

# Applying for Scholarships and Grants

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# Why scholarships?

Obtaining a scholarship during your grad studies is something you should aspire to because . . .

- Large blocks of time are freed up for your thesis research
- Even a single-semester award can be a big relief from TA duties
- Your supervisor's RA budget will be less stressed, which can free up funding (and goodwill) for other research opportunities like conferences, academic visits, computers, software, etc.
- Can be a mark of prestige and a big advantage in your later career
- Benefits are cumulative: obtaining one scholarship makes it more likely that you'll obtain others
- Applications are typically not a lot of work!

**Note:** Fall is scholarship application season

# Why research grants?

You may think that research grants are only concern professors but . . .

- Money that your supervisor obtains from grants can fund your RA and free up money for other research expenses; for example, I try to increase RA stipends for students working on externally-funded (industrial) research projects
- Getting some grant-writing experience can be a huge advantage in your later career
- Any experience in high-level research planning, budgeting, developing objectives/milestones and simply writing about your research for a general audience . . . will help you when writing your thesis and communicating your work
- I may ask some of you to get involved with preparing grant applications. Think carefully before you say “no”
- **Warning (mostly for me):** The work of preparing a grant application ranges from minimal (NAMSC) to huge/onerous (OMAFRA or NSERC CRD) to astronomical (NCE)

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I'll focus mainly on scholarships and then finish with a few remarks about grant proposals.

# Outline

- 1 Looking for opportunities
- 2 Choosing a scholarship
- 3 Preparing an application
- 4 Application tips
- 5 Research grant applications

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# Looking for opportunities

If you don't apply, then you can't get anything! There are many, many sources of scholarship funding:

**Internal SFU awards:** entrance scholarships (one-time), graduate fellowships (one semester), private awards (small amounts)

**NSERC Discovery Grants:** the source of most RA funding, usually summer only

**NSERC scholarships:** 1–3 years of full support, Canadians or landed immigrants only

**Other external scholarships:** Commonwealth, Fulbright (exchange), France-Canada Research Fund (exchange), British Council, Humboldt Foundation, other private foundations

Other research-related opportunities you should also pay attention to:

**Awards/prizes:** SIAM Student Paper Prize, Leslie Fox Prize in Numerical Analysis, ...

**Conference grants:** PIMS, SIAM student chapter, ...

**Competitions:** 3-minute thesis (3MT)

# Looking for opportunities (cont'd)

- Pay attention to emails from Diane about opportunities and deadlines
- Some scholarships go unused simply because there aren't any applicants . . . so consider applying even if you think you aren't "good enough"
- Don't count on me to tell you . . . I may forget
- Talk to me if you have any questions!

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# Choosing a scholarship

- You can't apply everywhere. Be selective.
- Choose a suitable scholarship by paying careful attention to:
  - Citizenship requirements
  - Other eligibility criteria
  - Deadlines
  - Applicant pool and degree of competition (SFU internal vs. NSERC Vanier)
  - Complexity of the application (ditto)

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# Preparing an application

- Create and maintain an up-to-date CV and research statement **NOW** before you even start thinking about applying. You'll need this for many other things in future.
- Pay attention to deadlines. Don't leave it to the last minute.
- Follow formatting guidelines exactly.
- Approach references early. Provide them with a draft application a link to scholarship details and
- Get feedback on drafts (from me, colleagues, mom/dad, . . .)

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# Application tips

- SFU's "Tips for effective scholarship applications"
- NSERC's "Tips on applying for an NSERC scholarship or fellowship"
- UBC's "Hot tips for scholarship applications"
- many others . . .

# Overall comments

- You won't succeed without strong reference letter(s). **Cultivate references early!**
- Don't be discouraged if you're not successful. **Keep on applying!**

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# Research grant applications

- There aren't many granting programs geared to students **BUT** there are opportunities for organizing events through SFU, PIMS, SIAM, etc. **Event proposals are like mini-grant applications!**
- Applications for grants are very different from those for scholarships:
  - Dual focus on applicant and proposed research
  - Extra components: budget, objectives, milestones
  - It's important to excite an expert reviewer
  - Balance between too much/too little detail
  - Often several levels of review: non-expert and expert
- Correct English, flow of ideas and presentation are **critical!**
- Do some research on the agency and program you are applying to
- Industry grants can shift you toward the "other side" where **deadlines and deliverables rule ... BEWARE!**

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