

# CV and Personal Statements for Scholarship Applications

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UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

# Session overview

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- This session is specifically designed to advise students who are applying for the Rhodes and/or McCall MacBain Scholarship.
- Quick overview on Personal Statements and CVs
- Suggestions about how to compress and make the most of the space/wordcount that you have



# Part 1: Personal Statements

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# What is the role of the personal statement?

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Personal statements...

- Give you a chance to **share your story**
- **Paint a picture** of what got you here and where you're hoping to go
- Elaborate on **components of your CV**
- Make the review committee want to **meet** you by being **authentic**

**Start by thinking  
about your story.**

# What is your story?

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Who are  
you?

What  
have you  
done?

Where  
are you  
going?

**Why this opportunity?  
Why should the scholarship invest in you?  
Why this particular institution?**

# A good statement will:

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- Answer directly the **questions you were asked**
- Articulate how your **experiences and skills** make you a good fit
- Show **alignment** between you and the scholarship
- Tell your **story**

# Before you start writing...

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- 1. Brainstorm;** think about your story and what programs you'll apply for
- 2. Gather** information and questions
  - Not every application asks the same thing; read the questions carefully
  - Think about how to tailor your statement to each application
- 3. Review** your CV

# Brainstorming questions

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- What inspired me to pursue graduate school?
- What can I offer? How will I contribute to the scholarship's mission, goals, etc.
- How do my background, skill set, experience and training make me an asset?
  - *What lessons did I learn?*
  - *What impact did this experience have on me?*
  - *What legacy did I leave?*



**Show them, don't tell them.**

# Illustrate your points

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- A. My strong communication and teamwork skills will help me thrive and support patients in the fast-paced surgical environment.
- B. During my cardiac surgery elective, I was often a liaison between the patient, their family, and the surgical team. My efforts to share procedural instructions and status updates in an empathetic yet clear manner, such as when preparing patients for open-heart surgery, helped me gain their trust to build positive rapport and manage the patient experience.

Ask yourself: So what?

# Have you included the result or impact?

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- A. I had the opportunity to participate in both urban and rural family medicine electives.
  
- B. Taking part in both urban and rural family medicine electives let me experience first-hand the importance of listening to patient needs. Through these opportunities, I developed the craft of asking strategic open-ended questions to allow patients to express their concerns and provide me with enough information to problem solve in the span of an appointment. Problem solving excites me, and...

How can you organize your content?

# Answer the Questions

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- If the scholarship to which you are applying has specific questions for you to answer, be sure that your answers to the questions are clear.
- Answering the question(s) will be the most important consideration for how your statement will be reviewed and assessed.
- If you are given enough space for a longer response to the questions, then consider the organizational approaches mentioned in the next two slides.

# Option 1: Write a narrative

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Think about your past, present, and future

## Introduction

- Personal story or event to capture the reader's attention
- How has this story impacted what you are pursuing now?

## Body

- Experiences, strengths and skills that align with the scholarship
- May include more about motivation to pursue this scholarship

## Conclusion

- Why this scholarship? How does it tie into your future goals?

# Option 2: Use themes

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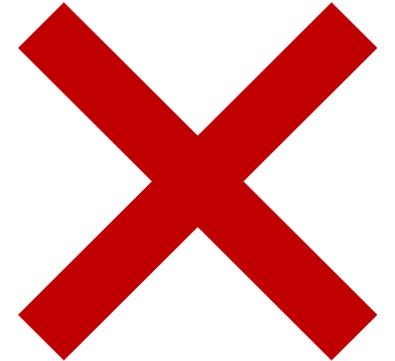
**Each paragraph centers around a specific theme, such as:**

- Education
- Past experiences
- Current experiences
- Skills
- Future career goal

# Things to avoid

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- Telling a personal anecdote that **is too long**
- **Restating your CV** or using too much chronology
- Being **too cheesy** or cliché
  - *“Ever since I can remember, I’ve wanted to be a pediatrician.”*
- Providing **too many stories**, not enough substance/examples
- Sounding **uncertain** or making **excuses**
- Being **negative**



# Keys for success

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- Make your document **personal**
  - Write in the first person and keep the focus mostly on yourself
- Have an undertone of **humility**
- **Don't repeat** yourself
- **Answer the questions** being asked; follow word counts
- Start **early!**



