Howard University

Electronic Signature and Approval Process

Submitting a Proposal Package Electronically

Version 6
Modified: 07/2018

CONTENTS

DOCUSIGN® OVERVIEW

Electronic signing provides a quick, easy, and secure method for signing and submitting internal sponsored project forms without the need to appear in person. This guide provides information on how DocuSign® is used to access, complete, sign, and submit a proposal package to Research Administrative Services (RAS).

ACCOUNT SETUP

A DocuSign® account is not required for the submission or review of a proposal package, however it is useful for tracking and managing submissions. Accounts are created by RAS upon request.

GETTING STARTED

Before beginning this process, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- **Speak to a research administrator.** Consultation with a research administrator is highly recommended prior to any submission. This helps to avoid any errors in the submission. Contact RAS to be connected to your research administrator.

- **F&A Rate Change.** There has been a change in the F&A rate that will affects any project starting on or after July 1, 2015. Visit the HU research website for more information. (http://www.howard.edu/research/)

- **RAS reserves the right to withdraw for consideration, any submission that was received by RAS less than five (5) full business days prior to the submission deadline date.** When planning a submission, make sure to give each signer at least 2 business days to review the submission. It is also important to make sure that there is ample time to resolve any possible issues that may arise.

- **RAS will not review or submit incomplete proposal packages.** Be sure that submissions are in FINAL form, as required by the sponsor. Once a proposal package has been sent to the next person for review, access to that package will not be available.

- **RAS reserves the right to withdraw for consideration, any proposal that lacks sponsor solicitation guidelines.** It is important that all sponsor guidelines are clearly followed as defined.

To begin, go to the following page and click on the 'Click here to submit a proposal to RAS' link: http://www.howard.edu/research/ras/esap.html

Navigation to this link may also be possible by following the path below:

HU Website → Academics → Research → Click on "Submit A Proposal to RAS" link on the left-hand menu or the red "Electronic Signature and Approval Process" link on the image with the clock → Click on the link that best describes the application being submitted (New Project or Continuing Funding).

THE PROPOSAL ROUTING STRUCTURE

The current proposal routing structure, displayed below, applies to all proposal package envelopes. This structure is effective as of 7/1/2016.

This routing structure should be followed to properly route a proposal package to RAS. Items in bold are defined by the PI. Items in bold should be defined by the PI. Items not in bold will be formatted by RAS as necessary.

ROUTING STRUCTURE
Principal Investigator
Department Chair (if applicable)
Dean/Director of School/College/Business Unit or **Associate Dean for Research**
Research Administrative Services
Research Administrator
RAS Executive Director Dana C. Hector, CRA
Vice President for Research Bruce Jones, Ph.D.

Contact the Office of the Dean verify if the Dean or Associate Dean will review and sign sponsored project proposals.

Besides the CC: role, all reviewers after the Dean are managed by RAS and should not be altered or removed!

POWERFORM SIGNER INFORMATION

Define who will review and sign the proposal package envelope. Enter the name and Email address of the individuals who fit the listed roles. Keep the following in mind:

- Someone other than the PI may complete the proposal package. Contact RAS for advice and direction.

- Business units with no Department Chairperson/Head may leave the space blank. However, a Dean or Associate Dean for Research must be defined.

- Anyone not listed who needs to see the envelope may be added to the CC role.

- The name or email address of an unknown reviewer may be found with the use of the University website, Microsoft Outlook, or other available resources.

- If a reviewer is unavailable, an alternate reviewer may be used. It is the duty of the PI to contact the office of the reviewer and request information regarding the alternate reviewer. This change may also be made later with the assistance of RAS.

When all of the necessary information has been entered, click the **Begin Signing** button. An email, containing an access code, will be sent to the email address used in the PI role.

ACCESS CODE AUTHENTICATION

The requested code is located in an email. The subject line will begin with, "Email Validation." Each access code is unique to a specific proposal envelope and should be saved for future use. Contact RAS to have this code resent.

