

# STUDENT EXPERIENCE FUND - STUDENT INFORMATION 2018-2019

## What is the Student Experience Fund?

The Student Experience Fund (SEF) is designed to provide financial support for students to participate in experiential learning opportunities that allow them to engage in practical applications of theories learned through their Social Sciences education. It also allows students to gain introductory grant-writing skills that can be valuable in future academic and career endeavours.

This is not a source of funding for agencies, clubs, or causes. The key criteria for funding must be the merit of the learning experience for the student and the degree to which the initiative is **experiential and student-initiated**.

## What is the level of funding?

Students may apply for up to \$1,500 and be awarded funds only once per academic year. Students may submit only one Student Experience Fund application at a time.

## Who is eligible to apply for the Student Experience Fund?

Activities offered through Experiential Education (EE) are available to undergraduate students who meet the [eligibility criteria](#) listed on our website. *Additionally, students who have already received funding twice through the Student Experience Fund (formerly Student Experience Grant) are not eligible to apply for or receive funding.*

The activities associated with the fund can occur up until August 31 of the current academic year, except for students in their final year, who can only apply for funds if the experience concludes **prior** to the completion of their degree requirements (e.g. Students whose final academic term ends April 30, can apply if their experience concludes by April 30 of that year).

## What types of activities may be eligible?

All experiences must include a hands-on, experiential element where the student is actively participating in or contributing to an activity. Students are, however, encouraged to reach out and work with partners such as their academic department, community organizations, etc.

Funding may be granted to the following types of activities:

- Presenting at conferences
- Attending conferences (Students must clearly articulate the hands-on components of the conference. The conference cannot simply be for knowledge acquisition.)
- Local, national, and international extra-curricular learning opportunities such as volunteering abroad, experiences while on academic exchange, etc.

- Faculty-supervised, non-credit, independent research or fieldwork (Funding is not intended to support volunteer research assistant positions for faculty members.)
- Ideas to enhance student-driven departmental initiatives (Must include a letter of support from the Department Chair/Director.)
- Ideas to work with community partners on community-based initiatives (Must include a letter of support from the community partner.)

This list is not exhaustive. Students may apply for any opportunity that fits the criteria.

*Students are expected to consider various offerings of similar experiences and choose the most local and economical option that provides the best opportunity to develop and achieve strong learning objectives linked to their academics.*

*McMaster University/EE cannot fund an activity if travel warnings issued by Global Affairs Canada advise Canadians to avoid non-essential or all travel to the location of the student experience for any reason (visit [travel.gc.ca](http://travel.gc.ca) for information). It is also the responsibility of the student to determine if any inoculation/medical intervention or insurance is required for travel related to their experience and to ensure that these requirements are completed appropriately before departure.*

### **What are ineligible requests?**

The following items are normally not considered for funding:

- Experiences leading to academic credit, certification or accreditation for the student at McMaster or another qualified post-secondary institution or body. (Exception: SOC SCI 3F03).
- Costs associated with mandatory travel related to a course, including student exchanges.
- Payment for the time of the student, guest speakers or research participants, or for experiences in which the student receives remuneration or is likely to receive remuneration (e.g. an entrepreneurial venture.)
- Expenses related to research where the principal investigator is not the student.
- Retroactive funding for experiences commencing or project expenses incurred prior to the date which the student applies.
- Food, beverages or membership fees, unless cost is included in mandatory program fees.
- Equipment that will become the property of the student or an outside group related to the student experience (e.g. technology, furniture, books, etc.).
- Medical or legal costs for the experience (e.g. vaccinations, passports, travel insurance, etc.).
- Any experience for which the student has received previous Student Experience Fund (*formerly known as the Student Experience Grant*) funding.
- Recruiting or fundraising for organizations.
- Payment towards an organization's administrative costs, customization of placements for students, payment of agency fees or finder's fees or costs associated with project development.
- Experiences for which students cannot provide individual/itemized receipts for expenses (e.g. some organizations hosting experiences abroad supply receipts for flat program fee.)

### **What are the application deadlines?**

Applications will be accepted at the following deadlines:

- Friday, September 28, 2018
- Friday, November 9, 2018
- Friday, January 25, 2019
- Friday, March 15, 2019

Normally, applications will not be accepted at other times. All applications are to be submitted **before 4 p.m. on the deadline date**. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

### **What is the application procedure?**

All applications should be type-written, up to two (2) pages in length. **In addition to the two-page application**, students **must** submit the following: 1) a learning plan, 2) a detailed budget, 3) a completed [Student Experience Fund Application Cover Sheet](#), and 4) a letter of support (if appropriate).

**Students travelling with a volunteer organization external to McMaster must also include one or two links** to relevant web pages that can assist the reviewers with better understanding the organization hosting the experience (e.g. vision, mission, finances, structure, etc.).

