

# IEEE SMCS PhD Thesis Grant Initiative 2026

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Thanks to the generous support of the **IEEE Systems, Man, and Cybernetics Society (SMCS)**, applications are now open for the SMCS PhD Thesis Grant Initiative. This program recognizes outstanding PhD research conducted by SMCS members who have made significant contributions to the Society's fields of interest.

The initiative was established in 2017 and is now relaunched in conjunction with the **2026 IEEE International Conference on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics (SMC 2026)**, to be held **October 4–7, 2026**, in Bellevue, WA, USA.

For details on how to become an IEEE SMC member, please check the IEEE SMC website: <https://www.ieeesmc.org/>

## Awards

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Three grants are available, one per technical area:

- **Outstanding SMCS PhD Thesis on Systems Science and Engineering (SSE):** \$1,000 and Certificate
- **Outstanding SMCS PhD Thesis on Human-Machine Systems (HMS):** \$1,000 and Certificate
- **Outstanding SMCS PhD Thesis on Cybernetics (CYB):** \$1,000 and Certificate

One awardee will be selected per technical area. If no qualified candidate is identified in a given area, no award will be given for that category. Each applicant may submit only one application and must select the single technical area that best represents their thesis work.

The awardees and a summary of their work will be presented at **IEEE SMC 2026**. Personal presence of the awardees is not required.

## Eligibility

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To be considered, applicants must meet all of the following conditions:

1. Be an active **IEEE SMC Society member** at the time of application.
2. Have successfully defended a **PhD thesis** written in **English** between **July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2026**.
3. The thesis topic must fall within one of the three SMCS technical areas (SSE, HMS, or CYB).
4. The PhD supervisor must be an active **IEEE SMC Society member** at the time of application.

## Selection criteria

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Applications will be evaluated by an Ad-hoc Committee. Each application will be assessed based on the following criteria:

1. Relevance of the topic to the SMCS fields of interest
2. Technical and scientific quality of the contribution
3. Originality and potential impact of the work
4. Clarity and quality of scientific writing
5. Quality and appropriateness of bibliographic references
6. Strength of the supervisor's recommendation letter

The evaluation process is competitive. Applicants are encouraged to submit complete and well-prepared documentation to maximize their chances of selection.

## How to apply

Applications must be submitted through the online form: <https://tally.so/r/obVrzV>

Each application must include:

1. The completed **application form** (via the online form above)
2. The **full PhD thesis** (PDF)
3. A **letter of recommendation** from the PhD supervisor (PDF)
4. A **thesis summary** (max 2,000 characters)

**Incomplete applications will not be considered.** The deadline for submissions is **July 31, 2026 (AoE)**.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q1: Can I apply if my thesis has not yet been published or made publicly available?** Yes. The thesis does not need to be published or publicly available. You only need to have successfully defended it before the submission deadline.

**Q2: My thesis is in a language other than English. Can I still apply?** No. The thesis must be written in English. Applications including a thesis in another language will not be considered.

**Q3: Can I apply in more than one technical area?** No. Applicants may submit only one application and must select a single technical area (SSE, HMS, or CYB) that best fits their thesis topic.

**Q4: Who can write the letter of recommendation?** The letter must be written by the PhD supervisor. If the thesis had multiple supervisors, any one of them may provide the letter.

**Q5: My supervisor is no longer affiliated with my university. Can they still write the recommendation letter?** Yes. The letter can be provided by the supervisor regardless of their current affiliation.

**Q6: I defended my thesis before July 1, 2022. Am I eligible?** No. Only theses defended between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2026, are eligible.

**Q7: Is there an age limit?** No. There is no age requirement for this grant.

**Q8: Do I need to attend the SMC 2026 conference to receive the grant?** Personal attendance is not required to receive the grant.

**Q9: When will applicants be notified of the results?** Applicants will be notified via email approximately one month after the submission deadline. Both successful and unsuccessful applicants will receive a notification.

**Q10: Can I appeal if my application is not selected?** No. The decisions of the assessment committee are final, and no appeals will be considered.

**Q11: How will the grant be disbursed?** The grant will be disbursed via bank transfer or another IEEE-approved method after the results are announced.

**Q12: Can co-authored theses be submitted?** PhD theses are, by definition, individual works. The applicant must be the sole author of the submitted thesis.

**Q13: I am an IEEE member but not an SMC Society member. Can I still apply?** No. Applicants must be active IEEE SMC Society members at the time of application. You can join the IEEE SMC Society at <https://www.ieeesmc.org/> before submitting your application.

**Q14: Does my supervisor need to be an IEEE SMC member?** Yes. The PhD supervisor must be an active IEEE SMC Society member at the time of application. Their IEEE membership number will be required in the application form. If your supervisor is not yet a member, they can join at <https://www.ieeesmc.org/>.