

The Student Funding Officer's Guide to Filling in Scholarship Application Forms

When applying for scholarships, either external or within the School, it can be confusing and stressful. This is particularly so if you are applying for a financial scholarship, as this can involve the completion of a complicated application form.

Applications can vary from organisation to organisation, but it is important to remember that these forms are a tool to allow candidates to be easily compared, as the information given is in the same format for each candidate.

Below is some useful guidance to completing an application form. Although these guidelines are applicable to completing applications for financial scholarships, they can also be used to cover other types of applications you may have to complete when you leave the School.

The Scholarship Covering Letter

1. The application covering letter is important as it conveys to the funding organisation the 'package' of why you are a suitable candidate for the scholarship. It is essential to remember that this is an opportunity to demonstrate professionalism and knowledge of appropriate etiquette, so it should be completed accurately and neatly. If possible, make a determination to find out to whom the letter should be addressed and make sure you have that individual's name and title spelt correctly (avoid using either "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam").
2. In the body of the letter, express your pleasure at the opportunity to submit your application for the specific scholarship you are seeking. It's always useful to add a sentence recognising the reputation of the establishment and why you would like the opportunity to audition/apply.
3. It is important to close the letter by expressing your enthusiasm for participating in the process and always thank the recipient for their time and consideration.

Before setting pen to paper

Read the guidance notes: You should always read all the enclosed explanatory or guidance notes before completing your application as they will provide essential clues to completing your form accurately and correctly.

Read about the awarding organisation and look at details of the scholarship to help you understand what skills and experiences are required. Refer to these to help you with questions about your skills, experience and why you should be awarded the scholarship.

Read the application form carefully: Before you start filling in the scholarship application form, read right through the form and note any special instructions (for example, "Give details of other funding applications" or "Beginning with the most recent"). As you read each section, think about what the establishment is trying to find out and answer accordingly.

Different types of application forms

Online forms: Some sites give you the option to fill in an application online where you can save your work as you go along. If so, make the most of this function to save it and come back and look at it later. If you do not have an option to save the form as you go along, prepare long answers in advance in, for example, Word, so that you can spell-check them and then copy and paste them in to the final copy to submit. Print out the completed copy, proof read it and get a friend to check it. Keep the printed copy to look at if you are offered an interview or to copy material from in the future.

Electronic forms: As with online applications, it is better to type out all the fields rather than to print out the form and hand write it. Typing is easier to read, and poor handwriting as well as poor grammar can make an application seem messy and hard to understand. It would be wise to have a practice and then print it out and read before amending and submitting.

Hard-copy forms: Check to see if the form stipulates that you have to write in a particular colour ink or in capitals. Photocopy the form and make rough drafts before filling in the final version. Once completed, proof read the form and get a friend to check it. Keep a photocopy to look at if you are offered an interview or to get material from in the future. Try to keep the form neat. If you need more space to answer a question, and the form does not forbid it, use a separate sheet of paper.

When filling in the form

Complete all sections: Make sure that you have completed all sections that are applicable to you on the application form, try not to leave any blanks and be as informative and accurate as possible in your answers. Put N/A if the question is not applicable to you.

Personal information: With any personal information related enquires, such as your name and address, make sure all your contact information is correct and up-to-date. With regards to your email address, make sure it looks professional. If your email address sounds at all jokey, such as groovydude08@exampleemail.com, it will not present you in a professional light. While attending the School it is best to use your School email address, e.g. Joe.Bloggs@stu.gsmd.ac.uk. If after you submit the application form you change any of your personal information it is best to inform the organisation as soon as possible.

Academic History: On some application forms there might be a section asking you to provide information of the educational establishments you have attended and the qualifications you achieved during your time there. Again, it is important to be as informative and accurate as possible. Do not embellish the truth about the grades you were awarded or are predicted to achieve as a lot of establishments may ask you to provide evidence or will check with your referees.

Employment/Work Experience: Most application forms will require you to provide details of work experience or employment you may have undertaken. Please note the organisation will want experience that is relevant to the field you want to obtain the scholarship and therefore it is best not to list every part-time job you have possessed. Think carefully and try to be as detailed as possible. For example, if you worked at a summer school it is worth mentioning, but a part-time job on the cheese counter at your local supermarket may not. However, if the employment is not relevant to the field but identifies a period where you were not in education then you should identify it.

