 above.
  2. Once you have blinded your schedule, take a screenshot of the blinded schedule.
  3. Paste the screenshot you have just taken into a Word document.
  4. Under File->Save As->Save As Type-> Select pdf as the save type.
- Since this pdf was created from an image file, the created pdf will not be able to be unblinded. However, since this file was created on a local computer, there may be additional meta data you will want to remove (see below).

## **Do I need to take all of the above steps when blinded documents other than my schedule?**

- Since your CV/Resume and proposal documents were in all likelihood originally in a word document, you will not have to do all of the steps needed to blind your Flashline schedule. Just be sure to remove your name from where ever it appears in the document and replace it with placeholder text (e.g., xxx, REDACTED, applicant name, or your Banner ID number).

## **Meta Data?**

- Please remember that the purpose of blinding your documents is to ensure that your application is judged solely upon its merit. Therefore, you will want to ensure that there is not meta data associated with the documents that can be used to identify you. Meta data is information that is captured in the background of a document file when creating and saving a document. You will only need to do this if you created/edited your application documents associated with your identity.
- Here are the steps you will need when running Windows for identifying Meta Data:
  1. Bring up Windows Explorer and locate the file while using the “Details” display setting.

2. When you click the file once (so that it is highlighted but not opened), a series of meta data topics appear at the bottom of the Windows Explorer window. In order to see all topics, you will want to make the Windows Explorer full screen.
3. You will want to make sure that your name does not appear under any of the meta data topics, particularly the “Authors”, “Last Saved By”, or “Title” tabs.
4. If your identity appears in a meta data tab, right click the file and select Properties->Details-> and click the “Remove Properties and Personal Information” option.
5. Remove all personally identifying meta data information.

### **I am still having trouble blinding my schedule. What should I do?**

- If, after following the steps outlined in this guide you are still having difficulty blinding your document, please contact the Advocacy Chair (Tim Rose) for blinding issues pertaining to the Research Award. Please contact the Executive Vice Chair (Kate Klonowski) for questions pertaining to the International Travel Award. Email addresses for the Advocacy and Executive Vice Chairs can be found on the [GSS website](#).

### **I am worried that I submitted a document that was not properly blinded. What should I do to avoid my application being considered incomplete?**

- Once you have submitted an application via Qualtrics, you will receive a noreply email acknowledging receipt of your application. Included in this email is a copy of all your information entered into the application, along with links to download any documents you have uploaded as part of the application process. To check if your submitted document was properly blinded, please download the document using the link provided in this email.
- If you find you have submitted a document that was not properly blinded and the submission deadline has not passed, please contact either the Advocacy or Executive Vice Chair (depending on the award) to let them know about the need to submit a revised version of the improperly blinded document.