

Graduate/Professional Study Timeline

As graduate and professional students seek support, they may find it useful to familiarize themselves with the categories used by funding agencies. Potential sponsors tend to divide graduate work into "stages," which we have outlined below. These descriptions are intended as a general guide and are not specific to any particular grant or fellowship - always check the guidelines of the particular funding opportunity that you are considering.

1. "Early" Graduate Student: Funding for the first - second year of graduate school. Applicants may be in these years and often these opportunities are available for students to apply one year prior (undergraduate or other) to beginning graduate work. These grants mainly fund tuition and fees, as well as a stipend for living expenses.

2. Predissertation: Tailored to students from the start of their graduate programs through the master's or defense of the dissertation proposal. Some sponsors fund master's level students through this category while others may not. These opportunities mainly fund research and experiences that aid research, such as travel, language study, and supplies.

3. Thesis/Dissertation: The "classic" graduate funding category, this is the most widely available type of graduate funding. These grants and fellowships generally cover the period of time from after the defense of the dissertation topic, when the student enters the ABD ("all but dissertation") stage, to the completion of dissertation research. Funds may support the doctoral research and experiences that aid research, such as language study, travel, supplies, and facility use. Living expenses while completing research may also be included in some funding applications. Some grants/fellowships may also cover expenses for master's theses.

4. Writing or "Write-up": This stage covers the actual writing process of the dissertation, once the graduate student has completed or is nearing the completion of their dissertation research. Most of these opportunities fit under the fellowship category, and are designed to enable the student to concentrate mostly or only on writing and completing the dissertation. The majority of these grants are designed for students who will complete their dissertation at or near the end of the award year. These funds may generally be used for tuition and fees, stipend for living expenses, and any follow-up research needed for completion.