Copy the code from the email and paste it in the space provided.

Click the **Validate** button.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS AND SIGNATURE DISCLOSURE

The Electronic Records and Signature Disclosure covers the terms and conditions of system. It may be read in leisure by clicking on the given link. It may also be printed.

To move forward, select the checkbox to agree to use electronic records and signatures. *The application cannot be accessed unless the box is checked.* Once the box is checked, click the **Continue** button to continue.


Important!

The **Other Actions** dropdown button will be discussed later and should be ignored for now.

THE PROPOSAL PACKAGE ENVELOPE

This 15-page envelope includes a copy of the following common documents:

- Application to Seek Off-Campus Funds
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure form (PI ONLY)
- F&A Waiver/Reduction form
- Cost Sharing Authorization form
- NIH PI Assurance form
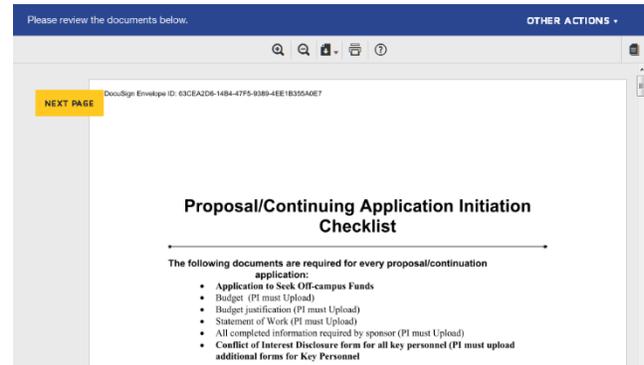
ENVELOPE LAYOUT

MAIN MENU

The main menu offers the following services and features:

Use the triangles to navigate up or down one full page. A page number may also be entered to jump to that page.

Click on the + or – to zoom in or out of the page.

Download a PDF copy of the envelope. When asked, choose to download the combined document. The envelope may be saved to a computer or an eternal hard drive such as a flash/thumb drive.
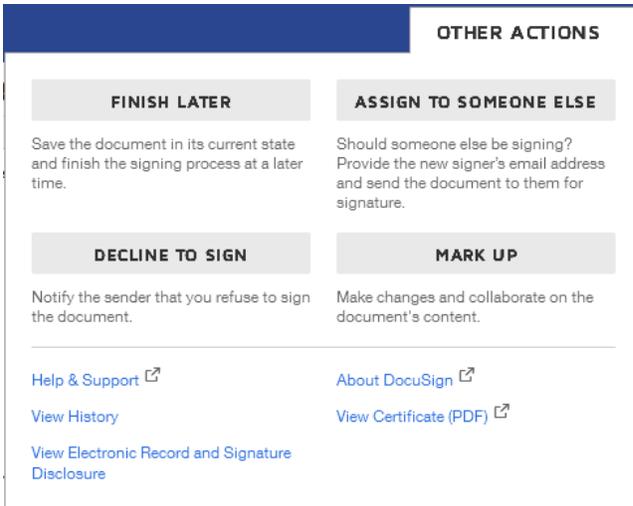
Print the envelope. If the envelope does not print correctly, save it as a PDF and then print the saved copy.

Click on this button to get general DocuSign help and information. Please note that application and grant-specific assistance can only be provided by RAS and ORD.

OTHER ACTIONS ▾ Access more options and features such as:

- **Finish Later** saves the progress of the envelope. To return to the envelope, select the **Resume** link in the original Email that included the access code. If the original email is lost, contact RAS to have a new email sent.

- **Assign To Someone Else** is **Not** applicable for this stage in the process.

- **Decline To Sign and Mark Up** are **Not** applicable for this stage in the process.

- **Help and Support** for the general use of DocuSign®. However, grant and application-specific questions should be forwarded to RAS or ORD (contact information at the end of this guide).

- **About DocuSign** opens a web page with business information about DocuSign®.