It is also **strongly recommend** that students use and submit **one (1)** completed [Student Experience Fund Checklist](#) to ensure that they have submitted all required documentation.

### **Applications are to be submitted electronically using the instructions below.**

1. Save your completed application (with original signature) as a PDF and send it to [talbotr@mcmaster.ca](mailto:talbotr@mcmaster.ca).
2. Your email subject line should include: a) your name; b) your student number, and; c) "SEF Application".
3. Please send your application in only ONE (1) attached document. Do not send all documents separately and do not cut/paste your application into the body of your email.
4. **In addition** to your application package, students must submit a completed [Student Information Disclosure Form](#) (with student AND witness signatures).
5. Please do not include any additional information (e.g. resumes, photos, brochures, etc.) that are not requested as these will be removed prior to the review process.

Incomplete applications will not be considered. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that applications are complete and that all information is accurate. Any and all information provided in any application, including supporting documentation, may be subject to clarification and/or verification for authenticity and accuracy.

### **How are applications evaluated?**

Each application will be evaluated based on the following items as well as overall quality and the learning value of the opportunity. All items **must** be addressed to be considered for evaluation:

Please include questions 1-3 in the two-page application, and questions 4 and 5 can be addressed in separate appendices.

1. Provide a complete description of what the experience includes.

*What will you be doing (larger experience and specific activities)? With whom (demographic of people, host organization, etc.)? For how long?*

2. Describe how this opportunity is experiential/hands-on in nature.
3. Describe the connection between your proposed experience and your academic studies in Social Sciences.
4. Provide a learning plan (in chart form) answering the following three questions:
  - a. What are your learning objectives?
  - b. What strategies will you undertake to achieve your learning objectives?
  - c. How will the successful completion of your learning objectives be assessed?See [EE Guide to Creating Learning Plans & Learning Objectives](#) for more information.
5. Provide a detailed budget. See [Student Experience Fund Budget Guide](#) for more information.

**In addition to the above criteria, students who propose student-initiated experiences will be given preference.** Also, students who are able to effectively address the following two items in their two-page proposal may also strengthen their applications:

- a) Describe any academic mentorship you will receive to successfully plan, participate in and reflect on this experience. Will a faculty member be assisting you with preparing for your experience or providing mentorship throughout the process?
- b) Describe how this experience will impact others beyond yourself (McMaster community, Hamilton community, etc.) *What will you do with what you learned? How will this learning extend beyond you?*

Although both qualify for funding, **preference may be given** to experiences that are student-initiated, in that the student has developed their own experience rather than participating in a pre-organized or pre-existing experience.

A **written letter of support** may strengthen the application, and is strongly encouraged, but not required. This is **not** a reference letter for the applicant, but a letter of support for the experience, stating that the experience has academic value to the student and is related to his/her program of study, and is normally written by a **McMaster instructor** who will comment on their perception of the learning value of the experience or verifying their role as an academic mentor in the experience.

The letter of support is the only piece of the application that can be submitted in person as it will likely come in a signed/sealed envelope. Alternately, the instructor can email Ruthanne Talbot directly at [talbotr@mcmaster.ca](mailto:talbotr@mcmaster.ca) from his or her official McMaster email address.

The [Student Experience Fund Rating Form](#) used by reviewers can be viewed on-line.

### **What is the review process?**

The Student Experience Fund Review Committee consists of up to three faculty members and up to three student members from the Faculty of Social Sciences. Applications are normally reviewed by one faculty member, one student, and the Associate Dean of Social Sciences. The review process is normally facilitated by a Programming and Outreach Manager.

The committee will review eligible submissions and candidates will be informed of the funding decision by their McMaster email, normally within a **three-week period** following the deadline in which they applied.

### **What are the possible review decisions?**

After reviewing applications, the committee may award you the full amount requested, a portion of the amount requested, or none of the requested funds.

### **How are funds released?**

Upon funding approval, students must submit the following documents to EE before funds are released:

- Completed and signed Student Experience Fund Agreement
- Proof of ethics approval (if required)
- Completed [Student Experience Fund Travel Safety Plan Check List](#) (if travelling)

The Student Experience Fund is **reimbursement-based**. Students are not awarded funds until they have provided receipts of expenditure. Normally, reimbursements take 3-4 weeks to process. Within two weeks of completion of the experience students must submit all original receipts and boarding passes.

Students must agree submit a written summary reflection paper at the conclusion of their experience within the timeframes agreed upon in the signed Student Experience Fund Agreement: See [Student Experience Fund Reflection Guidelines](#) for more information.

Failure to complete the terms and conditions of the fund will make students ineligible for access to the Student Experience Fund and may impact further participation in EE programs and activities.

### **For more information about the Student Experience Fund, please contact:**

Ruthanne Talbot, Programming and Outreach Manager at [talbotr@mcmaster.ca](mailto:talbotr@mcmaster.ca), 905-525-9140, ext.23382 or in KTH 129.