

AWARD APPLICANT'S HANDBOOK

*Information for Students Completing
Student Award Applications*

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 educationmatters
Calgary's | trust | for public education

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1. INTRODUCTION

Student awards are often judged on the basis of academic standing, demonstrated potential for post-secondary study and financial need (where applicable). They provide financial support to students who are enrolled, or planning to enrol, in post-secondary studies and programs of at least two years duration; including vocational, technical or post-secondary institutions. Some awards are provided to students before high school graduation in recognition of their achievements, and to encourage and support post-secondary studies.

Normally, students must claim their award within two years of receiving it. If the Scholarship Selection Committee cannot find a suitable candidate for an award based on the eligibility criteria, the Committee reserves the right to not award any number of award(s) in any year.

2. TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS

Applying for an award takes time and effort. As applications have a firm deadline, you should begin compiling the necessary information well in advance. Be prepared to work a minimum of 1-2 hours on each application. The entire process of preparing and submitting your application package, including obtaining references and writing essays, could take up to one month. Do not leave applications to the last minute as most are complex and involve more thought than just filling in blanks on a form.

Here are a few general points to consider in preparing your scholarship application:

- + Consult the Scholarship Coordinator (guidance counsellor) in your school to discover what awards you might be best suited to apply for and assistance in completing your application(s).
- + Tailor your application to meet the Terms of Reference for the award.
- + Make sure all pages (i.e. essay) have your full name and a page number on it.
- + Make sure you have completed and attached all the required information for the application.
- + Do not include extra materials not mentioned in the Terms, as additional pages are discarded.
- + Remember to keep a copy of your completed application for yourself.

3. TERMINOLOGY

Scholarships and bursaries are awarded upon consideration of several criteria. The most common criteria are academic achievement, citizenship qualities, and financial need. Some awards are based on only one of these criteria, some are in combination, or still others have requirements such as volunteerism or part-time employment. Read the Terms of Reference for each award carefully to ensure you meet the eligibility criteria of awards for which you apply.

The following descriptions will be helpful in determining your eligibility:

Academic Achievement refers to your overall final average, or in some instances your final mark in a particular group of subjects, or the average maintained over selected years.

Citizenship Qualities usually takes into consideration your extra-curricular activities (e.g. clubs, teams, organizations) and your overall contribution to the school or community (initiative, cooperation, volunteerism, leadership, etc.)

Financial Need takes into consideration your family's ability to contribute financially to your post-secondary education costs (e.g. total family income, number of children, other financial commitments, extenuating circumstances). It can also factor in your costs associated with attending post-secondary institutions, including housing, food, transportation.

Payment Activation Form is the document provided to award recipients when you are notified of winning an award. Typically, to claim the award payment, you must complete this form through the Registrar's Office of the post-secondary institution you are enrolled in. After the signed / stamped form is returned to EducationMatters for processing by the deadline noted, payment of the award will be forwarded to the post-secondary institution to be deposited into your tuition account. If you receive notification that you have been selected for an award, it is your responsibility to inform your post-secondary institution that scholarship money will be forthcoming from EducationMatters.

Stipend is the value or amount of the award that the recipient will receive.

4. COMPONENTS OF THE APPLICATION

The application package must include:

- + The correct application form. We have two separate application forms: the EducationMatters **General Application for Awards #1 – May 1 Deadline** and the **General Application for Awards #2 – May 30 Deadline** form. If you apply for awards in both deadline rounds, you must complete both forms. Do not submit awards not listed on the respective forms.
- + Transcripts from your current high school (at least grade 12, possibly grades 10-12). A separate transcript must accompany both the early deadline and late deadline application package.
- + A list of all awards and scholarships you hold (have won) or have applied for.
- + Additional statements or information required by the Terms of Reference of the award you are applying for.

Where required by the Terms of Reference, the application package must also include one or more of the following:

- + The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) Notice of Tax Assessment form must be provided for the previous tax year (i.e. 2015) for ALL income earners living in the same household (refer to "definition of household" provided in application forms) for all awards where financial need is part of the criteria. (*where required by the Terms of Reference*)
- + References, one or two, or as specified, with the referee's original signature (*where required by the Terms of Reference*).
- + Your one-page essay or statement (*where required by the Terms of Reference, length may vary by award – do not go over the word count specified*).