- **View History** of events pertaining to the envelope since its initiation.

- **View Certificate (PDF)** that may be used for legal matters.

- **View Electronic Record and Signature Disclosure** for the terms and conditions.

Display thumbnails for every page in the application package. These thumbnails aid in navigation and provide clues as to what pages require attention.

Each thumbnail includes a number at the bottom-left which corresponds to a page number within the proposal package. Clicking on a thumbnail displays the corresponding page.

The page currently displayed is outlined in a blue border.

The inner scroll bar may be used to navigate through the full pages on the left. The outer scroll bar may be used to navigate through the thumbnails on the right.

Pages where all required actions have been met.

Pages where one or more required actions have not been met. Required actions may include data fields, signatures, attachments, or choosing an item from a dropdown. Required fields have a red border.

Important!

All required actions must be met in order to send a proposal package to the next person in the routing structure. The following tips can help fix issues that may arise:

- All fields with red borders are required.

- Select an option from all dropdown boxes (usually at the top of the F&A Waiver Form, NIH PI Assurance Form, etc.).

- Be sure to use all Yellow attach and initial tags. To remove an unwanted tag, click on it and select the option to remove/delete the tag.

- Select the opposite option on a Yes/No question, then select the right option. This resets the page.

ATTACHMENTS AND SIGNATURES

ATTACHMENTS
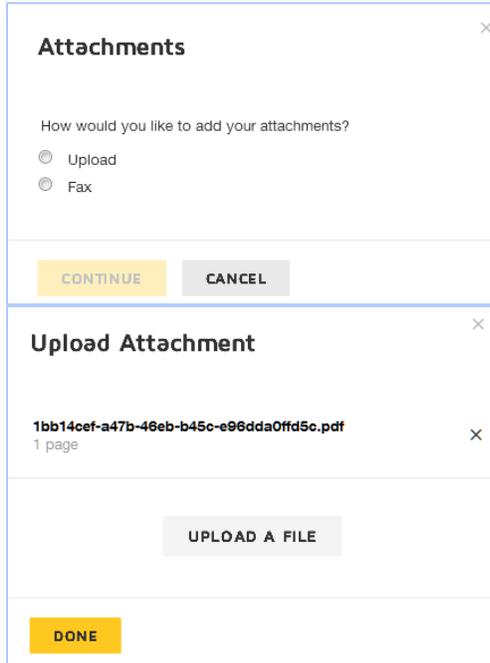
The **Attach** tag is used to upload one or more supporting files. Select the **Upload** option and click on **Continue**. Click the **Cancel** button to cancel the process and go back to the proposal package. DO NOT select the Fax option!!!

Click on the **Upload A File** button and select the file that should be attached. Attached files are listed and the **Upload A File** button appears again. If another attachment is needed, click on the **Upload A File** button and attach another file. Continue this process as necessary. When no other attachments are needed, click on **Done**. To remove an attachment, click on the x next to file that needs removing.

Used Attach tags will look like this. Click on it to upload and remove attachments.

There are no space or size limitations to the documents that may be attached. Images or documents created in Word, Excel, Adobe PDF, or similar applications can be attached.

SIGNATURES AND INITIALS

This portion of the guide will explain how to sign or initial documents within the envelope. Click on a yellow **Sign** or **Initial** tab to begin.

To adopt a signature:

- Verify that the name and initials are correct. Make any necessary changes.

- Select a style of handwriting by clicking on the **Change Style** link and choosing a style from the ones available.

- Finally, click **Adopt and Sign** to save the signature. The adopted signature will be used throughout the document.

Each signature has its own identification code that links the signature to the email address of the signer. Since these are in-house documents and the identification code verifies the identity of the signers, RAS has agreed to accept any of the signatures provided by the system.

Initials are required when a reviewer makes a change to the form.

COMPLETING THE ENVELOPE

This section of the guide will give an overview of the various forms found in this envelope. It will also provide information on completing these forms. If further information or assistance is required in regard to completing these forms, please contact RAS.

