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Scholarships Liaison Officer Information Package
– Administration of the NSERC Postgraduate
Scholarships-Doctoral Program

2017-18

Foreword

This document is a guide for Scholarships Liaison Officers (SLO) and university scholarships selection committees that are responsible for the selection of Postgraduate Scholarships-Doctoral (PGS D) applications to forward to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC). It provides information on the activities carried out by universities, as well as the policies, guidelines, and deliverables for each of these activities.

For more information regarding the programs, policies, and guidelines contact NSERC by email at schol-slo@nserc-crsng.gc.ca.

This document is updated every year.

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1. Overview of scholarships

1.1 Doctoral scholarships

[Alexander Graham Bell Canada Graduate Scholarships-Doctoral \(CGS D\)](#) and [NSERC Postgraduate Scholarships-Doctoral \(PGS D\)](#) programs provide financial support to high-calibre scholars who are engaged in doctoral programs in the natural sciences or engineering. This support allows these scholars to fully concentrate on their studies and seek out the best research mentors in their chosen fields.

Each Canadian university is assigned a quota of applications for the PGS D program that can be forwarded to NSERC. It is at the discretion of the university to determine how to divide the quota among disciplines.

2. SLO responsibilities

2.1 Program promotion

Each university is responsible for promotion of the scholarship programs. The SLO should:

- set and publicize the internal deadline; and
- promote the [program](#), the [instructions](#) on how to apply, and the [resource videos](#).

2.2 GSAP, On-Line System and tools

In order to submit applications to NSERC, the SLO must have access to the [Grants and Scholarships Administrative Portal](#) (GSAP) and the [On-Line System](#). Within the On-Line System, SLOs will have access to the SLO Portfolio which provides access to all in-progress and submitted applications. In this portfolio, the SLO will have the ability to assign roles to other staff members to assist them in the review and submission process. For additional information consult the [Instructions for the SLO Portfolio](#).

In order to obtain access to these platforms, **new users** must:

- register for access to the [GSAP](#) and [NSERC's On-line Services](#); and
- submit the [Registration Form for Authorized Institutional Representatives](#) to institution@nserc-crsng.gc.ca to be granted access to the SLO Portfolio. Once access has been granted, "Scholarships Liaison Officer (Master)" will appear

on the eConsole screen under *Institution Services*, the next time the SLO logs on to the [On-Line System](#).

2.3 Eligibility review

SLOs are responsible to review the applications for completeness, applicant eligibility, and subject matter eligibility.

A complete application includes:

- the “submitted” electronic version of the application (Form 201) including all of its free-form attachments;
- the two completed reports on the applicant; and
- transcripts for each of the degrees listed in the academic background page of the application form. SLOs are encouraged to pay close attention to the transcripts provided, ensuring that they meet all eligibility requirements. In addition, the SLO must:
 - indicate any semesters when the applicant was not a full-time student;
 - provide the exact date when a student transferred from a master’s to a doctoral degree without having completed their master’s requirements; and
 - verify that all uploaded documents are legible.

The SLO must carefully review the Transcripts/Proof of Registration section of the [Instructions for Completing an Application - Form 201](#). **This is imperative as it is the primary reason for the rejection of applications.**

If changes are to be made once the transcripts are uploaded, the university designate must advise the applicant to delete and re-enter the information on the University-Transcripts page of their application. The university designate will then receive a new invitation email that can be used to upload the revised document.

In order to evaluate applicant eligibility, SLOs should consult the [program description](#) for information on citizenship, maximum number of months in the program, registration status, and [first-class average requirements](#).

To evaluate subject matter eligibility, SLOs may refer to section 3.6.1 of the [Selection Committee Guide](#). Each SLO should ensure that:

- the research subject code included in the application corresponds to the applicant’s proposed field of study (this determines the NSERC selection committee in which the application will be evaluated);

- the applicant is not pursuing a professional degree (e.g., MD/PhD); and
- the justification for eligibility of proposed research section of the application is completed if the research has any link, overlap, or relevance to the health or social sciences and humanities disciplines. Applicants must describe the natural sciences or engineering (NSE) research challenges of the project on which they propose to work during the tenure of their scholarship. They must clearly explain why their proposed research is predominantly NSE and should be considered research that is directed to an NSE audience. This document should not exceed one page and will not be evaluated by the university scholarships selection committee(s).

2.4 Tasks prior to the meeting of the university scholarships selection committee(s)

At each university, the SLO must:

- identify the university designate(s) responsible for uploading the transcripts to the applicant's Form 201 and provide their name(s) and email address(es) to students;
- appoint members to the university scholarships selection committee(s);
- set the date for the meeting to select the applicants to be recommended to NSERC for a scholarship; and
- submit applications to the university scholarships selection committee(s) using the SLO Portfolio.
 - The SLO Portfolio has sorting capabilities in all columns so that SLOs can sort the applications according to their needs. They will be able to view the applications and provide read access to individuals within departments and the university scholarships selection committee(s).