Applications that do not include all required items are incomplete. Incomplete applications will not be processed. Late applications will not be accepted.

4.1 THE APPLICATION FORM / HOW DO YOU APPLY?

READ AND FOLLOW THE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY. Often details are missed because an important part of the instructions was not read or followed

- + Accuracy and deadlines are your top priority.
- + The application forms can be completed on your computer (our preference) or by hand.
- + Make your application clear, neat, and easy to read.
- + Use the space provided, do not extend to extra pages unless specifically requested in the Terms of Reference, extra pages are discarded.
- + Double check all spelling and information accuracy on documents carefully. Plan on proofreading each document at least three times – at least once by another person.
- + Check for word processing and grammatical errors. Errors can result in an undeserved negative impression by reviewers who read large numbers of applications.
- + If using cut and paste in word processing from a similar document please ensure there are no references to the other award left in the application. Carefully proof read everything you submit.

A well-presented application demonstrates your organizational skills and conscientious attention to detail.

4.2 ACADEMIC HISTORY / TRANSCRIPTS

Ask the Scholarship Coordinator at your high school to provide you with a photocopy of your current transcripts and they certify that the transcripts are taken from originals. These transcripts should be certified that they are “**copied from originals**”. Grade point averages are calculated for each year of study. A separate transcript must be included with both the May 1 and May 30 Application Forms.

4.3 OTHER SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

- + List all financial awards you have won and include others for which you have applied.
- + Be sure to include awards that you have been offered but were unable to accept.

4.4 SCHOLARSHIP ESSAY

The purpose of the essay is to present a solid case for why you are deserving of this award. Follow the instructions carefully on the specific topic you are to write about. Essays and statements should demonstrate evidence of solid writing skills, and your knowledge of the subject or theme. The essay **must be written by you, not your family, friends or any third party**. Plagiarism will disqualify you from this and other awards for dishonesty.

Scholarship essays vary considerably in subject. The most common theme is a personal experience or opinion to be shared with the reviewers. The most important aspect of your scholarship essay is the subject matter: do not stray in your writing. Some people may **devote**

about 1-2 weeks simply to brainstorming ideas. To begin brainstorming subject ideas consider the following points, you may find a subject or perspective you had not considered at first.

- + What are your accomplishments, and why do you consider them significant accomplishments? Do not limit this to accomplishments for which you have been formally recognized, since the most interesting essays are often based on events that may have seemed less important at the time, but become fundamental when placed in the context of your whole life. This is your opportunity for the scholarship committee, who receives a list of your credentials, to see how you stand out from other applicants.
- + Do you possess or exhibit an attribute, quality, or skill that distinguishes you from others? How did you develop this attribute?
- + Consider the books, movies, works of art, etc. that are your favorites, or you liked the least. Have these influenced your life in a meaningful way? Why are they your favorites or not your favorites?
- + What was the most difficult time in your life, and why? How did your perspective on life change as a result of the difficulty?
- + Have you ever worked hard or fought for something and succeeded? What made you successful?
- + Have you ever worked hard and fought for something and failed? How did you respond?
- + If you could do anything right now (work or play), what would you most like to be doing? Where would you most like to be? Is there anyone living and dead, would you most like to be with, or meet?
- + Have you experienced an epiphany, that moment when it seems as if your eyes were opened to something you were previously unaware or unclear about?
- + What is your strongest, most unwavering personality trait? How would your friends characterize you? What would they write if they were writing your scholarship essay for you?
- + Do you maintain strong beliefs or adhere to a specific philosophy about life and friendships? What have you done outside of the classroom that demonstrates qualities you believe that universities look for in students? Of these, which means the most to you?
- + What are your most significant extracurricular or community activities? What made you join these activities? Why do you continue to participate in them?
- + What are your dreams and hopes for your future? When you look back on your life in thirty years, what would you consider a good or successful life? What people, things, and accomplishments do you need? How does this particular scholarship fit into your plans for the future?

