FREE GUIDE

Graduate Student Funding Guide and Planner (Free PDF)

A guide to the kinds of funding open to graduate students and where to look for them, with a fillable funding search log and an application planner.

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This guide describes the kinds of funding graduate students apply for, where to look, and how these applications differ from an organization's grant proposal. It ends with a search log and an application planner to fill in. It describes categories, not specific programs. Each funder's own instructions and eligibility rules come first, and they change, so read them on the funder's official page.

Your details

Name:

Degree program and year:

Research topic in one sentence:

Stage (coursework, proposal, data collection, writing):

Advisor:

Kinds of funding

Kind	What it usually supports	What to check in the instructions
Fellowship	The student: living costs, and sometimes tuition or fees, for a period of study	Eligibility by field, stage and citizenship; whether you can hold other funding at the same time
Dissertation grant	The costs of dissertation research, or time to finish writing	Whether your proposal must be approved first; allowed costs
Small research grant	Specific project costs such as data collection, materials or participant payments	Allowed costs; whether a budget is required; reporting
Travel award	Travel to present at a conference or to do fieldwork or archive visits	Whether you must be presenting; how costs are paid or repaid
Internal university funds	Any of the above, offered by your graduate school, college, department or a research center	Internal deadlines; whether your advisor must nominate you

Terms vary. One funder's "fellowship" is another's "grant" or "award". Read what the money can be used for instead of relying on the name.

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Where to look

- [ ] **Your graduate school.** Ask what internal awards exist and whether the school keeps a list of outside funding.
- [ ] **Your sponsored programs or research office.** Ask whether student applications must go through the office and how much notice it needs.
- [ ] **Your department.** Ask your advisor, the graduate director and students a year or two ahead of you what they applied for.
- [ ] **Professional associations in your field.** Many offer student research awards and conference travel awards to members.
- [ ] **Federal agency fellowship pages.** Agencies that fund research in your field publish their student and fellowship opportunities on their own websites.
- [ ] **Foundations and nonprofits working on your topic.** Check their websites for student or early-career programs.
- [ ] **Your library.** Ask a librarian whether the university subscribes to a funding database.

Questions for your sponsored programs office or graduate school:

How these applications differ from an organization's grant

Part	Organizational grant	Graduate funding application
Who is assessed	The organization and its program	You, your project and your promise as a scholar
Core document	Need statement and program narrative	Research statement or proposal, often with a personal statement
Proof of capacity	Organizational history, staff, finances	CV, transcripts, your preparation and your advisor's support
Outside voices	Letters of support from partners	Letters of recommendation from your advisor and other faculty
Budget	Full program budget and justification	Sometimes none; sometimes a short budget for research costs
Who submits	The organization	You, or your university on your behalf. Check which.

Three things to get right:

1. **Research statement.** Say what you are asking, why it matters, how you will answer it and what you have done so far. Write for a reader outside your subfield unless the instructions say otherwise.
2. **Advisor and faculty letters.** Ask early, give each writer your draft statement, your CV and the funder's criteria, and tell them the deadline and how the letter is submitted.
3. **CV.** Follow the funder's format and length. Put what the criteria ask about where it is easy to find.

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Funding search log

List every opportunity you find, including ones you decide not to pursue, with the reason. Copy eligibility and dates from the funder's official page.

Opportunity and funder	Kind	Am I eligible (yes, no, need to ask)	Deadline	What it pays for	Decision (apply, later, skip)

Application planner

Complete one planner for each application you decide to pursue.

Opportunity:

Funder's deadline:

Internal deadline (university or department), if any:

Who submits (me or the university):

Component	Required (yes or no)	Length or format limit	Who provides it	Due to me by	Done
Research statement or proposal					
Personal statement					
CV					
Letter from advisor					
Other letters					
Transcripts					
Budget and justification					
Ethics or research approval documents					
Other					

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Review criteria, copied from the funder's instructions:

People who will read my draft, and when:

Before you submit

- [ ] I have read the full instructions and confirmed I am eligible
- [ ] My advisor knows about this application and has seen the statement
- [ ] Every letter writer has the deadline, the criteria and my materials
- [ ] The statement answers the funder's review criteria in its own words
- [ ] Length, format and file rules are met in the final files
- [ ] I have checked whether the university must review or submit the application
- [ ] I have checked whether this award can be held with my other funding

> **Want help with this?** The Complete Grant Architect is a free 16-week grant writing course, and you can hire a grant writer for your next proposal. Both are at subthesis.com.

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