

Writing Successful Scholarship Applications



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Agenda

- Why apply?
- NSERC, SSHRC, OGS, Trudeau
 - Deadlines, Eligibility, & Ranking Procedures
- Administrative Tips
- Tips on Writing a Grant Application
- What Makes a Good Application?
- Perspectives from a Reviewer
- Questions

Why apply?

Many reasons

- You need to apply, if you are eligible, in order to receive funding from graduate studies as outlined in your admission letter
- Gives you a chance to organize your research program
- Gives you practice for applying for other grants
- Garner you prestige for the job market and build your CV
- \$\$\$ (for you and savings to the program)
- We want to continue the great success our PhD students have had in securing external scholarships

What is the difference between NSERC, SSHRC and CIHR?

NSERC

- Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada
- Typically some MS and IS students depending on research topic
 - www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca

SSHRC

- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- Typically Accounting, Finance, Marketing, MOBHR and most IS students
 - www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca

CIHR

- Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- Full-time HM and some IS students (rare)
 - www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca

Can I apply to multiple agencies?

- No
 - **You may submit only one application per academic year to NSERC, SSHRC or CIHR**
 - If you need clarification on which agency, your best course of action is to contact NSERC at schol@nserc-crsng.gc.ca and provide them with a one page research proposal that you would develop for your application. They will then let you know if you should be applying to NSERC or to SSHRC.

NSERC

Value and Duration of Award

- Alexander Graham Bell Canada Graduate Scholarship (CGS D) Awards are valued at \$35,000 per year for two or three years
- NSERC Postgraduate Scholarship (PGS D) Awards are valued at \$21,000 per year for two or three years

NSERC

Eligibility

- Be a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada;
- Intend to pursue in the following year, full-time graduate studies at the master's or doctoral level in an eligible program in one of the areas of the natural sciences and engineering supported by NSERC;
- Have obtained a first-class average (a grade of “A-”, equivalent to 10.0/12.0 or 80/100) in each of the last two completed years of study;
- Hold, or expect to hold (at the time you take up the award), a degree in science or engineering from a university whose standing is acceptable to NSERC.

NSERC

- One application for both CGS D and PGS D
- Application completed online: www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServices-ServicesEnLigne/Index_eng.asp; must also print copy and deliver completed package to Deb by the deadline
- Application and instructions found at: www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PG-CS/BellandPostgrad-BelletSuperieures_eng.asp
- USE FORM 201
- NSERC Instructional videos found at: www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/Videos-Videos/Index_eng.asp

NSERC

Deadline: October 3, 2016 9:00am

Ranking Criteria:

NSERC Scholarships are focused on academic achievement. The internal ranking committees will place a:

- 50% weighting on research statement, goals & achievements
- 30% weighting on academic performance
- 20% weighting on “Communication, interpersonal and leadership” abilities.

NSERC

Ranking Procedures

- These applications are NOT ranked at the department or program level
- All applications are forwarded to SGS and then ranked at the University level according to discipline
- Applications are NOT ranked by people in your field so write your statement for a broad audience
- NSERC allows each university to forward a specific number of applications to the national competition
- If your application is forwarded to the national level you have a 75 – 80% chance of being successful

SSHRC

Value and Duration of Award

- SSHRC – Joseph-Armand Bombardier SGS Doctoral Scholarships are valued at \$35,000 per year for 36 months (3 years)
- SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships are valued at \$20,000 per year for 12, 24, 36 or 48 months
- SSHRC determines the value and duration of an award based on the number of months of full-time study the applicant will have completed at the proposed start date of the award.

