UC San Diego Department of Visual Arts

Russell Foundation Grant – Frequently Asked Questions (2026–27)

General Information

- **Q: What is the Russell Foundation Grant?**

A: The Russell Foundation Grant supports approved student art projects in the Department of Visual Arts. Awards are based on promise, feasibility, and quality of proposals. **Undergraduates** may receive up to $1,500 total during their UC San Diego academic career. **Graduate students** may receive up to $3,000 total during their program.

Eligibility & Deadlines

- **Q: Who can apply?**

A: **Undergraduates** must have completed at least 90 units, hold a GPA of 3.0 or higher in the Visual Arts major, and be enrolled full-time. **Graduate students** in Visual Arts are eligible if they maintain a 3.0 GPA and full-time enrollment.

- **Q: When is the application due?**

A: All applications are due Wednesday, November 25, 2026, at 12:00 PM (noon).
Email applications to: **nlesley@ucsd.edu**

- **Q: When will awards be announced?**

A: Students will be notified by Thursday, January 15, 2027.

- **Q: Do I have to apply for the full amount?**

A: No. Currently enrolled **undergraduates** are eligible for a total of **$1,500** and **graduate students** for a total of **$3,000**. This does not mean you must apply for the full amount at once. Students may reapply up to **two times** while enrolled, as long as the total awarded to each student does not exceed $1,500 (undergraduates) or $3,000 (graduates).

Use of Funds

- **Q: What can grant funds be used for?**

A: Funds may be used for project-related expenses such as art supplies, expendable materials, equipment rentals, printing, graphics, lab costs, or essential travel. Software subscriptions or licenses (e.g., Adobe Creative Cloud, video or sound editing programs) **are fundable** if they are necessary for completing the proposed project and used only during the grant period. **Equipment purchases exceeding $500** must be returned to the department at the end of the project.

- **Q: Can I request a per diem for travel?**

A: No. The grant does not cover per diem expenses. A 'per diem' is a daily allowance meant to cover meals, transportation, or incidental travel costs. Russell Grant funds cannot be used for general daily allowances. However, you can request reimbursement for specific, itemized travel costs directly related to your project—such as airfare, train tickets, lodging, or museum entry fees.

Payment and Reimbursement

- **Q: How will I receive the funds (Undergraduates)?**

A: Undergraduates must choose **one** of the following options:

1. **Stipend Payment** – The stipend is processed through the Financial Aid and Scholarships Office. The award will first be applied to any outstanding UCSD balance (tuition, fees, etc.). Any remaining amount will be issued as a refund via direct deposit or paper check. This payment may affect your overall financial aid package, so students should contact finaid@ucsd.edu with questions.
2. **Reimbursement** – Students pay for approved project expenses out of pocket (meaning you use your own money upfront) and then request reimbursement. After the choice deadline, fiscal staff will email you with instructions on how to provide documentation and receive reimbursement. Receipts are required in order to issue a reimbursement. Processing takes a minimum of 15 business days. All receipts must be submitted by June 30, 2026.

- **Q: How will I receive the funds (Graduate Students)?**

A: Graduate students also choose **one** of the following options:

1. **Stipend Payment** – Processed as a lump sum through the Department of Visual Arts. This stipend is considered taxable income. Payment timing will be arranged with the Visual Arts Graduate Coordinator.
2. **Reimbursement** – Pay for approved project expenses and submit receipts for repayment. Submit all original receipts with proof of payment to vis-fiscal@ucsd.edu. Processing takes a minimum of 15 business days. All receipts must be submitted by September 23, 2026.

- **Q: Can UCSD order (and pay) for me directly from a company like (BLICK or AMAZON)?**

A: No. Students must make purchases themselves and request reimbursement (or receive a stipend). The department does not place direct orders or receive vendor discounts.

- **Q: Will I be reimbursed for sale tax paid?**

A: Yes, please include sales tax in your budget proposal.

Deadlines for Using Grant Funds

- **Q: What is the deadline for spending or using grant funds?**

A: **Undergraduates**: All funds (stipend or reimbursement) must be spent by **June 30, 2027.**
Graduate Students: All funds must be spent by **September 22, 2027.**
No exceptions — unused funds cannot be rolled over or extended.

Budget & Application Materials

- **Q: What should my budget include?**

A: Your budget should list each item or service you plan to purchase with the grant funds, along with its estimated cost and a short justification of how it supports your project.
Include **sales tax** in your cost estimates. Budgets typically include materials, supplies, equipment rentals, printing, software subscriptions, or travel directly related to your project.
Avoid general living expenses or per diem allowances, as these are not fundable.