The first page of the envelope is for information only. It provides a list of items included within the envelope and documents that may need to be attached.

Page 2 is a handy checklist that will aid PIs in making sure that everything that they may need is on hand and ready to be included in the proposal package. This checklist is totally optional.

APPLICATION TO SEEK OFF-CAMPUS FUNDS

This form spans from pages 3-6 and is used by research administrators as an overview of the project. This form is required for filing and record purposes.

Form Requirements

Pages 3-6: Complete the form in its entirety.

Page 6: Attach the proposal, including statement of work, budget, and any other information required by the sponsor and RAS.

Page 6: Sign the form.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE STATEMENT FORM

This form spans from pages 7-10 and must be completed using information of the PI. This form is required for audit purposes and will be filed by RAS.

It is required that one of the options from the dropdown box at the top of the page is selected.

Choose **Supplemental Explanation** if the PI has a conflict of interest with this project. The PI is required to use the **Attach** tag provided to attach a document that explains the conflict.

Choose **Additional COI Forms** if there are other key personnel listed on the project. These key personnel will have to complete a separate COI form (found on the research website) and email a signed copy of the form to the PI. The PI can then use the **Attach** tag to attach the signed form.

Choose **No COI Attachment** if the PI is the only key personnel on the project and has no conflict. Even if this option is chosen, the form must be completed.

<u>Form Requirements</u>

Page 7: Select an option from the dropdown box. Attach additional files if necessary.

Pages 7-10: Complete the form in its entirety and sign it at the end.

F&A WAIVER/REDUCTION FORM

This form is on page 11 and is required if the requested F&A rate is different from the current negotiated rates. The current rates are located on the research website.

It is required that one of the options from the dropdown box at the top of the page is selected. Based on which selection is chosen, further action may be required.

Choose **No F&A Waiver/Reduction Necessary** if the requested F&A rate is the same as a current, negotiated rate. No further information is required and this form may be left blank.

Choose **F&A Waiver/Reduction Necessary** if the F&A rate is different from the current, negotiated rates. The form will have to be completed and a justification for the rate difference will need to be attached using the **Attach** tag. A letter from the sponsor or a copy of the RFP requesting the different rate is sufficient.

<u>Form Requirements</u>

Page 11: Select an option from the dropdown box.

Page 11: If required, complete the form in its entirety, attach a justification, and sign the form.

AUTHORIZATION FOR MATCHING FUNDS/COST SHARING

This form is on page 12 and is necessary if cost sharing is required.

It is required that one of the options from the dropdown box at the top of the page is selected. Based on which selection is chosen, further action may be required.

Choose **No Cost Sharing Required** if cost sharing is not required. No further information is required and this form may be left blank.

Choose **Cost Sharing Required** if cost sharing is required. Use the **Attach** tag to attach an explanation of the cost sharing. The form will have to be completed and signed.

Form Requirements

Page 12: Select an option from the dropdown box.

Page 12: If required, complete the form in its entirety, attach an explanation, and sign the form.

NIH PI ASSURANCE FORM

This form is required for any project seeking funding from the NIH. It can be completed within the system if the PI is the only key personnel listed on the project. See below for further instructions in that case.

It is required that one of the options from the dropdown box at the top of the page is selected.

Choose **This is a NIH Project** if the project is funded by the NIH. The form will have to be completed and signed by the PI. If there are other key personnel listed in the project, the NIH PI Assurance form found on the research website should be completed by the PI, distributed and signed by all key personnel, then attached to page 6 of the envelope.

Choose **This is not a NIH Project** if the project is NOT funded by the NIH. No further information is required and this form may be left blank.

<u>Form Requirements</u>

Page 12: Select an option from the dropdown box.

Page 12: If required, complete the form in its entirety and sign the form. If necessary, attach a completed copy of this form to page 6.