An essay can have many purposes, but the basic structure is the same: introduction, body, and summary/conclusion. You may be writing an essay to argue for or against a particular point of view, or to explain the steps necessary to complete a task. Either way, your essay will have the same basic format. Here are some tips to getting started:

- + Someone who is not aware of the topic or theme should be able understand your reasoning and conclusions. Selection committees have the ability to spot jargon and unclear reasoning.
- + Demonstrate that you have a solid understanding of important issues about the topic, and are familiar with recent and relevant issues/articles/literature.
- + Ask friends, family members, and your teachers to read the draft. Give them sufficient time to do this properly and allow yourself time to make changes.
- + If you plan to undertake a major revision, get more feedback from someone who knows you well.
- + List all references used. Do not plagiarize, if it is a quote, please list as a quote.
- + Pay particular attention to the instructions for the essay/statement.
- + Space is limited; use it wisely to explain critical assumptions, concepts and conventions. Avoid unnecessary repetition to 'pad' the content.

The essay plays an important role in the selection process. Take care to ensure that you write to address the topic/theme stated in the terms of reference for the specific award(s) for which you are applying. Don't let the thought of putting pen to paper overwhelm you. Just get started!

4.5 REFERENCES

The content of the letters of reference should not be a surprise and are not completely out of your control.

Consider the type of scholarship, grant, award, or position you are seeking in order to choose the best person for the task; this is important. Choose someone who knows you well, and who can attest to your demonstrating the qualities that are required by the Terms for that award. This person must have first-hand knowledge and experience of who you are and your abilities. The longer they have known you, the better reference they can write for you.

Letters from people who hold senior positions such as Principal or Department Head are only impressive if they know you personally and have worked with you. You do not want the letter written by someone if they are writing from the reports of others (hearsay).

Keep these points in mind as you are considering your references:

- + Give the reference a copy of your application form, the award Terms of Reference, and any other information that may assist them.
- + Give the reference all required forms and/or addressed envelopes.
- + Give the reference at least one week to write the letter for you.
- + Try to choose a reference who is a clear communicator and can articulate your strengths.
- + References must be included with your application package.
- + The reference may not use all the information you provide, but will be grateful for your help. Section 17 at the end of this document contains some guidelines and tips for completing the reference.

5. DEADLINES

Deadlines to keep in mind when you apply for any kind of award will vary, not just with EducationMatters. So be sure to check with your school Scholarship Coordinator to confirm deadline dates for your school. Some Schools have earlier deadline dates than the one listed on

the Terms of Reference for the award. **Be sure to check with your school's Scholarship Coordinator.** Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

We have two separate application forms: the EducationMatters *General Application for Awards #1 – May 1 Deadline* and the *General Application for Awards #2 – May 30 Deadline* form. If you apply for awards in both deadline rounds, you must complete both forms. Do not submit awards not listed on the respective forms.

6. THE SELECTION PROCESS

6.1 GENERAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARD COMPETITION

The deadlines for students to submit their completed applications to their school Scholarship Coordinator are May 1 & May 30. Students must complete the required sections for all awards they are applying for (outlined and on the front page of each application) and include any required components (essays, references, etc.) outlined in the Terms of Reference. Please note that for awards with a financial need component, a copy of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) **Notice of Tax Assessment** for the previous tax year for ALL income earners living in the same household must be included with the application.

The EducationMatters Student Awards Selection Committee meets twice before the end of September to review all the applications for each award administered by EducationMatters. The Committee is comprised of teachers and community members elected to the committee by EducationMatters. The Committee may include participation of the donor, or designated representative, or members of a particular organization or program.

Committee members rank of all applications based on the written Terms of Reference and the student's eligibility for the award. The best qualified recipient(s) is/are chosen by consensus.

6.2 SCHOOL-SPECIFIC AWARDS

EducationMatters also administers some school specific awards and bursaries. Deadlines are typically May 30 to the school Scholarship Coordinator.

Students must complete the appropriate *School Specific* application form, available on the EducationMatters website, and where applicable, include a copy of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) **Notice of Tax Assessment** form for the previous tax year for ALL income earners living in the same household (if applicable).

7. QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR APPLICATION

All scholarship recipients are typically notified in the fall. If you have a question, or would like more information on the status of your application, please contact the Scholarship Coordinator at your school, or contact the Grants and Stewardship Officer at EducationMatters as listed below:

Grants and Stewardship Officer
EducationMatters
1221 8 Street SW
Calgary, AB T2R 0L4

Main phone: 403-817-7468
Email: kschilman@educationmatters.ca

8. CONGRATULATIONS!

You've received a letter from the Grants and Stewardship Officer of EducationMatters saying that you have been awarded a scholarship!

In order to receive the payment of the award, you will usually be required to complete a **Payment Activation Form**. Take the form and have it stamped by the Fees or Registrar's office at your post-secondary institution. This form must be returned to EducationMatters in order to process the payment of the award. Many awards allow you up to two years (24 months) to claim the award but some of them are sooner, so be aware of this claim deadline.

If you receive an award that was created by a private donor, you will be asked to send a letter of appreciation to the donor once you have accepted the award. Information to help you write a letter of appreciation is available on the EducationMatters website at www.educationmatters.ca.

When indicated in the award's Terms of Reference, students must inform EducationMatters, in writing, of all other awards held concurrently with an EducationMatters award.

9. PAYMENT OF AWARDS

Most awards administered by EducationMatters are paid to the post-secondary institution the student is attending; few awards are paid directly to the student. Award holders will be required to provide a Canadian Social Insurance Number, a Calgary Board of Education student number, and/or a post-secondary identification number in order to receive payment. Normally, all award payments occur in November for fall semester and January for winter semester.

Due to various circumstances we may not process your payment before fee deadline dates. If you receive notification that you have been selected for an award, it is your responsibility to inform your post-secondary institution that scholarship money will be forthcoming from EducationMatters and ensure they have a note placed on your record. We do not inform the institution on your behalf.

For applicable awards, students must provide proof of registration in an eligible program of study at a post-secondary institution; this is done by completion of the Payment Activation Form. This document must be signed by the Registrar's Office of the post-secondary institution they are attending in order to receive payment of their award.

Some awards are paid in instalments and require the award recipient to provide proof of registration and/or transcripts of marks from previous semesters in order to receive continued funding. The payment details and how to apply for payment of your award will be described in the Letter of Offer that you receive from EducationMatters, along with the Payment Activation Form(s). Be sure to read this letter carefully, and keep all paperwork in a safe place.

10. RENEWAL

Some awards may be renewable, but **renewal is not necessarily automatic**. If an award is renewable, the award holder must complete the appropriate Payment Activation Form as confirmation of continuing post-secondary enrollment and meet all conditions of renewal outlined in the Terms of Reference (e.g. minimum GPA requirement). In some cases, such as when there is a minimum GPA requirement, students will be asked to provide an official transcript from the previous semester.

11. TERMINATION OF FUNDING

The Terms of Reference indicate a specified period of time (e.g. 1 year, 18 months) that a student has to accept the award and claim their payment. Once the allotted time has lapsed the funding will no longer be available.

If a student receives a multiple year award and fails to maintain full-time standing at their post-secondary institution, or does not maintain the required GPA as specified in the Terms of Reference, the award may be terminated. Please ensure you understand the requirements as outlined specifically in the Terms of Reference of the award.

12. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

12.1 What if I just found out about an award and the deadline is only days away?

Deadlines cannot be extended. Review the requirements for the application and do your best. Remember that if all requirements are not met with your submission (essay, references, tax assessments), your application will be disqualified.

12.2 Can I defer or interrupt an award?

This may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Contact EducationMatters' Grants and Stewardship Officer to discuss your particular circumstances.

12.3 Do I have to have to provide original transcripts with my scholarship application?

Yes. Your School Scholarship Coordinator can provide high school transcripts. If it is not an original, transcript must be marked "**copied from an original**" and signed by the school Scholarship Coordinator.

12.4 When will I find out about success in the scholarship competition?

The Scholarship Selection Committee meets twice before the end of September. The winning recipients are typically notified, in writing, before the end of October. (The notice includes instructions and documentation required to claim the award, including the Payment Activation Form.)

