

SUCCESS BREEDS SUCCESS

The benefits of successful grant applications

Winning a prestigious scholarship is an important accomplishment and holds many potential academic and career benefits for successful applicants.

The financial benefits can make a difference to the postgraduate experience of students, reducing the financial burdens that postgraduate students deal with frequently. Many postgraduate students report that they have underestimated the cost of postgraduate studies and that financial constraints caused significant stress in their lives.

Grant application processes are highly competitive and successful applicants are viewed favourably by future employers as the successful grant application is seen as evidence of a candidate's academic merit and research competencies.

Another benefit is the investment many funding organisations make in the personal and academic development of grant holders. The mentorship and academic support provided to candidates enhance their chances of academic and professional success and is just as important as the financial benefits of the scholarship.

Managing your grant responsibly also help to build a history of good project management and integrity that will improve your chances of success with future grant applications.

Do's of Grant Writing

Apply for funding well in advance before you start with your studies or make arrangements to cover all your expenses in the period while you are waiting for feedback from the funding organisation. It may take as long as six months to receive feedback from the funder.

Carefully plan your project and do your homework before you start completing the application.

Pay attention to the funding guidelines and align your proposal to the focus of the funding call and the mission of the funding organisation.

Check the organisation's website and your postgraduate funding office to see if there is an archive of previous successful grant applications. Pay attention to how well your research lines up with what has been funded in the past.

Nominate references who know you and your research project well enough to write a strong motivation and request their permission before you nominate them. Inform referees about the closing date to ensure they submit their referee reports on time.

Tailor your proposal to an educated audience who might not be familiar with the literature and terminology of your field.

Provide sufficient detail about your research project. Write details of the who, what, why, when, where, and how of the proposed project. Ensure that your proposal reflects a carefully planned research project.

Ask your supervisor and peers for feedback on your proposal before submission. Discuss the funding guidelines with your funding or research office to clarify questions about the scholarship. Ask your supervisor for specific feedback about your methodology and budget to ensure that you provide sufficient detail.

Provide concrete details and examples when it comes to your particular skill set. Funders have to decide whether you have the necessary skills to conduct your research successfully.

Once you are successful in your application, read the terms and conditions carefully before you sign the contract.

Don'ts of Grant Writing

Don't give up. Many application processes are extremely competitive. If you get turned down, it doesn't necessarily reflect negatively on you, your research, or even your proposal. Funding organisations receive thousands of applications and have a limited number of scholarships to award.

Don't wait until the last minute to start writing. Prepare your materials well in advance of the deadline, leaving yourself time to ask questions of the funder and to double check your information with the institutional funding office.

Don't ignore the guidelines of the funding call, especially with regards to eligibility criteria and the deadline for the call.

Don't use one essay or proposal to apply for different scholarships. Scholarships focus on different outcomes, and you need to adjust your motivation and proposal to the purpose and guidelines of the specific call.

Don't nominate references without asking their permission and ensure that they will be able to provide sufficient detail about your research and your research and academic skills.

Don't use jargon. Explain discipline-specific key terms early on in the proposal. This will make it easier for your reviewers to make sense of your proposal.

Don't overstate or estimate your budget. Be precise with your budget numbers and ask only what you need, and make sure that need is justified and aligned with your project proposal. Do not ask for more funding than the maximum available.

Don't overload your proposal with too much information. Reviewers have limited time to review the proposal and look for a well-integrated proposal that focuses on the essential elements of the research project.

Don't sign the scholarship contract without taking note of the grant conditions, especially regarding the numbers of hours you will be allowed to work. Discuss changes in your research project and your employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time study) with your research/funding office to ensure that you comply with grant conditions.