Preparing a Strong GAC Application

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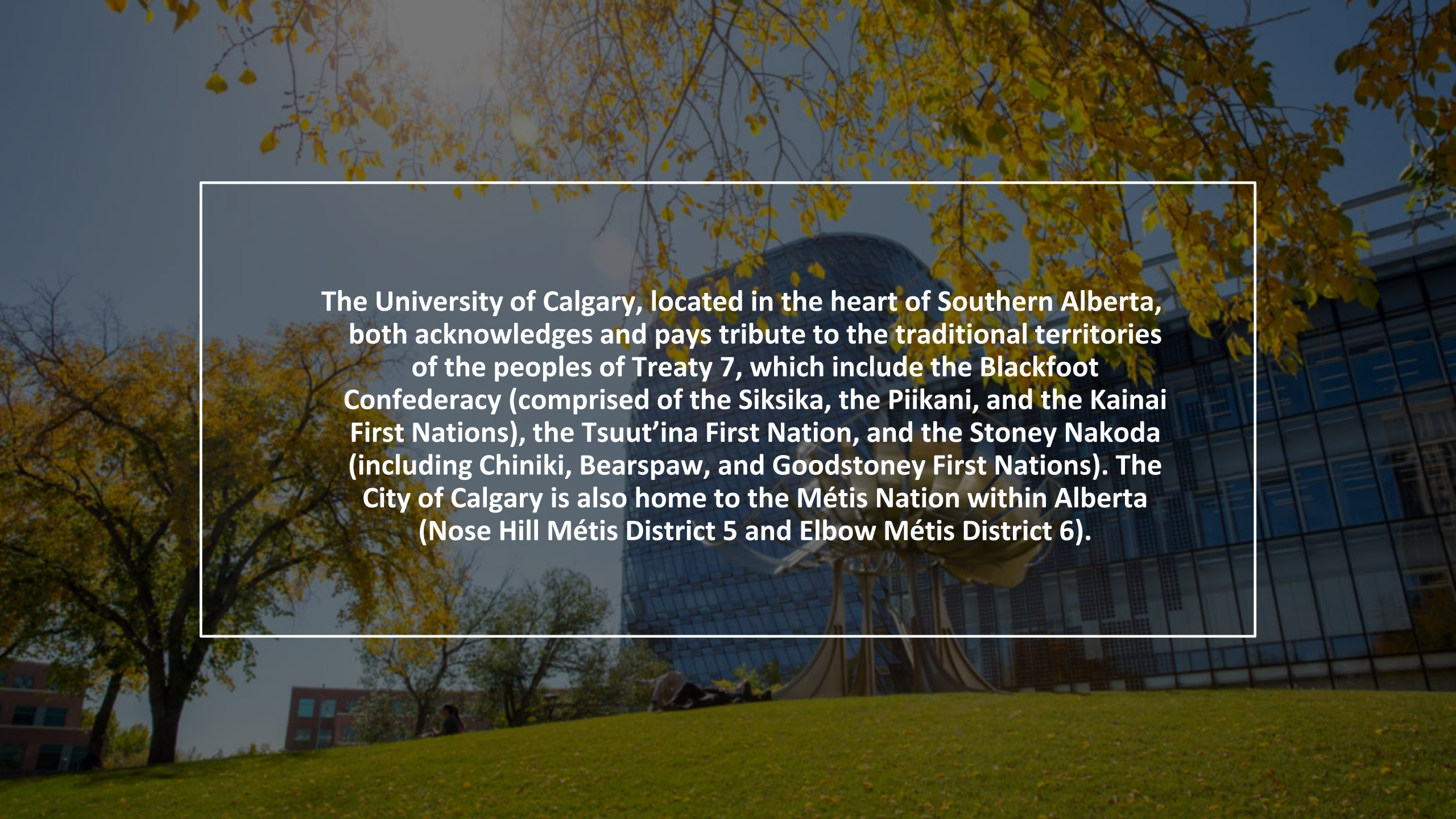
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES



The University of Calgary, located in the heart of Southern Alberta, both acknowledges and pays tribute to the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7, which include the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprised of the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation within Alberta (Nose Hill Métis District 5 and Elbow Métis District 6).

