

FGSR Professional Development Student Life Module



Scholarship Applications

Usually graduate students are required to apply to various funding agencies to support their research and studies. Below are some tips to help you with your next scholarship application.

Tips

- Find the scholarships you are eligible to hold. Read the instructions provided for each specific application to help you determine if you are eligible. This is important because some scholarships allow a student to submit only a certain number of applications or a supervisor may only be allowed to support two students for a specific application. Some applications indicate they will not give funding to a student if they have funding from another agency. Some organizations offer various scholarships that have separate application forms and instructions that accompany the various scholarships.
- Discuss scholarship applications with your supervisor. Some scholarships are targeted to students at different stages of their programs (for example a dissertation scholarship).
- Review your research topic eligibility. For example, if the award is specifically for research on mammals and your research is on insects, it is likely not the best choice for you to apply. If you are unsure, ask your supervisor if you should apply.
- Follow the format given in the application guidelines. The consequences of not following the given instructions are that some agencies will simply remove any extra pages and they will remove pages that do not use the correct font and text size.
- Use full page allowances. The application is the place where you need to sell your research to the funding agency. It is to your advantage to use the entire space allotted to apply for the funding. If you do not want to use more text, but have some space remaining, it may be useful to incorporate a picture or diagram that will help the reader understand your research proposal.
- If you have questions about how to complete an application or what to include, contact the agency and ask the appropriate coordinator.
- If possible, review applications of previous applicants that were successful or review the credentials of the previous successful applicants.
- Attend information sessions that may be offered on a specific scholarship competition. They usually provide information specific to the application and are able to answer additional questions you may have. They may also have new information on the number of awards offered that year or any changes in funding for a specific funding opportunity. Information sessions are usually given one or two months before the application deadline. Stay aware of upcoming sessions by following your departmental or Research Service Office newsletters or contact the agency.
- Keep track of deadlines. It takes time to prepare scholarship applications and assemble the required documents. Be aware of how much time you will need in order to prepare an excellent application. Keep in mind that your first time applying for an award may take more of your time than the second time you apply.
- Look for new scholarship opportunities regularly and add them to your agenda. Review the website of FGSR (<http://www.gradstudies.ualberta.ca/>) and the Research Services Office (RSO) (<http://www.rso.ualberta.ca/>).
- Reference letters are often required for scholarship applications. Give your references plenty of notice before the deadline and provide a copy of the application information and a copy of your CV.

- Determine how your application will be evaluated. Do they focus mostly on the candidate or is there emphasis on the supervisor's record? Usually this information can be found on the website of the funding agency.
- Find out how your application will be reviewed. Does the agency have a rating system? How does the rating system work? How many people will review your application? What types of people will review your application?
- Keep track of your accomplishments. If you do a poor job keeping track of your information, when it comes time to submit an application you may be missing some of your accomplishments. In order to keep track of your work, it is suggested to update your CV once a month.
- Before you begin working on an application, write an outline of all of the items that are required for the application. For example, two reference letters, transcripts, appendices, and outlines.
- When you are ready to begin the application make sure you have access to information you may need such as supervisor contact information, publications, awards and accomplishments.
- When writing your research proposal, be clear and avoid jargon. If allowed, use pictures to help explain concepts (again keep in mind you want to try to use the full space allotted for each section).
- Ask your supervisor for help with sections of the application, especially if that section indicates "should be written by student and supervisor."
- Proofread your application. Read it backwards. Have a variety of people read it for clarity and editorial comments.
- Ask your supervisor and another professor (who has experience with awards) to review your application before you submit to the agency.
- Make sure you know where to submit the final application. Do you submit online? Does a paper copy (or copies) go to the Department or directly to the address the agency provides?
- Keep in mind time to process your final application. Some applications need to have signatures from your department and may need to also be reviewed by the Research Service Office before you can submit to the agency. Once this is approved you will still need time to submit the application in the mail or by courier.
- Don't exaggerate your record because funding agencies will check it for accuracy and academic integrity.
- Keep your application easy to read. This is especially important for appendices or sections you add on your own. A page of text should have some white space and a list of items should be categorized.
- Keep hard copies and electronic copies of the work you complete for an application. This will help you as you review and edit, and if you decide to use the information in another competition.
- Reviewers want to know the rationale behind your studies. Why is your research important and what is the impact of your research?
- Identify potential weaknesses in your research plan and design. Provide an alternative plan, in case your initial method is not successful. Indicate that you are able to adapt future work depending on the results of initial experiments or assessments.
- Put your immediate ideas and experiments in context of the big picture. You want your proposal to be focused and yet have long term research goals.
- Discuss how you plan to interpret data that is generated.
- Cite supporting and conflicting literature that may be relevant to your proposal. Do not overwhelm the reviewers with facts.
- Your grant application will be scored on how well it is written. If English is not your first language, ask someone to check your spelling and grammar.

- Construct an outline of your research plan. Consider writing a time line for your proposed research, for example you could prepare a gantt chart which may be included in your application (at the expense of some white space).
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Activities to Do On Your Own

- Review the FGSR website for scholarship opportunities: <http://www.gradstudies.ualberta.ca/>.
 - Talk to your Department Coordinator about scholarship opportunities in your field.
 - Attend an information session by a funding agency.
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Other Resources

- “How not to kill a grant application: part 6.” By Vid Mohan-Ram. Science Careers August 11, 2000.
- CIHR Scholarship Information Session. September 8, 2008.
- Alberta Ingenuity Scholarship Information Session. September 16, 2008.