2.5 Tasks following the meeting of the university scholarships selection committee(s)

At each university, the SLO must:

- hold the meeting for the university scholarships selection committee(s);
- complete the *Recommended PGS D Applicants* form (found on [GSAP](#)) and return it to NSERC by email at schol-slo@nserc-crsng.gc.ca;
 - The form must include an unranked list of recommended candidates identifying all Indigenous* candidates. **Universities are permitted to recommend an unlimited number of self-identified Indigenous applicants above their application quota.** A column exists in the SLO

Portfolio which will identify those who self-identified. SLOs are responsible for verifying the status of those who self-identified.

**First Nations (North American Indian - Status and Non-Status), Métis, or Inuit*

- submit the recommended applications via the SLO Portfolio no later than 8:00 P.M. (ET) on November 25;
 - Substitutions for ineligible or rejected applications will not be permitted.

List A	Forwarded to NSERC (recommended)
List B	Not forwarded to NSERC (not recommended, but deemed meritorious)
List C	Not forwarded to NSERC (not recommended, unsuccessful)

- inform all applicants of the outcome of the university's internal selection process; and
- advise applicants whose applications were not forwarded to NSERC. .

3. Responsibilities of the university scholarships selection committee(s)

3.1 Awareness of implicit or unconscious bias

NSERC expects members to consistently guard against the possibility of unconscious bias influencing the decision-making process, whether these biases are based on a school of thought, fundamental versus applied research, certain sub-disciplines, areas of research or approaches (including emerging ones), size or reputation of an institution, age, gender, and/or other personal factors of the applicant. NSERC cautions members against any judgment of an application based on such factors.

NSERC is actively engaged in increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion in its review process in order to contribute to improved diversity and equality in science and engineering fields. For reference, see NSERC's [Policy Statement on Gender Equality in Science and Engineering](#) and online resources such as [Strengthening Canada's Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension](#).

Members of the university scholarships selection committees are encouraged to complete the following two training modules: [Gender-based Analysis Plus \(GBA+\)](#), produced by Status of Women Canada; and [Unconscious Bias in Peer Review](#), produced by CIHR. Members are also encouraged to complete one of the [Sex and Gender](#) training modules produced by CIHR.

3.2 Special circumstances

Members must consider any special circumstances that have had an effect on the performance or productivity of the applicant. This includes delays in disseminating research results, health problems, family responsibilities, parental leave, disabilities, or other applicable circumstances. Members are to recognize delays and assess the quality of the applicant's performance and/or productivity during their active period (i.e., excluding the period of special circumstances).

3.3 Selection committee guide

Members can refer to the following relevant sections of the [Selection Committee Guide](#) (used by the members of the NSERC Scholarship and Fellowships selection committees):

- Section 3: Provides information on the NSERC review process, conflicts of interest, and additional factors to consider in the review of an application;
- Section 4: Legal and ethical information;
- Appendix A: Selection criteria and indicators.

3.4 Application review

When assessing applications, members must evaluate all applications and select those which merit being forwarded to NSERC.

It is the responsibility of the members to assess all applications including:

- applicants currently registered (full and part-time);
- applicants who have completed all requirements of a degree program during the year of the application and who are not registered at another university; and
- applicants who are on an approved leave of absence from the university.

After reviewing all applications, members must:

- recommend the best applicants, regardless of their status or proposed location of tenure; and

- recommend applicants who have obtained an overall first-class average* in each of the last two completed years of study (full-time equivalent) unless there are grounds for exception.

* *First class average is defined as a minimum grade of A- in each of the last two completed years of study (full-time equivalent; two years of part-time study equals one year of full-time study). The last two years of completed study should be the 24 months prior to the last day that the student was registered in the program (or September 1st of the year of application for students still registered). The average should be calculated for each of these years separately as students are required to have a first class average in each of the two years; however, if there is only one mark during the full two years, then that is the mark used to determine eligibility.*

For assistance in interpreting and comparing academic transcripts, members can refer to the *University Grading Systems Table* (found on [GSAP](#)) which summarizes the undergraduate and graduate grading systems at the various Canadian universities. This document also shows the approximate conversion to a percentage scale, the maximum grade attainable, and the minimum requirements for a first-class average as defined by the university. The information contained in this document is verified annually by each university.

3.5 Special statement pertaining to academic average, international degrees, and/or special circumstances

In some cases, members may prepare individual statements to include with the recommendations forwarded to NSERC in order to:

- attest to a foreign university's reputation (in the case of an international degree);
- justify the submission of an application with a lower academic average (e.g., taking into account relevant work experience in cases of a return to university for graduate studies); and/or
- address an unusual situation or special circumstances.

These statements are to be submitted to NSERC by the SLO along with the *Recommended PGS D Applicants* form.