

STUDENT EXPERIENCE GRANT STUDENT INFORMATION 2016-2017

What is a Student Experience Grant?

Student Experience Grants are designed to provide financial support for student-initiated experiential learning opportunities that allow students to engage in practical applications of theories learned through their Social Sciences education. They also allow 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 Grant application at a time.

Who is eligible to apply for a Student Experience Grant?

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 two (2) Student Experience Grants are not eligible to apply for or receive funding.*

The activities associated with the grant can occur up until August 31 of the following academic year, except for students in their final year, who can only apply for funds if the experience will conclude **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. **Preference will 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, but both qualify for funding. 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 Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada advise Canadians to avoid travel to the location of the student experience for any reason including civil unrest (visit 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. (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 deadline date to which the student applies.
- Food, beverages or membership fees, unless this cost is included in mandatory program/conference fees.
- Equipment that will become the property of the student or an outside group related to the student experience (e.g. tape recorder, 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 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 grant expenses incurred (e.g. some organizations that host student volunteer experiences abroad supply a receipt for a flat program fee. These students must be able to also provide a receipt for their specific flight, and a breakdown of the remaining fees, as required.)

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 Grant Application Cover Sheet](#), and 4) a letter of support (if appropriate).

Students **must** submit **six (6)** complete copies of their Student Experience Grant application package at the time of application. **One (1)** copy **must** include original signatures, and the remaining **five (5)** copies can be duplicates of the original application.

It is also **strongly recommend** that students use and submit **one (1)** completed [Student Experience Grant Checklist](#) at the time of application to ensure that they have submitted all required documentation. It is the student's sole responsibility to ensure that applications are complete and that all information is accurate.

Students travelling with a volunteer organization external to McMaster must also include two (2) pieces of promotional material (e.g. brochure, copies of relevant website pages, etc.) for the organization they plan to volunteer with to be considered for evaluation. These documents will be in addition to the two (2) page application and other requirements and will be placed in the appendix of the application package. The promotional material will provide the Review Committee with additional information regarding the volunteer organization (e.g. vision, mission, finances, structure, etc.).

When are the application deadline dates?

Applications will be accepted at the following deadlines:

- Wednesday, November 2, 2016
- Wednesday, January 18, 2017
- **Wednesday, March 1, 2017 (*revised)**
- Wednesday, March 22, 2017

Normally, applications will not be accepted at other times. All applications are to be submitted in person to **KTH 102 before 4 p.m. on the deadline date**. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered, nor will applications submitted by email.

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 Grant 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?*

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.

See the sample [Student Experience Grant Rating Form](#) for more information.

What is the review process?

Applications are normally reviewed by all members of the Student Experience Grant Review Committee: two faculty members from the Faculty of Social Sciences, two students from the Faculty of Social Sciences, and the Director of EE. Review meetings are normally facilitated by a Programming and Outreach Manager.

Any and all information provided in any application to EE, including supporting documentation, may be subject to clarification and/or verification for authenticity and accuracy.

The committee will review all eligible submissions and candidates will be informed of the funding decision by email (as listed by the student on the application cover sheet) normally within a **three-week period** following the deadline date for the written application.

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, each student must submit the following documents to the EE office before funds are released:

- Completed and signed Student Experience Grant Agreement.
- Proof of ethics approval (if required).
- A completed [Student Experience Grant Travel Safety Plan Check List](#) (if travelling as part of the experience).

Student Experience Grants are **reimbursement-based**. That is, students are not awarded funds until after they have provided receipts of expenditure. Normally, reimbursements take 3-4 weeks to process, but can take longer. Within two weeks of return from travel or completion of the experience students must submit all outstanding original receipts and boarding passes. Reimbursements can also be processed prior to the activity taking place if the student provides sufficient receipts.

Students must also agree to complete **both** of the following tasks within the timeframes agreed upon in the signed Student Experience Grant Agreement:

- A written summary reflection paper at the conclusion of their grant. See [Student Experience Grant Reflection Guidelines](#) for more information.
- A visual representation of the experience, to be used for EE promotions, in the form of a testimonial quote with high-resolution digital photo, submission and photo to the EE Blog, HD video, or other approved format.

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

Where can I find more information?

Several information sessions will be held in the fall and winter terms to review application guidelines and provide tips on writing a successful application. Students must register on [OSCARplus](#) to attend.

For more information about Student Experience Grants, please contact:

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