Agenda

- Overview of GAC Awards
- Eligibility
- Deadlines
- Program Quotas
- Results
- Application Location
- What you Need to Submit
- References
- Academic History
- Evaluation Criteria
- How to Create a Strong Application
- Resources
- Questions

GAC Awards

Awards Offered Through GAC

The following award categories are awarded through the annual Graduate Award Competition (GAC)

- Izaak Walton Killam Doctoral Scholarships
- Open Doctoral Scholarships
- Alberta Innovates Graduate Student Scholarships
- Special Awards (including select Indigenous/DEI Awards)
- FGS Awards open to all eligible applicants (including Alberta Graduate Excellence Scholarship (AGES) – International)
- Cumming School of Medicine Awards

Eligibility

Eligibility

- **Thesis-based students only**

- **You must meet the eligibility criteria for each award you are applying for.**
  - Terms of reference for the Killam, Open Doctoral, FGS, and Special Awards can be found on the Graduate Award Database
  - Terms for the Alberta Innovates Graduate Student Scholarships can be found at grad.ucalgary.ca/awards/award-opportunities/alberta-innovates

- **Killam and Open Doctoral categories:** require a first-class average in the last two completed years of study (full-time equivalent).
  - At the University of Calgary that is an **average of 3.5 or higher**

Deadlines

GAC Deadline

- Applications are submitted electronically through your Student Centre
- Deadlines vary by program, contact your Graduate Program Staff
- You may only submit one application, regardless of the number of programs you may have applied to
- Contact gsaward@ucalgary.ca immediately with details if:
  - If you have applied to multiple programs for admission
  - decline an offer from the program to which you have submitted your GAC application
  - are declined admission the program to which you have submitted your GAC application

Program Quotas

Program Quotas

- **Killam Award**
  - Each graduate program is allocated a certain number of applications to forward
  - Some programs are more transparent than others in this regard (e.g., will inform students that have been forwarded). Please speak with your program in late February/early March if you have not been told either way.
- **All others (Open, Alberta Innovates, and Special/FGS Awards)**
  - All applications are forwarded to the competition, no Program quotas