**The best personal statements  
have had time to “brew”!**

# As you plan, write, and revise...

## **Seek support!**

- Talk your statement and its contents over with others
  - If you are applying for the Rhodes Scholarship, remember that the application will ask you to identify any help you have received from others.
  - Don't wait until it's "perfect" before getting input
- Be prepared to receive conflicting and contradictory feedback



# Part 2: CVs

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# CV vs. Resume for Scholarship Applications

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- A Curriculum Vitae (CV) is the academic/educational version of your resume.
- In practice, a CV will often be much longer than a resume, which is traditionally a one-page document.
- For some scholarship applications, however, a CV will have a strict page limit.
  - Rhodes Scholarship: 2-page CV with minimum 12-point font.
  - McCall MacBain: 1-page resume (which might end up being more like a CV).

# Quick Overview of CV Sections

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- Traditional order of a CV:
  - Contact Info
  - Education
  - Experience
  - Awards/Scholarships
  - Conferences/Presentations
  - Affiliations/Memberships
  - Skills
  - Interests
- Order of sections may vary; put sections that are most significant for you earlier.
  - If one section is really long, think of ways to break it up (e.g. Leadership Experience vs. Volunteering).
- Reverse chronological order (most recent items go first).
- Put title of section in all caps and bold; divide sections up by including solid lines.

# Sample Student

[sample.student@ucalgary.ca](mailto:sample.student@ucalgary.ca) • (403) 555-5555

## **EDUCATION**

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**Bachelor of Science, Psychology Sept. 2021 – April 2025**

**Cumulative GPA: 3.92/4.00**

Thesis title: “If you have an Honours thesis, you can include the title if you’d like.”

## **EXPERIENCE**

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**Name of company and position title Sept. 2022 – Aug. 2024**

- Include accomplishment statements of one or two lines each.
- Number of accomplishment statements to include depends on importance of position/activity.
- Begin each accomplishment statement with an active verb (“led”; “initiated”; “served”; do a web search for “action words for resume” to get ideas about verbs to use).

## **LEADERSHIP**

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(Full version of this sample CV is posted on our website in PDF format.)

# Suggestions for Compressing a CV

- No need to include mailing address.
- Use minimal indentation for bullet statements and stick to no more than one or two lines for each.
- Change the font size of blank spaces between entries and sections (e.g. 4-point font instead of 12-point).
- Use month and year (or just year) rather than exact dates.
- Title sections things like **SELECT AWARDS & SCHOLARSHIPS** and only include the most important.
- Include a summary statement like “Received more than **\$100,000** in scholarship funding between 2022 and 2025” and then list examples of the most important scholarships you have received.

# Other General Suggestions about CVs

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- Remember that the audience for your application will include people who know nothing about the academic discipline you're in.
  - Be careful about including acronyms (“CPR” will likely be fine, but more technical acronyms will likely be unfamiliar to some readers).
  - All entries should contain exactly enough information to be comprehensible to a non-specialist reader.
- Aim for consistency throughout
  - Periods at the end of every bullet statement, OR no periods at the end of any bullet statements.
  - Line up dates at the right side of the page.
  - Spacing with date ranges
    - “2020- 2022” looks bad, especially if other date ranges say things like “2020-2022.”
    - Ideal for date ranges should use an en-dash rather than a hyphen:
      - 2022 – 2023 rather than 2022 - 2023.

# Is your CV content verifiable?

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- You may want to include details in your CV to establish the significance of an accomplishment or achievement.
- But please be accurate and careful in how you do this.
  - If you say that you were one of only two people at the University of Calgary to receive an award, please be sure that this is correct!
- Please try to make sure that the information you include is up to date.
  - Is there a website with details that someone reviewing your CV can visit to learn more about what you've done? If yes, this can be helpful.

# Need additional help? Reach out to the SSC

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- [ucalgary.ca/ssc](https://ucalgary.ca/ssc)
- [jared.secord1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:jared.secord1@ucalgary.ca)
- [sandra.ukaigwe@ucalgary.ca](mailto:sandra.ukaigwe@ucalgary.ca)