

FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions from applicants for the Kerrie Nairn Scholarship for Public Speaking

What do the Judges really want?

The Judges want applicants to really think about the best way to address the criteria. Don't use 'kitchen sink' approach and throw everything in. Provide a succinct, clear, well-thought-through application. The Judges are looking for a person with high potential to be a professional speaker - someone who knows how to deliver a clear, persuasive, memorable message.

Who are the Judges?

The Chair of the Selection Committee is CSP and Past National President of PSA, Helen Macdonald. Other members of the Committee are selected from past Nevin Winners, CSPs and Professional Members who have long and successful careers and experience in the speaking industry. These people are PSA mentors & guiding lights and know what Kerrie stood for.

Do you get any feedback from the Judges?

The decision of the Judges is final. There are usually too many applicants to be able to provide detailed feedback to each person. However, after the Scholar is announced, the Chair of the Committee Helen Macdonald is happy to respond to an email or phone call asking for informal feedback, though not to debate the decision.

What should the application have in it?

Follow the application form – it sets out what the Judges require.

Is there any area that's more important in the application?

No, so please make sure you answer all the questions.

Is it really important to have a great video?

This Scholarship is to select someone with high potential. The Judges understand that many applicants may not yet have a professionally made video. That's fine. The Judges look at the footage not for how technically sensational it is, but to look and listen to you, your presentation style, your message, your impact on the audience, your potential to be one of the leaders in the speaking industry. Audio alone is not enough. We need to see the whole package of you – your connection with the audience, the emotional elements as well as the content.

What if I don't have any video footage?

Get some. It doesn't have to be commercially made. If you haven't got a presentation coming up that can be recorded prior to putting your application in, get some friends together and record your presentation to them. It's better than nothing. Audio alone is not enough. We need to see the whole package of you – your connection with their audience, your impact, the emotional elements as well as the content. If you are a member and/or attend PSA meetings, perhaps you have a State meeting coming up (check out the PSA website) – think about how you could use that opportunity even if it was only to ask a few people to come and watch you present as part of your 'audience' when you make the recording.

What should the layout of my application look like?

Follow the layout of the application form. You can use the application form on the website or you can use it as a template. Answer all of the questions.

Should I go to the effort of making my application 'pretty'?

Depends what you mean by 'pretty'. The Judges are looking for potential to be a Professional Speaker. Something just thrown together with hand-written application, papers not clipped together, and so on, will not be considered 'professional'.

What did previous winners do to win?

They demonstrated their true potential. They presented their material in a clear succinct and professional form. Their message was easy to understand. They had thought through what they would do with the Scholarship funds. They explained how they would be an Ambassador for the Association and the Speaking industry. They showed their commitment to being a role model for young speakers and the speaking community. They had a plan. They had some 'runs on the board' and evidence to prove it.

Can I have a look at previous applications?

No. Nor should you contact them for assistance with your application. The Judges want to hear from YOU, assess YOUR initiative, professionalism, creativeness, inspirational capability – and YOU can't copy that from someone else.

Will testimonials from other people help my application?

Referees are an essential part of the application. Think carefully about who you choose. Most applicants come up with referees who give glowing reports –just like job applicants do. But think carefully. Giving us the names of referees who have never seen you speak isn't that helpful! Think about who can provide credible, accurate, thoughtful observations about you and your professional speaking potential. Explain to them what the Kerrie Nairn Scholarship for Public Speaking is all about. Make sure you get permission from your referees to put their names forward, then ensure that you put all their current contact details, phone, mobile and email on the application form. Some previous applicants have not asked permission from their referees to give their names or have given incomplete and/or inaccurate contact details – this is an indicator of lack of professionalism.

Will the Committee contact all the referees?

We contact the referees of applicants who make the 'short' list – but that could be a long 'short list' depending on the calibre of the applicants. The Committee will talk to as many people as necessary to select the best candidate for the Scholarship. We will ask referees not to disclose they have been contacted, as we do not want to give applicants any false hopes.

What are the obligations of the Scholar over the 12-month period?

Please see the information about Terms and Conditions in the Scholarship Application form. You are required to be an Ambassador for PSA, the Professional Speaking Industry and are required to present a session at a number (up to 3) of events for a community-based or NFP organization of your choosing plus some to your PSA Chapter.

Do I have to complete all of the programs offered in the Scholarship?

No. The programs that are offered have been generously donated by senior members of the Association. They represent development opportunities that have been chosen by many previous Scholars as well as many members of the Association. It is expected that the Scholar will make every effort to take advantage of all the programs offered, but there is no requirement to do so.

Do I have to get involved in Professional Speakers Australia other than remaining a member?

Yes. One of the criteria is to be an Ambassador for the Association as well as for the industry. Don't apply if you don't think you can do that. Being an Ambassador for PSA means to be promoting the Association whenever you get a chance. It is also likely that your participation and contribution to the Association will increase, possibly including involvement in your local Chapter committee or at a National level. A description of the specifics of your plans as an Ambassador and/or your contribution should be included in your application.

Do I have to use the Acknowledgement and Disclaimer on my website and all marketing & promotional materials during the Scholarship year?

Yes, whenever you describe yourself as the Kerrie Nairn Scholar (and most people do as it is such a prestigious Award), you must use the Acknowledgement and Disclaimer.

Can I apply again if I was not successful in a previous year?

Of course. The Selection Committee reviews all applications on an equal basis each year. Prior applications and results are not taken into account. Of course, if you have made progress since your last application, we are confident that you would describe that as part of your application.