Results

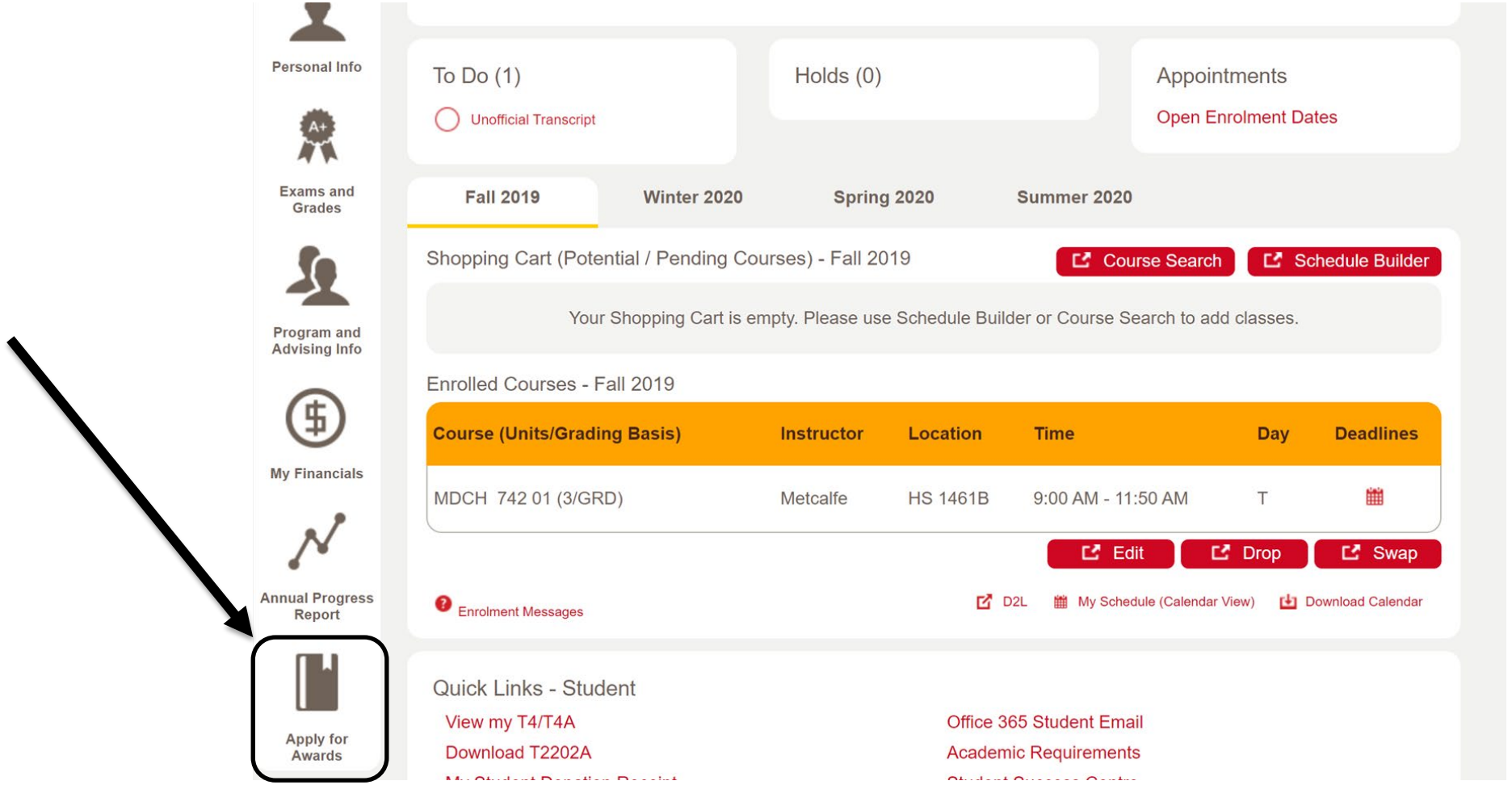
Expected Results TimeLine

- **Results are expected to be announced as follows**
  - **Successful notices**
    - Izaak Walton Killam: May
    - Open Doctoral: May - September
    - Special Awards: May - September
    - Alberta Innovates: September - December (successful students only)
  - **Unsuccessful notices will not be sent**
    - Review the result schedule posted on the GAC webpage to see if all results have been announced

Application Location

Application Location

my.ucalgary.ca > Academic > Student Centre



What you need to submit

Application Components

- The online application requires the following
  - Award Selection
  - 2 References
  - Academic History
  - Scholarship / Award History (up to 10)
  - Title of research proposal (254 characters)
  - Research Abstract (250 words)
  - Research Proposal (800 words)
  - Bibliography (1000 words)
  - Presentations and Contributions (1000 words)
  - Leadership and Interpersonal Skills (800 words)
  - Allowable Inclusions (250 words)

References

References

- Fill out online form
- Names, email, organization
  - **Select notify:** They will receive an email with instructions and a deadline
- Ensure referee confirms receipt of email request
  - It may end up in the junk/spam folder!
- Ensure you “SAVE” the page once nominations are sent
- Submission of your application **does not** rely on submission of references

Academic History

Academic History

- List **ALL** post-secondary institutions, whether or not you received a degree from those institutions
- If you are currently registered at UCalgary, list UCalgary!
- Ensure you delete all duplicate entries and add any missing degree data as required.
- Transcripts for all institutions will be uploaded by the Graduate Program Staff in the program for which you are applying for funding.

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria

	Academic Excellence	Research Potential	Personal Characteristics and Interpersonal Skills
GAC	40%	40%	20%

Application Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Indicators
Academic Excellence (40%)	• Transcripts • Awards • Reference Assessments (x2)
Research Potential (40%)	• Research Proposal • Presentations and Contributions • Awards • Reference Assessments (x2)
Personal Characteristics & Interpersonal Skills (20%)	• Leadership Statement • Reference Assessments (x2)

How to Create a Strong Application

How to Create a Strong Application

- **Start early**
  - Writing a good application takes time and planning
  - Make a schedule so that you can meet the competition deadlines and submit with confidence

- **Know what you are applying for**
  - Read the terms of reference to confirm you meet the eligibility criteria and understand what is required to complete the application

- **Feedback in Key**
  - Get colleagues, supervisors, peers, etc. to proof your application

GLC Video Resources

1. GAC: Understanding the Graduate Awards Competition
2. GAC: Positioning Yourself for Success
3. GAC: Building a Strong Academic Profile
4. GAC: Crafting Your Proposal and Submitting with Confidence

