



GRADUATE
STUDENTS'
ASSOCIATION
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

QUALITY MONEY HANDBOOK FOR STUDENT INITIATIVES

2026 - 2027

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OVERVIEW

01



HOW IT STARTED

The Quality Money program was established in 2002/2003 through a unique **partnership between the University of Calgary, the Graduate Students' Association (GSA), and the Students' Union (SU)**. Created as part of the annual tuition consultation process, the program **allocates funds proportionally** to the GSA and SU based on student population.

PURPOSE

The goal of Quality Money is to **invest in student-led initiatives** that enrich the graduate student experience by fostering community, supporting professional and personal development, and addressing barriers to success. Each year, the GSA invites applications for new projects that align with its strategic priorities and have a lasting, positive impact on the graduate student community.

QUALITY MONEY PILLARS

02



PRIORITIES

The Graduate Students' Association (GSA) receives Quality Money funding through the University of Calgary's Board of Governors, reflecting a valued partnership in enhancing the graduate student experience. Projects supported through this program are expected to align with the University's **Ahead of Tomorrow Strategic Plan** (2023–2030). To ensure projects also reflect the unique priorities of graduate students, the **GSA's Strategic Plan** (2026–2030) serves as an additional framework for guiding funding decisions.

In alignment with both the University's and the GSA's strategic plans, the Quality Money Pillars were established to reflect graduate student priorities and guide the evaluation of all funding applications and proposals.

QUALITY MONEY PILLARS

03

**SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS MUST ALIGN WITH
AT LEAST ONE OF THESE PILLARS:**



PILLAR 1 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT & DEVELOPMENT

This pillar supports projects that foster community, amplify graduate student voices, and promote skill development.

These projects include, but are not limited to:

- Career, skills and leadership development
- Speaker series
- Symposia and conferences
- Cultural events
- Sports activities

QUALITY MONEY PILLARS

04

PILLAR 2 ENRICHING TEACHING & LEARNING

This pillar supports projects that enhance graduate education, improve teaching skills, and encourage cross-departmental collaboration.



These projects include, but are not limited to:

- Teaching and learning projects
- Research analysts
- Workshop series

PILLAR 3 SUSTAINABILITY & ACCESSIBILITY

This pillar supports projects that improve access, reduce barriers, promote well-being, or strengthen long-term program viability for graduate students.



These projects include, but are not limited to:

- Enhancing graduate student study and recreational spaces
- Journal digitization projects
- Online resource development

GRADUATE STUDENT GROUP FUNDING

WHAT IS A GRADUATE STUDENT GROUP?

In 2025, the GSA Elected Council consolidated Departmental Graduate Associations (DGAs) and Graduate Student Groups (GSGs) under one governing policy. GSGs are regulated by the GSG Handbook and Student Group Policy.

GRADUATE STUDENT GROUP FUNDING

Registered GSGs may access GSA support and resources, including operation bursary and event funding. Funding is limited and may change from year to year.

Details regarding support for GSGs can be found online at gsa.ucalgary.ca/graduatestudentgroups/ or by contacting the Executive Coordinator at governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca.



INTAKE PERIODS 2026 - 2027

JULY 15 - AUGUST 12

SEPTEMBER 17 - OCTOBER 15

JANUARY 14 - FEBRUARY 11

APPLICANTS WILL BE NOTIFIED OF THE RESULTS **WITHIN FOUR WEEKS FOLLOWING THE CLOSE OF THE INTAKE PERIOD.**



WHO CAN APPLY

- Current graduate students.
- Established University partners (e.g., Food Hub).

REQUIREMENTS

Projects must align with at least one of the GSA Quality Money Pillars (p.2-4).

DGAs that have received an event grant or departmental grant must allocate those funds before applying for Quality Money.

- The event grant must be referenced in the Quality Money application—either by:
 - indicating how it will be used within the project, or
 - stating its intended use for the relevant semester.

Where possible, please submit letters of support (financial and otherwise) with your application.



HIRING WITH QUALITY MONEY

Speaker fees are eligible for funding, however a valid invoice or receipt must be provided by the speaker.

Graduate students must be prioritized for paid roles.

Funding cannot be used to pay salary or honorarium to the applicants.

