Creating a Strong Scholarship Application
Tri-Council Doctoral Student Workshop

Dr. Donna-Marie McCafferty, Assoc. Dean FGS

Chelsea Christie, Graduate Leader Circle Co-Chair
Shasta Webb, Graduate Leader Circle Co-Chair

Fall 2019
Top Reasons to Apply for Tri-Council Scholarships

- Creates a culture of applying for funding
- Provides experience in scholarly writing (esp. proposals)
- Creates an ongoing desire to disseminate research
- Prestige: Tri-Council support is an important metric of success for you, your supervisor, your program, and the university as a whole
- Potential of additional funding opportunities
- Don’t wait until the first time you think you have a legitimate shot at a scholarship to try preparing an application
How to Create a Strong Scholarship Application

▪ Start early
  — Writing a good application takes time and planning. Make a schedule so that you can meet the competition deadlines and submit with confidence.

▪ Know what you are applying for
  — Read the terms of reference to confirm you meet the eligibility criteria and understand what is required to complete the application.
Know the deadline

[INSTITUTIONAL DEADLINES!]

grad.ucalgary.ca/awards/opportunities/tricouncil


- NOI deadline Sept 3rd
- Deadline to request transcripts Sept 13th
- Deadline to submit application Oct. 1st

**CIHR Doctoral**: Submit application through ResearchNet portal
(link: http://http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/50513.html#details-panel2)

**NSERC Doctoral**: Submit application through On-line portal (link:

**SSHRC Doctoral**: Submit application through On-line portal
(link: https://webapps.nserc.ca/SSHRC/faces/logon.jsp)
**CIHR Doctoral**

- CIHR PIN (and primary supervisor’s CIHR PIN)
  - If you don’t have one already, you will need to request one: [http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/38201.html](http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/38201.html)
  - Request early (it can take up to 3 business days)

- 2 sponsor/reference forms (changed from last year)

- CCV

- Application
  - Attachments
    - Publications list (2 pages)
    - Training Expectations (2 pages)
    - Research Project Summary (1 page) + lay abstract
    - Proof of Canadian Citizenship/Permanent Resident document
    - Confirmation of scientific area form & signature pages
NSERC Doctoral

- 2 referee Reports on the Applicant
- Form 201
  - Attachments
    - Outline of proposed research (2 pages & 5 pages for references)
    - Optional justification of eligibility of proposed research (1 page)
    - Contributions and statements (2 pages)
      - Contributions to research and development
      - Significant contributions (up to 3)
      - Applicant’s statement
      - Optional special circumstances (half-page)
SSHRC Doctoral

- Application
  - Attachments
    - Program of Study (2 pages)
    - *Supplemental/Sport Justification (1 page each))
    - Research Contributions (1 page)
  - Referees
    - Identify 2 referees in the application & SSHRC will send the letter of appraisal directly to the contact email listed for that referee.
    - Once the letter is completed it is automatically attached to the application.
    - The reference letters are not sent from the department to FGS office – it is all completed directly with SSHRC
Evaluation and Selection Criteria
Institutional review
CGS-D applications undergo an institutional review and are ranked within each discipline. The University of Calgary then submits applications according to their quotas for consideration to each agency.

Agency review
Agency selection committees review applications

Multidisciplinary selection committees evaluate applicants based on a variety of measures as indicated within the application, transcripts and reference letters
Previous Breakdown of Selection Criteria

1. Academic Excellence
   - Transcripts
   - Awards
   - Reference letters (x2)

2. Research Potential
   - Research proposal
   - Form 201 / Contributions/ Common CV
   - Reference letters (x2)

3. Personal Characteristics and Interpersonal Skills
   - Reference letters (Especially important in SSHRC as no where else to state)
   - Common CV (CIHR) / Form 201 (NSERC)
### Evaluation Criteria

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<td>50 %</td>
<td>Research ability and potential</td>
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<tr>
<td>50 %</td>
<td>Relevant experience and achievements achieved within and beyond academia</td>
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Indicators of Research Ability and Potential (50 %)
Quality of research proposal

- specific, focused and feasible research question(s) and objective(s)
- clear description of the proposed methodology
- significance and expected contributions to research

Highlight:

✓ What is new and important about your research?
✓ What is the key question your research addresses and how will it be answered?
✓ How does your research fit with institutional and/or funding agency priorities?
✓ What are estimated milestones and what does success look like for this research proposal?
✓ Write clearly
“Hooking” your audience

- Draw the audience into the importance of the work quickly
- Introduction written at newspaper level
  - Understandable regardless of educational level

Introduction:

Even if humanity could completely halt human carbon emissions today, the climate risks they pose would persist for millennia, yet fossil fuels remain our primary source of energy to satisfy the population’s energetic needs. [...] According to climate scientists, if there is no immediate and substantial reduction of CO₂ emissions, the earth will witness massive and effectively irreversible impacts on ocean ecosystems before 2100. Hence, society is left with the question: how can we avoid disastrous long-term consequences when we know that society is as dependent on fossil fuels as ever?
Research Ability and Potential

- Relevant training, such as academic training, lived experience, and traditional teachings
- Research experience and achievements relative to the applicant's stage of study, lived experience, and knowledge systems
- Quality of contributions and extent to which they advance the field of research. Contributions may include: publications, patents, reports, posters, abstracts, monographs, presentations, creative outputs, knowledge translation outputs, community products, etc.

