MBB Graduate Travel and Research Award: Terms of Reference

The MBB Graduate Travel and Research Award (TARA) is designed to encourage student participation in conferences or research opportunities outside of SFU. The goal of this program is to provide travel opportunities for MBB students, facilitating involvement in scientific events that would normally be prohibitively expensive for their supervising faculty member.

Value: $2,000

Departmental Application Deadline: August 31st

Applicant Requirements:

- Domestic and international students are eligible
- While holding this award, the student must be registered full time and in good academic standing
- MSc students must hold the award within 9 terms of the beginning of their program; PhD students must hold the award within 15 terms of beginning their program. These times may be extended for students who have taken an approved leave. Students who did not complete a MSc program before transferring into a PhD are eligible to hold the travel award within the first 15 terms of their PhD, from the PhD start date.
- Evidence of outstanding research achievement
- Formal participation in the event (e.g., presentation of a poster or talk at a scientific conference)

Apply: Students will submit an application package through the GA3 portal. This must include:

- The applicant’s graduate transcripts
- 1-page statement of interest from the student, which includes the following information:
  - A description of the proposed travel (research opportunity or conference)
  - A description of how participation in this research opportunity or conference will enhance the student’s ability to study, network, job seek, or market published/unpublished work.
  - A brief outline of the student’s research (NOT a full research proposal), highlighting recent results or pending publications that could be presented at a conference
- A reference letter from the supervising faculty, which includes the following information:
  - A brief description of the work the student will be presenting at the conference or performing at the remote location
  - A commitment to pay any expenses incurred at this event that exceed the value of the TARA award

Application packages will be adjudicated by the Scholarship Committee. Priority will be given to participation in national/international events, and to students nearing the end of their graduate program. This award can only be held by a student once during their graduate program.

If a TARA is approved, the normal procedure is that the supervising faculty will first reimburse the student for their travel (i.e., either a cash advance or expense report), and the TARA funds will be made available to the supervisor in the term following the event. EXCEPTION: If travel occurs in the summer semester or the last semester of a student’s graduate program, then TARA funds will be provided in the semester that travel occurs.

Ex. Student Z (whose stipend is $8,000/semester) is awarded a TARA and attends a conference in October. The supervisor reimburses the student’s expenses ($2,000) from a research grant (total funds to support the student that semester: $10,000). At payroll in December, the supervisor is provided the TARA funds to support student Z’s stipend for the following term (paying the student $6,000 from their grant and $2,000 from TARA). This system allows the overall contribution of the supervisor to be unchanged ($16,000 over two semesters).

If the student fails to attend the conference/remote research opportunity or does not formally participate (present) TARA funds will be withheld.

Awardees and supervising faculty will be notified of the results of the TARA competition in mid-September.