When hiring a graduate student in:

- **Academic roles** (e.g., research, academic event support)
 - The student must be hired via a **supervisor** (e.g., professor, instructor, dean, associate dean, graduate program administrator).
 - The student must be hired through the **Collective Agreement** with the University of Calgary as the employer.
 - A signed **letter of support** from the position supervisor must be included with the application.
 - Funds are transferred from the GSA to the faculty to process the payment.



HIRING WITH QUALITY MONEY

When hiring a graduate student in:

- **Non-academic roles** (e.g., podcaster, pancake flipper, etc.)
 - The student hired must provide an **invoice** for their services. The invoice must include the **date, amount paid, and a brief description of the work completed.**
 - The hired student is responsible for reporting any income received through Quality Money on their tax return.

ELIGIBILITY

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QUALITY MONEY CANNOT BE USED FOR

- Alcohol
- Honoraria, gifts, or cash prizes
- Projects unrelated to graduate student benefit
- Projects that are already finished
- Projects that began before the application deadline
- Student research projects related to a thesis or other academic submissions

**ALL EXPENSES MUST BE SUPPORTED BY
AN INVOICE OR RECEIPT.**

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS & REPORTING

**APPLICANTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO VIEW
QUALITY MONEY AS SEED FUNDING AND TO
SEEK ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT.**

APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUBMITTED ONLINE

gsa.ucalgary.ca/financial-support/quality-money-program

Incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

QUALITY MONEY RECIPIENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Recipients are expected to:

- Include GSA branding on all promotional materials.
- **Submit a final report** within 30 days of project completion that includes:
 - A brief overview of the project.
 - A detailed spending report with proof of payment (e.g., receipts, invoices).
 - An assessment of project outcomes and impact on graduate students.
 - Suggestions for future improvements and student feedback.
- Return any unused funds to the GSA.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS & REPORTING

EXTENSIONS

If a project is delayed, an extension request must be submitted before the original end date. Each project may only be extended once, pending GSA Elected Council approval.

GSA Elected Council is unlikely to approve an extension request if:

- The request is submitted after the original end date, or
- The extension is for more than 30 days beyond the original end date.

CHANGE IN PROJECT SCOPE

Should the scope of an approved project change, the applicant is required to notify the GSA by contacting [**governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca**](mailto:governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca) with a detailed description of the proposed changes.

Changes must be reviewed and approval by the GSA Elected Council before proceeding.

EVALUATION PROCESS & CRITERIA

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The GSA Elected Council is responsible for reviewing all applications and making final funding decisions. As funding is limited, the process is competitive, and approval—whether full or partial—is not guaranteed.



EVALUATION CRITERIA

QM applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Strength of connection to the GSA Quality Money pillars
- Potential impact on graduate students
- Practicality of timeline
- Measurability of outcomes
- Project's future direction
- Sustainability (if applicable)
- Efficient use of financial resources

FAQS & CONTACTS

FAQS

Q: What if my project spans more than one year?

A: Applications can only be approved for one year. Applicants must reapply each year.

Q: What if my application is rejected?

A: Applicants can re-apply in the next intake cycle.

Q: Can I apply to multiple intake periods for the same project?

A: Yes. If your project was not funded or requires renewed funding, you may reapply in a future intake cycle. Each application must be self-contained and meet all current requirements.

Q: Can I apply for multiple projects in the same intake period?

A: Yes. Multiple applications are allowed as long as each project is distinct and separately justified.

Q: What qualifies as a valid receipt or invoice?

A: A valid receipt or invoice must include the vendor name, a description of goods or services, the date, the total amount paid, and proof of payment.

Q: What if I underestimate or overestimate my project costs?

A: Any unused funds must be returned. If costs change significantly, contact the GSA as soon as possible. Additional funding is not guaranteed.

FAQS & CONTACTS

FAQS

Q: Can undergraduate students or staff be involved in my project?

A: Yes. However, the primary beneficiaries must be graduate students, and graduate students must be prioritized for any paid roles.

Q: Are travel and accommodations eligible expenses?

A: Typically not. Travel expenses may only be approved if they are essential to the project and benefit graduate students. Pre-approval is required.

Q: What happens if I miss the reporting deadline?

A: Failure to submit the final report within 30 days may result in ineligibility for future funding and repayment of awarded funds.



FOR SUPPORT & INQUIRIES CONTACT:

Treasurer

vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca

Executive Coordinator

governance.gsa@ucalgary.ca