SSHRC

Canada Graduate Scholarship to Honour Nelson Mandela

- Some Canada Graduate Scholarship recipients may be considered for the honour of having their scholarship named a “Canada Graduate Scholarship to Honour Nelson Mandela” should SSHRC deem their application to be aligned with at least one of five themes championed by Mandela:
 - national unity
 - democracy
 - freedom and human rights
 - leadership
 - children’s participation in society
 - children’s health

SSHRC

Eligibility

- Be a citizen or permanent resident of Canada
- Be applying for support to pursue your first PhD
- Be pursuing doctoral studies in the social sciences or humanities
 - Subject Matter Eligibility: www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/apply-demande/background-renseignements/selecting_agency-choisir_organisme_subventionnaire-eng.aspx
- Not have already received a scholarship or fellowship from SSHRC, NSERC or CIHR to undertake or complete a doctoral degree
- Have obtained a first-class average (“A-”, equivalent to 10/12 or 80/100) in the last two years combined of full-time study, regardless of the number of credits completed (Pass/Fail courses do not count in the GPA)
- Number of months in the program must be within 0 and 40 months (see chart on next slide)
- Must complete ‘Consent to the Disclosure of Personal Information’ Form

SSHRC

Number of months completed by December 31 of the year of application	Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS Doctoral Scholarship	SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship
Applicants who will have completed between 0 and 4 months (first year)	36 months of funding	48 months of funding
Applicants who will have completed between 5 and 16 months (second year)	36 months of funding	36 months of funding
Applicants who will have completed between 17 and 28 months (third year)	Not eligible	24 months of funding
Applicants who will have completed between 29 and 40 months (fourth year)	Not eligible	12 months of funding
Applicants who will have completed 41 months or more	Not eligible	Not eligible

SSHRC

- Apply in Mosaic
- Complete the web-based forms:
<https://webapps.nserc.ca/SSHRC/faces/logonFellowships.jsp>; must also print copy and deliver completed package to Deb by the deadline including original transcripts and letters of appraisal
- What's in an application? www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/apply-demande/tips-astuces/doctoral_awards-bourses_de_doctorat-eng.aspx

SSHRC

- Resources - Doctoral Awards: www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/apply-demande/doctoral-awards-bourses-de-doctorat-eng.aspx
- Help with Online Forms: www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/forms-formulaires/help-forms-aide-formulaires-eng.aspx

SSHRC

Deadline: October 12 @ 12:00 pm

Ranking Criteria:

SSHRC Scholarships are focused on academic achievement. The internal ranking committees will place a:

- 50% weighting on research statement, goals & achievements
- 30% weighting on academic performance
- 20% weighting on “Communication, interpersonal and leadership” abilities

SSHRC

Ranking Procedure:

- All applications are reviewed at the program level by the Ad Hoc PhD Advisory Committee which includes a representative from each field of study
- Each member of the PhD Advisory Committee will review each application independently and determine a ranking
- The committee will meet to discuss the individual rankings and determine one final program ranking list
- The committee will identify the “A list” and those applications will be submitted to SGS for university ranking (typically 5)
- The department will notify students who are not recommended to move forward to SGS
- Applications are then ranked at the University level and a predetermined number are forwarded to the National competition

SSHRC

Ranking Procedure:

- The university level ranking committee for SSHRC scholarships consists of a total of 9 faculty members from a variety of disciplines
- The applications are divided according to discipline and sent to a committee of three
- Members of this committee can be from any Social Science or Humanities related faculty and likely will not be familiar with your research topic: please speak in general terms
- This committee determines which applications are forwarded to the national level
- Each university is given a specific number of applications that they are allowed to put forward and McMaster has been allotted 56 doctoral nominations
- Members of the National review committee will likely not be familiar with your research topic

SSHRC

Evaluation:

Applications will be evaluated solely on the basis of their academic merit. To assess the overall merit of an application, the following criteria will be carefully considered:

- Past academic results, demonstrated by transcripts, awards and distinctions;
- The program of study and its potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge;
- Relevant professional and academic experience, including research training, as demonstrated by conference presentations and scholarly publications;
- Two written evaluations from referees; and
- The departmental appraisal.