COMPLETING THE PROCESS

When all required actions within the envelope have been completed, the **Finish** button will be displayed at the bottom of the screen.

Before pressing the button, review the envelope and make any changes to the information as necessary.

Once the button is pressed, a window will display a confirmation of the completion of the envelope. The first reviewer is immediately sent a link to the completed proposal package envelope.

The option of downloading a PDF copy or printing a copy of the completed envelope is also given at this point.

DocuSign® accounts are created by RAS, so ignore the login request. Close the window by clicking on the **X**.

TRACKING A SUBMISSION

Reviewers are asked to sign a document within 2 business days of receipt. A PI with a DocuSign® account has the ability to see where a submission is in the routing structure at any given time. It is also possible to see if a reviewer has even viewed a submission. Below is a brief summary of this feature. For more detailed information, see the Account Management Guide or contact RAS.
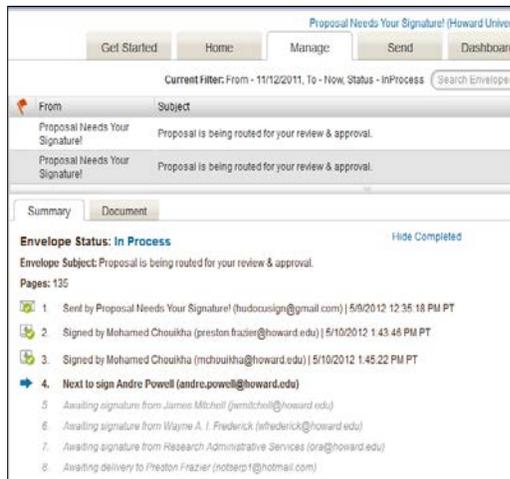
Log into DocuSign® and, from the **Home** tab, click on **Out For Signature**.

In the **Results Pane**, select an envelope to track.

Review the information in the **Details Pane**.

At this point, the reviewer may be contacted if the document has not been signed within the allotted time. It is the duty of the PI to contact the reviewer and request information regarding the alternate reviewers.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHERE ARE THE PROPOSAL PACKAGES STORED?

DocuSign® is operated by a third party outside of the University. All documents are saved to DocuSign® servers and are accessible, even if the HU network is down.

ARE ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES LEGAL?

In 2000, the U.S. Electronic Signatures in Global and National Commerce (ESIGN) Act established electronic records and signatures as legally binding, having the same legal effects as traditional paper documents and handwritten signatures. But not all eSignature solutions are created equal. Only DocuSign® warrants federal ESIGN Act compliance. Per European Directive 1999/93/EC, DocuSign®'s advanced signature is legally admissible and enforceable in the European Union. In fact, almost every civilized country in the world has adopted an electronic signature law, and the vast majority recognized DocuSign®'s form of electronic signature as meeting the definition of a valid electronic signature.

Since the documents included in the proposal package are primarily in-house documents, Research Administrative Services has agreed to accept documents signed electronically through DocuSign®.

HOW DO I GET A DOCUSIGN® ACCOUNT?

The RAS staff will create and distribute accounts for PIs and other signers upon request. Once complete, an introductory email will be sent to the user with login credential information, reference material, and a link to the proposal package.

HOW DO I FIND OUT WHO ARE ALTERNATE SIGNATORIES?

Reviewers, especially Department Chairs and Deans, should always inform their staff of when they will be unable to sign documents and who will be their designated signatory. It is up to the PI to contact reviewers and their offices to find out the status of signatory responsibilities.

CAN THE ROUTING PROCESS BE MORE PARALLEL INSTEAD OF HIERARCHAL?

No. The routing process is a hierarchal in nature and DocuSign® follows the rules of that process.

DOES THE PERSON I'VE ASKED TO SIGN A DOCUMENT NEED AN ACCOUNT?

No! Reviewers do not need an account to review or sign envelopes.

CAN SOME MEMBERS OF THE ROUTING PROCESS BE EDITED OR OMITTED?

