A few Tips on Preparing Your UMGF Application

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UMGF Details

• University of Manitoba Graduate Fellowship (UMGF)
• Highest level internal graduate award at UofM
• $18,000 (PhD), $14,000 (MSc)
• Maximum 4 years of award
  – Across MSc and PhD, if applicable
• Manitoba Graduate Scholarship (MGS) top up awarded to best UMGF applicants received
  – $7500 (PhD), $3,000 (MSc)
• Minimum 3.75 GPA on last 60 credit hours
  – most recipients have higher GPAs
UMGF Adjudication in Science

- Applications from each department considered
- **Interdisciplinary** committee adjudicates
  - Write accordingly
    - Not an expert review panel
- One member on committee from each department
  - Review done by members from other departments
  - Member from your department acts to clarify questions but does not correct problems or mistakes
- Committee ranks applications and then forwards to FGS for awarding based on a quota provided

The Form - Directions

- Please make sure you read the directions! 😊
  - They’re provided for a reason – to help you!
  - First part is for the applicant but other parts should probably be read too
  - Also read instructions on each page in the form
    - These provide specific information on what is needed
### Page 1

- **Form is PDF fillable**
  - Use Adobe Acrobat,
  Preview (on a Mac) or FoxIT
  http://www.foxitsoftware.com/
downloads/

- **This page is easy to do**
  - Don’t forget the name of your **proposed supervisor**

- **Your name and student number will carry forward to other pages**

### Page 2

- **The section on academic background is obvious**
  - The section on academic/research experience is important

  - Don’t forget to describe the **nature of the work**
  - If necessary, explain how the work was research relevant
The Form – Page 3

• Your list of awards and scholarships provides evidence that others think you have merit
• Specify value of the award ($0 is an option) and whether it was national, provincial or institutional
  – Other options can be specified if needed
    • Explain the scope of the award

The Form – Page 4

• List all awards that are currently applied for
  – If you are a Canadian citizen or permanent resident there should be an NSERC PGS application
• Indicate any extenuating circumstances (e.g. sickness) that might have affected your record
The Form – Page 5

- This is where you list all your publications to demonstrate the impact of your prior experience
  - List all publications in the order prescribed with suitable headings
  - Discuss quality of venue if potentially unclear
  - Other contributions (e.g. patents) should also be listed

The Form – Page 6

- Continue your list of publications and other contributions here
  - Describe significance of author order as well
• Here you list your theses completed or in progress and your supervisor(s) for those theses
• Next, you describe your proposed research
  – Written for non-experts
  – In your own words
  – Describe What, How & Why
  – Explain significance

• The rest of your research proposal
  – Provide detail but avoid too much jargon that might be unclear
  – You will normally have one reader of your proposal from an “allied” discipline so some detail is alright
  – The challenge is to strike the right balance!
  • Ask people to proofread
The Form - Page 9

- Provide contact details for **two referees** (at least one local to UofM):
  - Who will respond
  - Who will respond favourably
  - Who know you well and can comment on your abilities from experience

- List transcripts/certified histories included

The Form - Page 10

- This is the part that your referees must complete
  - Make sure that the referees you select can provide the needed information
  - Provide them with pages 1-9 of your application and, if needed, a copy of your transcripts
  - Make sure they know how to return their reports and follow up to be sure they do
The Form - Page 11

• This is the part that the department head or awards committee completes
  – Again, be sure they have all the necessary information to do so

Common Problems

• We have seen a number of common problems with applications submitted in previous years

• Be sure your application doesn’t suffer from any of these problems:

  1. **Failure to provide complete information**: This should be obvious but is nevertheless a recurring problem
     • Read the instructions – if you don’t you may not know what all is needed
     • Don’t leave the application to the last minute – if you are rushing you’re more likely to miss something
Common Problems (cont’d)

2. **Failure to Explain Relevance of Earlier Work:** This applies both to research experience and to your contributions (e.g. papers, etc.)
   - For example, you should tell the committee how your prior work experience is relevant to doing research for your degree
     - This may be directly relevant or just general skills development but it all speaks to preparedness to do your thesis research

3. **Failure to Explain Contribution Details:**
   - Tell the committee what role(s) you played in a paper published.
   - You might also tell them what contribution the paper makes and why the venue for publication was important
   - Be sure to explain other, atypical contributions (e.g. reports prepared for industry)

Common Problems (cont’d)

4. **Failure to Explain Importance of Awards:** Sometimes the importance of awards is hard to judge
   - If an award is particularly selective make this clear
     - If you were at the top of your class was this a class of 20 or 500?
     - Is an award only given to a single individual? (you!)

5. **Failure to Have a Research Plan:** you must convince the committee that you are ready to do the research
   - Explain how you will do the research. While you may not have specific methodologies or tools in mind, you should have a general idea and be able to communicate it clearly!

6. **Failure to Explain why your Research Matters:** “new” and “interesting” are two different things – you want both!
   - Explain why your research is interesting/important
     - This doesn’t have to be a practical application
       » How does the work advance the field is fine!
A Couple of Tips About Writing

• Write carefully and think about flow in your proposal
  – Get friends to proofread for you to see what you missed

• Follow the rules for organizing and presenting information (e.g. publication lists)
  – The people reading and ranking your application will be tired from reading many others – try to make it easy!

• Be concise – its harder to write a short note than a long one but it is almost always clearer in the end

• Make your enthusiasm and excitement for the research clear in what you write

Getting Additional Information

• Faculty of Science UMGF web page has a couple of useful documents and is located at:
  http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/science/graduate/UMGF_Intro.html

• Graduate Studies UMGF web page describes post-award details and is located at:
  http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/graduate_studies/funding/585.html

• E-mail can be sent to the chairs of departmental graduate studies committees (check department web sites) or to myself at:
  sciadr@umanitoba.ca
Questions?

• Anything you’re unsure about?
  – If so, now is the time to ask!

Happy writing and good Luck!