12.5 If I accept an award will I be required to pay Income Tax?

Canada Revenue Agency recently revised their application and no longer considers scholarships, fellowships, or bursaries taxable, providing your enrolment in a program qualifies you to claim the education amount as per CRA regulations. If you are not eligible for the education amount you must report only an amount that is over \$500.

12.6 If I already hold a Scholarship, can I still apply for other awards?

You can apply other awards with EducationMatters; however, please read the Term of Reference for any awards you apply for to see if there are financial limitations for other awards won. There may be restrictions on the value of the awards you are able to hold concurrently. In some cases, if you are successful in receiving more than one award, you may be required to forfeit one of the other awards. It is your responsibility to notify EducationMatters of any awards won that may disqualify you from claiming certain other awards.

13. SUMMARY

There are many awards available for students proceeding to post-secondary education. Be sure to organize your time and allow enough time to prepare and gather all materials. Take time to double check your application *and if possible have someone else review it before submission.*

In addition to the awards listed through EducationMatters, there are several other institutions and funding bodies that offer scholarships. Use all the reference resources available to search for awards outside of EducationMatters.

Watch the EducationMatters website, your high school and post-secondary institution's newsletter and the Student Awards office for other award opportunities throughout the year.

Don't get discouraged if you are not successful in any one competition. Apply every year and look for other competitions and awards for which you are eligible.

14. SCHEDULE A - INFORMATION FOR REFEREES

14.1 Attributes that should be addressed

- Academic ability
- Originality of thought, creativity
- Accuracy of work
- Discipline and intellectual integrity
- Leadership and citizenship skills
- Communication skills
- Artistic or athletic potential

14.2 More tips

- Be specific. Concrete examples of the student's qualities are far more telling than vague generalities. It is important to state clearly the basis for your evaluation.
- Although length is not a reasonable criterion for judging an evaluation, an extremely brief set of comments suggests that the referee is either unfamiliar with or not interested in the student.
- Write thoughtfully and in some detail. General comments without specific support are not particularly useful.
- It is astonishing how many students are "the best student I ever had". More useful comments focus on the student's particular strengths as observed in particular circumstances.
- A letter that includes specifics about what the student has accomplished and is likely to accomplish is more informative than a string of platitudes.
- Do not restate transcript information. The assessor already has this. Do offer useful amplification of reasons for weakness in the student's performance in a course, if appropriate.
- A balanced identification of strengths and weaknesses can highlight a student's potential, particularly if it is made clear that the weakness can be easily overcome.
- In the case of a student who does not have a strong record (for example, his/her academic marks are not outstanding, no previous awards), the referee can make the case for the student by providing information about the student's potential.
- Write about the student, not yourself. Many letters reveal more about the writer than the person for whom the letter is being written.
- If you are writing letters for more than one student for the same competition, specific comparisons are very helpful.
- Think of how you would react to reading your reference letter if you had another two or three hundred to assess. The reality is that the competition is fierce and a referee who does not seriously consider how her or his comments will be received could potentially prevent a good applicant from obtaining an award.

15. SCHEDULE B - USEFUL SITES AND TOOLS

Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (includes directory listing)	www.aucc.ca
Alberta Learning Information Service – various scholarships	www.alis.gov.ab.ca/scholarships/info.asp
Canada Foundation for Innovation	www.innovation.ca
Canada – U.S. Fulbright Awards Program	www.fulbright.ca
Canadian Bureau for International Development	www.cbie.ca and www.destineducation.ca
Canadian Graduate Award Database	www.schoolnet.ca
Canadian Merit Scholarships	www.cmsf.ca
Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation	www.millenniumscholarships.ca
Community of Science	www.cos.com
International Development Research Centre	www.idrc.ca
Canadian & International Scholarship Programs Commonwealth Scholarship Plan Foreign Government Awards Organization of American States (OAS) Fellowships Program	www.scholarships-bourses-ca.org
National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation	www.naaf.ca
National Science Foundation	www.nsf.gov
Scholarships Canada.com	www.scholarshipscanada.com
School Finder.com	www.schoolfinder.com
StudentAwards.com	www.studentawards.com
TD Canada Trust	www.tdcanadatrust.com/scholarship/
The Calgary Foundation	www.thecalgaryfoundation.org