**Evidence:**
- Common CV /Form 201 Contributions
- Reference letters
Research Ability and Potential

- Demonstration of sound judgment and ability to think critically
- Demonstration of responsible and ethical research conduct, including honest and thoughtful inquiry, rigorous analysis, commitment to safety and to the dissemination of research results and adherence to the use of professional standards
- Enthusiasm for research, originality, initiative, autonomy, relevant community involvement and outreach
- The ability or potential to communicate theoretical, technical and/or scientific concepts clearly and logically in written and oral formats

Evidence:

Reference letters
Contributions
Common CV / Form 201

“In this randomized experiment, I studied the influence of wedged footwear on knee joint mechanics during running by altering wedge angle across 7 different footwear conditions. I found that as wedge angle shifted from a lateral wedge to a medial wedge across the 7 conditions, knee angular impulses (a variable commonly associated with the development and progression of various musculoskeletal conditions) significantly increased. This is an important finding because it highlights that the current practice of prescribing medial wedge footwear to treat running injuries should be questioned. I was responsible for study design, subject recruitment, testing, analysis, and preparation of the manuscript.”
Indicators of Relevant Experience and Achievements Obtained within and beyond Academia (50%)
Relevant Experience and Achievements... within academia and beyond

- Scholarships, awards, and distinctions (amount, duration, and prestige)

- Academic record:
  - Transcripts
  - Duration of previous studies
  - Program requirements and courses pursued
  - Course load
  - Relative standing in program (if available)

Evidence:
- Transcripts
- Reference letters
Include transcripts from all post-secondary institutions that you have attended, even if no grades were assigned.

Request copies of your official transcripts through FGS scholarship office. **Deadline Sept 13th**

— Check the competition requirements and the Faculty of Graduate Studies Award website for instructions.
Relevant Experience and Achievements... within academia and beyond

- Professional, academic and extracurricular activities as well as collaborations with supervisors, colleagues, peers, students and members of the community, such as:
  - teaching, mentoring, supervising and/or coaching
  - managing projects
  - participating in science and/or research promotion
  - community outreach, volunteer work and/or civic engagement
  - chairing committees and/or organizing conferences and meetings

- participating in departmental or institutional organizations, associations, societies and/or clubs

Evidence: Common CV /Form 201
Reference letters
Increase readability and be direct

— Save work and effort for your adjudicators

Example (NSERC):

“I was elected President of the Students United in Research of Fisheries (SURF), on a platform to create new science programs to mentor and educate local GK-12 students. My leadership provided seven new mentors to guide ‘at-risk’ students as they developed science-fair projects during 10 weeks, more mentors than in prior years of the program. I personally mentored three students that built a model aquifer to test water cycling...”

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Components of a Strong Application
Always follow the instructions!

Examples:

— if you are restricted to a one-page research proposal and you submit an extra page, that extra page will be removed before your application goes to adjudication.

— if you are to use a specific font and size and you use something smaller, the adjudicator may reduce your score because you have not followed the instructions.
Strong references

- **Ask early and send reminders!**

- **Choose wisely:** ask your potential referees if they can provide you with a positive reference; one of them should be your current supervisor or someone who is familiar with your academic work.

- **Give them the details:** The **scoring criteria** for the award
  - Your research **rationale and goals**
  - Your recent **presentations and publications**
  - Your **accomplishments**. It may be that they know you as a good student, but struggle with specifics – it’s your job to remind them!
  - The **deadline** to submit the letter and instructions on how to submit it

- **Follow up - Don’t be shy!**
  - Remind your referees of the deadline a week or more before the reference is due.
The curriculum vitae (CV) is a record of your academic background; it captures:

- Degrees
- Awards
- Research
- Publications, Presentations and Other Achievements.

Set aside more time for the CCV than you think you will need to complete it--it is a process!

Differences:

- CIHR: Canadian Common CV
- NSERC: Form 201 (Contributions and Applicants Statement; 2 pages)
- SSHRC: Research Contributions (1 page)
Don’t cram as much text as possible into the document

Consider using some of the following:

- Space between paragraphs
- Indentation
- Headings
- Bolding

Image copyright Ally Brosh
http://hyperboleandahalf.blogspot.ca/
Consider your audience

- The committee will likely include non-specialists

Avoid jargon

Limit abbreviations (or avoid them altogether)

Explain technical terms
Top things the adjudicator wants to know

- What is this person going to do?