OGS

Value and Duration of Award

- OGS awards are valued at \$5,000 per term for a maximum of three terms (\$15,000)
- They must be held for a minimum of two terms
- Last year there were several stages of consideration for the competition:
 - Applicants to the SSHRC, NSERC and CIHR were automatically considered for central OGS competition
 - The faculty of Business was also granted a specific number of faculty based awards (1 International OGS @ \$15,000 and 8 Domestic OGS @ \$15,000)

OGS

Eligibility:

- Open to all full-time PhD students regardless of citizenship
- Must have A- Grade point average at time of application as below:
 - If you are entering your second year of graduate studies at the time of application, you must have an overall average of at least A- (10.0/12.0 or 80/100), on the last 20 one-term/semester courses, or the equivalent, completed. NOTE: this may take you into your undergraduate courses
 - If you are entering the third year of graduate studies at the time of application, you must have an overall average of at least A- (10.0/12.0 or 80/100), on all graduate courses completed
NOTE: Pass/Fail courses do not count in the GPA
- Must not exceed equivalent of six (6) years for the maximum funding from Federal and Provincial Awards
- Must not have any OSAP restrictions

OGS

Deadline: TBD – Competition tentatively scheduled for January 2017

Ranking Criteria:

Ontario Graduate Scholarships are focused on academic achievement. The internal ranking committees will place a:

- 60% weighting on the GPA

- 30% weighting on research

- 10% weighting on “other” including program milestones, general service to the program, attendance, etc.

OGS

Ranking Procedure:

- Ranking Procedures for this year – TO BE FINALIZED
- Last year's procedures:
 - Results for central competition were released. Remaining applications who did not win at the central competition (or weren't forwarded) entered the pool for ranking.
 - CDN/PR and VISA applications were split (two competitions) and forwarded to PhD Advisory committee for program-wide ranking.
 - Top ranked VISA applicant won the International OGS award and the top ranked CDN/PR applicants received awards according to our allocation (i.e. top 8 received \$15,000 awards)

Trudeau Doctoral Scholarships

Value and Duration of Award

- Annual value is up to \$60,000 per scholar (including an annual travel allowance of \$20,000) for up to four years

Key Themes of Award

- Present a research project linked to one of the four themes of the Foundation

<http://www.fondationtrudeau.ca/en/about/themes>

- Human Rights and Dignity
- Responsible Citizenship
- Canada in The World
- People and their Natural Environment

Trudeau Doctoral Scholarships

Eligibility

- Canadian citizen or landed immigrant applying to a doctoral program in the social sciences and humanities or registered full-time in the first or second year of such a program at a Canadian university; **OR**
- Be a foreign national [with a **preference for candidates from the developing world**] applying to a doctoral program in the social sciences and humanities or registered full-time in the first or second year of such a program at a Canadian university
- Be nominated by a university

Trudeau Doctoral Scholarships

- Apply online through the Pierre Elliot Trudeau Foundation portal
- Visit https://trudeaufdn.fluxx.io/user_sessions/new and use the "Create an Account" button to register
- Complete the online application form
- Upload your 3 letters of recommendations and transcripts

Trudeau Doctoral Scholarships

Description of required documents

- 3 letters of reference: 2 from academic referees, principally concerning academic achievements, AND one from a non-academic referee, concerning the non-academic aspects of the application
 - Must be signed and must clearly indicate the name and contact information of the referee
- Transcripts of all post-secondary studies

Trudeau Doctoral Scholarships

Deadline: November 2 @ 12:00 pm

Selection Criteria:

- Have a track record of academic achievements at the level of the highest standards of the world's most prestigious doctoral scholarship programs
- Possess exceptional skills that will enable the scholar to engage in lively exchange with other researchers
- Intend to work in an area related to one or more of the Foundation's four themes and have an expressed desire to contribute to public dialogue

Administrative Tips

- Order transcripts today!
- Try to allow 7-10 days for references (remember professors are busy too!)
- Work backwards from the department deadline and remember that applications that are not completed will not be reviewed

Administrative Tips

- Department deadlines are firm due to the amount of time required to process all of the documentation
- When asking for a reference, it is best to provide your completed application so that the referees can provide appropriate comments
- You should also provide a copy of your CV, transcripts and offer to meet with them to provide them with any information they may need to complete the form
- Use the referees that will provide the best reference!
- References are to be submitted directly to Deb