References: It is important you supply two referees for your application, if no number is specified. Ideal referees would be relevant teachers or employer. Check with your referees that they are happy to provide a reference before including their names and make sure you supply accurate contact information.

Statement in support of your application: When completing your personal statement, you should aim to keep it at a reasonable length. You need to be informative, but while being honest as to why you feel you should receive the scholarship, it is best to not focus too much on the financial aspects of the scholarship. Instead you should focus on what you hope to achieve if you receive the scholarship. It is also important to stress how passionate you are about the opportunity to apply/audition.

The essential four sections you need to cover are:

- What you hope to achieve while studying at the School,
- What you are aiming to do when you leave the School,
- How you plan on supporting yourself financially,
- The amount you have requested, and why, from the scholarship.

You can continue on a separate page if required/allowed. Remember to keep a copy of the organisation's guidance to hand and to refer constantly to this in your statement as this is the key part of the application form the organisation will use to determine whether you would be a worthy recipient of the scholarship.

Parent/Guardian/Partner's occupation and income: Some organisations will only support students on the basis of parental/guardian's occupation, and so will ask applicants to supply this information.

If you need to be considered for a Scholarship on the basis of financial need (e.g. you have no financial support from your parents, guardian or partner), it is helpful for the organisation to know their financial position, so that they may assess the financial support you are already receiving.

If you are requested to state your household income make sure you state the exact amount in pounds sterling (£) even if parents/guardian/ partner are retired, studying or on benefits. It is important to note that some applications who ask for this information will require the signature of any individual whose details are supplied here to confirm that the information is correct.

Predicted income and expenditure for 2010/11: Most applications will ask you to predict how much your income and expenditure will be for the academic year. It is important you let the organisation know of any ongoing debts (e.g. student loans) you may have. Again, it is important to be as accurate and informative as possible, and it is vital you do not misinform about any debts or your income.

Other financial applications: If you are asked to provide a list of other organisations you have applied to for financial aid, it is best to be honest and to give as much detail as possible; the amount you have asked for, as well as the deadline after which you will receive a decision.

Extra documents

Equal Opportunities Form: If the application form includes an equal opportunities form, it is useful for the organisation for you to provide as much information as possible so that they can use it to evaluate their services.

Curriculum vitae: Some applications may ask you to enclose a copy of your most up-to-date CV. This should be typed and should be well-presented. Please remember to include the following details:

- your name, nationality and date of birth,
- your instrument/voice (musicians only),
- your education to date,
- your professional experience.

There are many websites providing generic advice about the basics of writing CVs such as www.cvtips.com. You may also like to include a copy of your professional biography, but this should be in addition to, rather than in place of, a more factual CV.

Before submitting

Re-read the completed form: Even though you might have copied your answers from a rough version, errors can easily creep in so make sure you re-read what you have written for any mistakes and correct them.

Make sure you sign the form or if you are submitting an online application, make sure the form submits before shutting down the computer. It would be awful to have filled in the entire form only to have it disqualified for being unsigned or incomplete.

Envelopes: Make sure you use an envelope that is in ratio to the size of the application form – e.g. if the form is size A4, make sure you use an A4 envelope. If you use a smaller envelope the application form will look scruffy. Also it is vital you make sure you pay for the correct postage, remembering proportional pricing, so that the organisation does not end up picking up your postage bill!

Create a file: It is best to keep your scholarship application forms to hand, so you can look at them if you get an interview or to get material from in the future. Make sure you keep this file up to date and as organised as possible. If you are applying for more than one scholarship it may be beneficial to

create either a spreadsheet or a table listing each scholarship, when you applied, the date of the deadline and the response you received.

After submitting

Remember to say thank you: If your application is successful, it is important for you to take the time to thank the organisation for awarding you the scholarship. You should do this within seven days of receiving notification that you have been successful as well as when the cheque is provided by the scholarship. It is also courtesy to keep the organisation informed of your progression as a musician, by informing them of any awards or qualifications you receive, and perhaps even inviting a member of the organisation when you perform in a concert or recital.

If you need assistance in submitting an application or would like to discuss in more detail the information contained in this document, please contact the Student Funding Officer, Kirsty Ellinor.

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7382 7181

Email: Kirsty.Ellinor@gsm.d.ac.uk

Address: Registry office, Guildhall School of Music & Drama, Frobisher Crescent, Barbican, London, EC2Y 8DT

Last updated 4 November 2009.