- Is the research feasible?

- What will be the outcomes and their impact? Is it new? Who will care?

- Do I have a picture of who this person is?

- Is this a good investment?
Top Reasons Good Students Don’t Get Funded

- A generic letter of reference. The letter is positive but gives no specifics and does not address criteria.

- Content, context and/or impact of research not clearly stated.

- Not following instructions – i.e. addressing criteria, or stretching rules.

- Frustrating evaluators by making material hard to find.

- Diluting genuinely important/impressive material by describing generic material at length.

- Not addressing possible weaknesses in the application.
Get Started!
- **Contact your referees:** give them information about the competition – deadlines, scoring criteria, how to submit a reference. Provide material they could use!

- Check any **internal deadlines** with your Graduate Program Administrator (GPA). Ask about internal review/feedback. Do you need them to pull transcripts?

- Download and **start the application** – What do you need to complete it

- Map out an **application schedule**, set check points to ensure progress
Plan your **support network**: your supervisor, your program (is there a department workshop?), consult current scholarship holders in your program

**Peer review**: Scholarship Cafés (stay tuned!), application writing groups

— Café Dates; Locations and Times TBA:
  - Thursday, Sept. 19 • 1:00-3:30pm Main Campus
  - Tuesday, Sept. 24 • 1:00-3:30pm Foothills Campus
  - Thursday, Sept. 26 • 9:00-11:30am Main Campus

— Drop-In Hours
  - Wednesday, Sept. 25, 2019 • 3:00-4:00pm Main Campus
  - Friday, Sept. 27, 2019 10:00-11:00am • Main Campus
  - Monday, September 30, 2019 10:00-11:00am • Main Campus
Before you submit...

- Review your application one last time, check for spelling, grammar, formatting or factual errors.
- Read the application instructions again.
- You will increase your chance of success by following these tips and following the instructions exactly.
- Ask Writing Center to review application?
Still have questions? Contact

- Scholarship office: gsaward@ucalgary.ca

- Graduate Leaders Circle – Shasta Webb and Chelsea Christie: gradlead@ucalgary.ca

- Associate Dean Graduate Studies:
  - Dr. Donna-Marie McCafferty

- Your graduate program administrator
Connect and learn more about other workshops!

ucalgary.ca/mygradskills/workshops

facebook.com/mygradskills

twitter.com/mygradskills

mygradskills@ucalgary.ca

http://www.grad.ucalgary.ca/awards/tips_for_success
Selection Criteria - CIHR

- Achievements and Activities of the Candidate (35%)
  - Publication Activity (10%)
  - Other Research Activity (10%)
  - Academic Performance (15%)

- Characteristics and Abilities of the Candidate (40%)
  - Critical thinking, independence, perseverance, originality, organizational skills, interest in discovery, research ability, leadership

- Research Training Environment (25%)
  - Training program for the candidate (10%)
  - Scientific Activity (5%) (of the supervisor)
  - Research Resources (5%)
  - Training Record (5%)
Selection Criteria - NSERC

- **Academic Excellence (30 %)**
  - Academic record
  - Scholarships held
  - Institution comments

- **Research Ability or Potential (50 %)**
  - Proposal
  - Contributions
  - Scholarships

- **Communication, Interpersonal and Leadership Abilities (20 %)**
  - Professional/extracurricular activities
  - Poster awards
  - Participation in publication writing
  - Quality of presentation of application
Applications are evaluated solely on academic merit by multidisciplinary selection committees covering broad research areas. Academic merit is measured by:

- past academic results, as 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 (for those registered at Canadian postsecondary institutions).
Additional chance to receive funding!

- QEII funding available to the top ranked students in:
  - NSERC (Masters & Doctoral)
  - SSHRC (Masters & Doctoral)
  - CIHR (Masters only)

- The Faculty of Graduate Studies awards a portion of QEII awards based on tri-council ranking in the university competition

- Your program will still receive a quota of QEIIIs to distribute in addition to any success in the Tricouncil based competition

**Apply to Tri-council awards and you will have two chances at QEII funding, otherwise only one**
Why should you be funded?
Richard Slipp: The Narrativisation of Memory in the Prose Works of Christoph Hein (SSHRC)

Research project and context:
“Remember [...] You must remember” (5), implores the title character of the 1985 novel Horn’s End from beyond the grave. My thesis will examine the narrative treatment of memory by one of Germany’s most recognised and prolific living writers, Christoph Hein (b. 1944), whose works invariably focus on the imperative of memory and the tensions between collective and individual remembrance of the country’s troubled past.