- **Q: Should I include sales tax in my budget?**

A: Yes. Include estimated sales tax in all listed costs.

- **Q: Is there a sample budget I can refer to?**

A: Yes. See below sample budget for more information.

Q: What should the proposal include?

A: Submit a 1–3 page proposal describing project goals, feasibility, funding use, and—if applicable—why travel is necessary.

- **Q: What counts as supplemental materials?**

A: Supplemental materials are separate from the 1–3 page written proposal and should only be included if they directly support or clarify your project idea. These materials may include:

- Images or sketches of your proposed project, or examples of your previous work only if they provide context or demonstrate feasibility.
- Writing samples if relevant to your artistic practice or the project itself.
- Video links (such as short documentation clips or excerpts).

Supplemental materials should be concise and directly related to your proposal — avoid adding general portfolio work that does not help reviewers understand your project.
Supplemental materials should not exceed 2 pages or 5 minutes of video (maximum).

- **Q: Do undergraduates need a faculty letter of support?**

A: Yes. **Undergraduates** must include a letter from a faculty member endorsing the proposed project. Letters should be included with your application to: nlesely@ucsd.edu. **Graduate students** do not need a letter of support.

After the Award

- **Q: What happens if I don't spend the full grant amount by the deadline?**

A: Unused funds are forfeited and cannot carry over to the next year. Students may reapply if they remain eligible.

- **Q: What if my project changes after I'm awarded funding?**

A: Contact vis-fiscal@ucsd.edu before making any budget or project changes. All expenses must match your approved proposal.

- **Q: Do I have to return items purchased with the grant?**

A: Non-expendable items (equipment over $500 or reusable materials) may be requested back by the department before graduation.

- **Q: Is the stipend taxable?**

A: Yes. Stipends may be considered taxable income. Reimbursements are not taxed.

- **Q: Can I reapply if I've received a Russell Grant before?**

A: Yes, students may apply **twice,** as long as your total funding does not exceed $1,500 (undergraduate) or $3,000 (graduate) during your program.

- **Q: Do I need to submit my project after completion?**

A: No. There is no requirement to submit your project after receiving the award.

Communication and Support

- **Q: Where can I send questions or get help with my application?**

A: Please contact the following:

- Application submission: nlesley@ucsd.edu
- Undergraduate advising: vis-ug@ucsd.edu
- Fiscal/payment inquiries: vis-fiscal@ucsd.edu
- Financial Aid: finaid@ucsd.edu | (858) 534-4480

Additional Tips

- Keep all receipts for reimbursement.
- You must be a registered student when incurring expenses.
- Give faculty time to write your letter – ask them well in advance of due date.
- Submit all materials early; late or incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Still have questions? Refer to all FAQs and information online before contacting nlesley@ucsd.edu for additional information.

UC San Diego Department of Visual Arts

Sample Budget – Russell Foundation Grant (Undergraduate Example)

Project Title: **Fragments of Light: A Mixed-Media Installation**

Total Requested: $1,160 (including estimated sales tax)

Item	Description	Cost (Estimate)	Notes
Canvas & Painting Supplies	Acrylic paint, brushes, stretched canvases (4)	$220	Expendable materials
Digital Printing	Large-format photo prints on archival paper	$180	For installation wall components
Lighting Equipment	Clip lights and LED strips	$130	Reusable but under $500 value
Travel	Round trip to Los Angeles for research exhibition	$120	Includes train fare + local transit
Documentation	SD cards and printing costs for documentation booklet	$60	For final report and archive
Fabrication Supplies	Wood panels, screws, mounting hardware	$215	Expendable construction materials
Video Editing Software License	Adobe Premiere monthly plan (3 months)	$90	Software subscription for editing
Contingency (Approx. 5%)	Miscellaneous unexpected material costs	$60	Must remain within total budget
Subtotal		$1,075	
Sales Tax (7.75%)		$84	
TOTAL REQUESTED		$1,160	Rounded for proposal clarity

Budget Notes:

- All prices include estimated sales tax (7.75%). Students should include sales tax in their listed costs.
- Do not include per diem (daily meal or incidental costs).
- Equipment valued over $500 must be returned to the department after the project.
- Students may request less than the total eligible amount ($1,500 for undergraduates / $3,000 for graduates).
- Provide short justifications for each item so reviewers understand how it supports project goals.
- Provide links where relevant.
- Round up to nearest dollar amount.