It is recommended that all members of the routing process review and sign the proposal as necessary. If there is no other choice, the signature of the budget officer and AVP are the only signatures that are absolutely required in order for RAS to process a proposal.

See the Account Management Guide for information regarding editing signers.

CAN I EDIT SIGNERS ONCE THE PROPOSAL HAS ALREADY BEGUN THE ROUTING PROCESS?

Yes. As the PI, you have full control of the routing of the document. See the Account Management Guide for more information.

WHAT IS AN ENVELOPE?

An envelope is a collection of documents that are sent to recipients for review and signature.

DO I HAVE TO SIGN ALL OF THE DOCUMENTS? IF NOT, WHICH ONES REQUIRE SIGNATURE, ETC.?

No. There are some documents that are required and some that are mandatory based on your research. The *Application to Seek off-Campus Funds* and *Conflict of Interest Disclosure* forms are always required. Forms such as the *F&A Waiver/Reduction Request*, *Cost Sharing Authorization* are only required if the items are included in the proposal.

HOW DO I GO ABOUT MAKING A CHANGE AFTER I HAVE SUBMITTED THE PROPOSAL TO BE ROUTED?

Once you have submitted a proposal through the routing process, no changes can be made unless the proposal is marked up by a reviewer within the routing process.

CAN THE ROUTING PROCESS BE AUTO-POPULATED?

Yes. However, all PIs are using the same template. The idea of creating a different template for every PI is not efficient.

WHAT FIELDS IN THE DOCUMENT ARE REQUIRED?

Each required form must be thoroughly completed before it is submitted. Before you confirm signing a document, make sure that it has been completely filled out and all additional attachments are included.

CAN ANY OF THE INFORMATION ON THE FORMS BE PRE-POPULATED?

There are limits to what information can be pre-populated due to the fact that all PIs are using the same template and pre-populated data may not be applicable to some PIs. For example, PIs have different Chairs and Deans depending on the school or college under which they are employed.

CAN I PRINT OR SAVE THE DOCUMENT AT ANY STAGE?

Yes. The PI or anyone who has reviewed a document may save or print the document at any time. To save the document, use the Finish Later feature under Other Options button. To get back into the document, click on the Resume link in the email containing the access code. Printing can be done by clicking the printer icon.

HOW CAN I "MARK-UP"/EDIT A DOCUMENT WITHIN DOCUSIGN®?

A reviewer may wish to suggest a change to a document by using the mark-up feature. The document will be sent back to the PI with the suggested edits. The PI will have to make the changes and sign off on those changes.

HOW DO I TRACK A PROPOSAL?

The PI may edit signers or the order of signing by logging into their DocuSign® account. Reviewers may view the date and time previous signatures were made. See the Account Management Guide for more information.

HOW DO I KNOW WHO SIGNED?

As the individual requesting that a document be signed, you control who signs by providing the reviewer's name and email address in the beginning of the process. The document is routed to the reviewer's email with a request to sign. DocuSign® records the signer's IP address and a timestamp of the signing activity.

DocuSign® gives you complete visibility and control. You can log into your account and see who's viewed your proposal, who's signed it, and who's on deck to sign next.

IS A DOCUSIGN® SIGNATURE A "DIGITAL SIGNATURE"?

No. DocuSign® lets you create an electronic signature, which is not exactly a digital signature.

WHAT DOCUMENT TYPES ARE SUPPORTED IN DOCUSIGN®?

You can use DocuSign® to sign many kinds of documents: .doc, .docx, .pdf, .xls, .xlsx, .txt, among others. Grants.gov PDF documents cannot be attached to DocuSign®. These documents should be emailed to the members of the routing structure separately. It will be best to do so after you have completed your DocuSign® submission.

An **electronic signature, as defined by the Federal ESIGN Act,** is an "electronic sound, symbol or process, attached to or logically associated with a contract or other record and executed or adopted by a person with the intent to sign the record" (ESIGN). All 50 states have laws that define electronic signatures in substantially the same way.