Editing process: what captures the attention or imagination of the reader?
Vaniers: Khalil Rawji explores new ways to repair nerve damage

First-hand encounter with an MS patient inspired PhD student to pursue new therapies

Vanier scholar Khalil Rawji is researching compounds which could be used to repair nerve damage in patients with MS.

Prehistoric victims of violence: investigating the relationship between geographic origins and violent conflict at Paquimé, Mexico using stable isotope analysis (SSHRC)

Adrianne Offenbecker, PhD Student
Biological Anthropology
Motherhood and marginalization: Barriers and strategies in forming primary supports during pregnancy (SSHRC)

- “I found that women of ethnic minority status were the most vulnerable to psychosocial stress during pregnancy and have significantly poorer pregnancy and birth outcomes than those who identify with the dominant culture.”

- Robinson’s ultimate goal is to improve the quality of life of marginalized populations, particularly women and children, by using findings from her research and her position as a registered psychologist to advocate for systemic changes in primary support for marginalized populations, both locally and internationally.

“Alix Robinson 2015

“Grads in Profile” https://werklund.ucalgary.ca/media-room/news-events/grads-profile-alix-robinson
With the help of a Killam predoctoral award and her supervisor, English professor Aritha van Herk, Chamberlin is writing a novel that explores how empathy reacts in the context of globalization and advertising. “I think of it as a fictional experiment,” she says. “You have these variables and you stir them together and what do you get?”

Jane Chamberlin's novel explores the nature of empathy and the challenge of empathizing with those who live in different countries, cultures and circumstances. Photo by Riley Brandt
Research Contributions
Publications and Presentations highlight your academic accomplishments.

Provide as much background information as possible

— adjudicators outside of your discipline may not be aware of the prestige of awards you have received, conferences at which you have presented or the prominence of the journal in which you have been published.

If there is not a specified format, follow the format most commonly used in your discipline.

— Contact your program and supervisor for those details.
What led you to doctoral research?

How has your relevant life experiences and personal circumstances shaped your academic, research, leadership choices, challenges, and successes?

How has your personal life driven you to share and disseminate your research?

How have you created opportunities to make change, and how have you overcome obstacles to your vision?

How have you fostered your ability to lead others, and how have you leveraged that skill?

Why have you chosen to undertake your PhD at the nominating institution?

How does your nominating institution provide an environment that nurtures both your academic and your leadership skills?
Evaluation and Selection Criteria: Academic Excellence
Evaluating Academic Excellence

Evaluating by:

- **Academic record (first class average)**
  - Transcripts
    - Note: the past 2 years are used for eligibility, but they may look back as far as 1st year undergrad
    - Bad first year, but compensated by outstanding remaining years

- **Scholarships and awards held**
  - Application form (Awards), reference letters

- **Duration of previous studies**
  - If this is a potential weakness in your application you may want to ask a referee to mention it in their letter
Academic Excellence cont’d…

- Type of program and courses pursued
- Course load
- Relative standing (if available)

Do everything you can to ensure you address each of the selection criteria:

- Reference letters
- Address potential weaknesses head-on
Evaluation and Selection Criteria: Research Potential
Research Potential

Evaluated by:

- Quality and originality of contributions to research and development
- Relevance of work experience and academic training to field of proposed research
- Significance, feasibility, and merit of proposed research
- Judgement and ability to think critically
- Ability to apply skills and knowledge
- Initiative, autonomy and independence
- Research experience and achievements relative to expectations of someone with the candidate’s academic experience
Research Potential

- Publications, conferences, etc.

- Early stages of graduate career (most contributions are helpful):
  - Non-refereed publications (e.g. working papers)
  - Conference presentations – including small local conferences, student conferences, etc.

- More advanced students (quality of contribution also taken into consideration)
  - Refereed journals are most highly valued
  - International conference venues
Evaluation and Selection Criteria:

Personal Characteristics & Interpersonal Skills
Personal Characteristics & Interpersonal Skills

Evaluated by:

- **Work experience**
  - CV / form 201
- **Leadership experience**
  - CV, reference letters
- **Project management incl. organizing conferences and meetings**
  - CV, reference letters
- **The ability or potential to communicate theoretical, technical and/or scientific concepts clearly in written and oral formats**
  - Research proposal, references, awards, CV
- **Involvement in academic life**
  - references, CV
- **Volunteerism/community outreach**
  - references, CV
Leadership and interpersonal skills: examples

- Personal achievement:
  - professional involvement in dance, arts, music, etc.;
  - significant artistic achievement;
  - recognized athletic achievement, especially in a leadership role;
  - entrepreneurial achievement (startup company); and/or
  - foreign travel and study.

- Involvement in academic life:
  - mentoring/teaching;
  - supervisory experience;
  - Involvement in student government and in the university community, including committees, teams, senate, boards, ethics committees, etc.;
  - project management;
  - roles in professional societies; and/or
  - organization of conferences and meetings

- Volunteerism, community outreach, civic engagement