Resources

Additional Resources

- **GAC Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

- **Watch the other GAC videos**

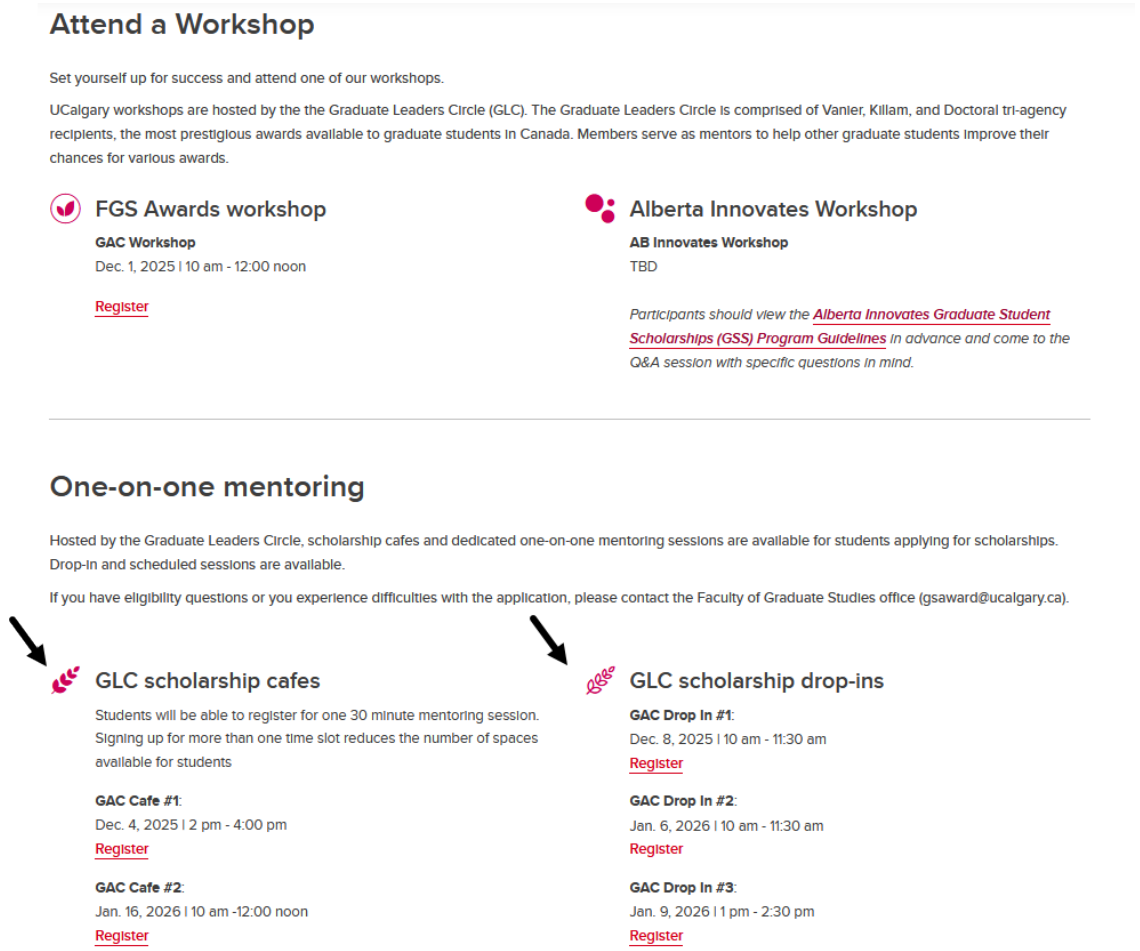
- **Plan your support network**
  - Supervisor
  - Your program (is there a department workshop?)
  - Peers
  - Family, & Friends
    - Applications benefit from multiple sources of support, so reach far and wide for feedback

- **Consult current scholarship holders in your program**

- **Writing Support Services**
  - Language & Writing Support
    https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support

GAC Scholarship Cafes and Drop-in Mentoring

- **GLC Peer Review**
  - Register for Scholarship Cafés & Drop-In Mentoring sessions hosted by the Graduate Leaders Circle (GLC)
  - Registration details and links are available on the UCalgary GAC webpage



Attend a Workshop

Set yourself up for success and attend one of our workshops.

UCalgary workshops are hosted by the the Graduate Leaders Circle (GLC). The Graduate Leaders Circle is comprised of Vanier, Killam, and Doctoral tri-agency recipients, the most prestigious awards available to graduate students in Canada. Members serve as mentors to help other graduate students improve their chances for various awards.

FGS Awards workshop

GAC Workshop
Dec. 1, 2025 | 10 am - 12:00 noon

Register

Alberta Innovates Workshop

AB Innovates Workshop
TBD

Participants should view the Alberta Innovates Graduate Student Scholarships (GSS) Program Guidelines in advance and come to the Q&A session with specific questions in mind.

One-on-one mentoring

Hosted by the Graduate Leaders Circle, scholarship cafes and dedicated one-on-one mentoring sessions are available for students applying for scholarships. Drop-in and scheduled sessions are available.

If you have eligibility questions or you experience difficulties with the application, please contact the Faculty of Graduate Studies office (gsaward@ucalgary.ca).

GLC scholarship cafes

Students will be able to register for one 30 minute mentoring session. Signing up for more than one time slot reduces the number of spaces available for students

GAC Cafe #1:
Dec. 4, 2025 | 2 pm - 4:00 pm
Register

GAC Cafe #2:
Jan. 16, 2026 | 10 am -12:00 noon
Register

GLC scholarship drop-ins

GAC Drop In #1:
Dec. 8, 2025 | 10 am - 11:30 am
Register

GAC Drop In #2:
Jan. 6, 2026 | 10 am - 11:30 am
Register

GAC Drop In #3:
Jan. 9, 2026 | 1 pm - 2:30 pm
Register

Contacts

Crafting a Strong Application, Cafes/Drop-in

- GLC gradlead@ucalgary.ca

Program Criteria (Deadlines, Returning an Application etc.)

- Graduate Programs

Eligibility, Application Criteria, Technical Support

- Review the Eligibility for competitive awards, Individual award eligibility, Instructions, and FAQ
- Graduate Award Office gsaward@ucalgary.ca

Questions

Connect with us on social media

@ucalgaryfgs

@UCalgaryGradStudies