Whereas, a **digital signature** or **digital signature scheme** is a mathematical scheme for determining the source of a digital message or document. A digital signature by definition is a technology, a method of authenticating. It does not by itself meet the standards of what constitutes a valid electronic signature, nor does it mean that the signer's identity has been verified. Digital signatures are most often used to apply a digital "seal" to an electronic document in order to make it tamper-evident. In fact, DocuSign® uses digital signatures in this way; DocuSign® customers and signers have the option to apply a digital signature to a DocuSign®ed document when the transaction is complete.

So when you need to get a legally-binding signature, make sure you're using a complete electronic signature solution.

HOW DOES MY SIGNATURE GET IN THERE?

The first time you sign a document, you'll be asked to adopt a signature. You can type in your name and select a signature style, create one with your mouse, or use a stylus on a tablet PC. This signature will be associated with a unique identifier so that every document you sign will be recorded as signed by you and you alone. The process of uploading a scanned image of your pen-and-paper signature is currently being researched.

CAN I BE NOTIFIED EACH TIME A DOCUMENT IS SIGNED?

Yes, but we have elected not to activate this feature. Instead, you will receive an email notification when the document has completed the process.

WHAT DO I DO IF THE PROCESS IS HELD UP BY RAS?

RAS staff has been trained to respond to DocuSign® submissions in a timely manner. If there has been no movement within RAS, it is suggested that you contact the research administrator.

WHAT DO I DO IF THE PROCESS IS HELD UP BY ANOTHER REVIEWER?

We ask that all reviewers respond to DocuSign® submissions within 2 business days. We ask that PIs contact reviewers who take longer to respond.

CAN REMINDERS BE SENT TO REVIEWERS?

Email reminders are sent to reviewers once a day. The PI may call, email, or visit a signer if necessary.

WHAT INTERNET BROWSERS SUPPORT DOCUSIGN®?

DocuSign® has been tested on and works fine with the latest versions of Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, and Apple Safari. It is also compatible with most mobile-based browsers.

DOES DOCUSIGN® SUPPORT SMS MESSAGING?

DocuSign® does not support SMS messaging, but you can get email reminders on a mobile device if you sync your HU email to your mobile device.

WHAT IF I AM A PI AND THE CHAIR OR DEAN?

Enter your name and email address in each applicable area of the routing process. You will be required to sign as the PI and as the Chair or Dean.

DOES THIS PROCESS AFFECT THE DEADLINE TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL TO RAS?

No. When submitting a proposal for routing, PIs should keep in mind that proposals should be received by RAS at least 5 business days prior to the proposal deadline date given by the sponsor. We ask all reviewers to sign DocuSign® submissions within 2 business days.

VERSION NOTES

Version 6 – updated 7/27/2018
The routing structure was updated to include the Vice President for Research.
Some grammatical issues were fixed.
Some text was updated based on FAQs and recent system updates.

Version 5 – updated 2/21/2017
Images were updated to reflect the new user interface.
Some grammatical issues were fixed.
The routing structure was updated.
Some text was updated based on FAQs and the latest system update.

Version 4 – updated 8/1/2015
Images were updated to reflect the new user interface.
Some grammar issues were fixed.
The routing structure was updated.
Some text was updated based on FAQs and the latest system update.

Version 3 – updated 5/31/2013
Images were updated to reflect the icons and images currently used in the system.
Some grammar issues were fixed.
Information on tracking a proposal package was added.
Some text was updated based on FAQs and system update.

Version 2
More detailed instructions were added.
FAQs were added.
Images were updated to reflect the icons and images currently used in the system.
A table of Contents was added.

SUPPORT

Any questions or comments regarding DocuSign® should be forwarded to the individuals or offices below:

LeeRoy Smith
Research Administrative Services
leesmith@howard.edu
(202) 806-4759

Office of Grants Management
huogm@howard.edu