Administrative Tips

- First year students should use references from your previous degrees unless your supervisor really knows you
- Please check and double check all documents, make sure that you have signed the necessary pages, included all necessary documents and ticked off all required boxes on the checklist provided and spell check!
- Pay attention to the instructions, review all of the information on the granting agencies website, webinars, etc.
- We will calculate GPA based on a standard formula and the Ontario University Registrars' Association (OURA) guide
- When listing previous awards be inclusive: SGS scholarships should be listed

Tips on Writing a Grant Application



The Program of Study is the key component

Program of Study

- Clearly state your current level of graduate study
- Indicate what stage you are at in your dissertation
- Provide the name of your supervisor of doctoral studies
- Outline your dissertation proposal, including the research question, context, objectives, methodology, and contribution to the advancement of knowledge
- Describe what you hope to accomplish during the award tenure and what will remain to be done

Program of Study

- Keep in mind your audience
 - Non-technical language (no jargon)
 - Define anything ambiguous
 - Be clear and concise when delivering your message
- Provide context
 - Important for Canadians? Society at large?
 - Importance for researchers?
 - Importance to practitioners?
 - Why does the research need to be done now?
 - Why is your research is important?
 - Why are you the best person to do it?

Program of Study

- Demonstrate your productivity
 - Anything that is under review or published
 - Cite your and your supervisors related research
- Relate to other researchers in the domain
 - Recent citations good
 - Canadian researchers may be more willing to be reviewers, so cite them if possible
 - Acknowledge differing points of view to show your maturity and understanding

But much more goes into it than just
the Program of Study

What makes a good application?

- The program of study and its potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge
- Past academic results, demonstrated by transcripts, awards and distinctions
- Relevant professional and academic experience, including research training, as demonstrated by conference presentations and scholarly publications
- Written evaluations from referees
- The departmental appraisal

Perspectives from a Reviewer

- The application is only as good as the quality of the package.
 - The only thing the committee sees are the content, not the person.
- It is really about relative quality
 - The committee will generally reward quality when they see it. However, in the end it is also about relative quality. Push yourself to do the best you can for one of your peers is doing it. Competitive!
- How well your proposal reads is almost as important as how strong the idea is.
 - The main questions to be asked is not just whether it makes sense, but whether it is also interesting and makes an impact. Is your write-up able to force the reader to question some deeply held belief? Take them to a point of surprise? Force them to question existing assumptions? This does not come through in a single pass of writing so be ready for multiple iterations.
- Are you an “active” academic?
 - In your cv, evidence of an active academic life is very important. Publications, seminars, papers in submission, working papers, etc. are all important parts of that. Publications matter more. If they are in good journals, so much the better.
- Despite all you do, a fact of life is you still need someone to vouch for you.
 - However, strong letters of recommendation is not often a discriminating criteria, for most letters are strong. However, a lukewarm letter of recommendation pulls you down.

Questions?

- Get started early!
- Ask Deb about deadlines and supporting documentation
- Ask your supervisor about research-related issues and the wording of your Program of Study
 - Your supervisor is expected to provide feedback on such things
 - However, do not leave this to the last minute and/or expect your supervisor to write the Program of Study for you
- Look at the websites and read all instructions carefully
- Look at the sample SSHRC and OGS program of study as guides on how to write a successful grant application

Summary

NSERC – Dept. deadline: October 3, 2016 @ 9:00am

- \$21,000 – \$35,000 per year for 1 – 3 years
- Permanent Residents and Canadian citizens with a minimum A- GPA
- Between 0 and 24 months by December 2016

SSHRC – Dept. deadline: October 12 @ 12:00 pm

- \$20,000 – \$35,000 per year for 1 – 3 years
- Permanent Residents and Canadian citizens with a minimum A- GPA
- Between 0 and 40 months in the program by December 2016

OGS – Dept. deadline: TBD – Tentatively scheduled for January 2017

- \$5,000 per term for 2-3 terms
- International, PR and Canadian students with a minimum A- GPA