

Tri-Agency Research Training Programs Post-Award Harmonization – Questions & Answers

Q1: Why is there a harmonized guide?

A1: The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) (“the Agencies”) are federal granting agencies that promote and support research, research training and innovation within Canada. In 2013, as part of the Canada Graduate Scholarships Harmonization Project, the Agencies agreed to harmonize the post award policies for directly funded training awardees. As publicly funded organizations, the Agencies have a fundamental interest in increasing Canada’s research capacity by recruiting and funding top-tier talent and then supporting this talent during their training careers. To facilitate this support, the tri-agencies have harmonized the post-award policies for award holders, increasing the flexibility of the leave arrangements, reducing the administrative burden on institutions and award recipients, and creating a universal guide for tri-agency directly funded training awards.

Q2: Who will use this harmonized guide?

A2: This guide applies to all Tri-Agency directly funded training award holders with active awards. It contains all the forms that training award holders and their institutions need to facilitate post-award activities allowed by the Tri-agencies.

Q3: When are these new policies effective and who is covered?

A3: These new policies take effect on September 1, 2016. If a training award holder is mid-way through an award at the time this guide becomes effective, they will follow this guide as of its effective date. However, no retroactive changes are possible.

This guide does not cover training award holders paid via supervisor grant funds (indirectly funded researchers in training).

E.g. 1. On September 1, 2016, a CIHR training award holder in the midst of a one-year unpaid interruption (the maximum allowed until September 1, 2016). They will now be able to take the other two years of interruptions as needed and if otherwise eligible.

E.g. 2. A SSHRC training award holder was not allowed to delay the start date of their award for reasons of relocation, and had to start their award. Now in the midst of their funding, they cannot retroactively request a delay in start date for relocation because it is available on September 1, 2016.

Q4: I have read the Training Award Holder’s Guide and still have questions, who do I contact?

A4: Points of contact for the programs covered by this guide (as of September 1, 2016):

Program/Agency	Contact
CIHR	support@cihr-irsc.gc.ca
CIHR CGS-M	cgsma@cihr-irsc.gc.ca
NSERC (including NSERC CGS-M)	schol@nserc-crsng.gc.ca
SSHRC (including SSHRC CGS-M)	fellowships@sshrc-crsh.gc.ca
Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships	banting@cihr-irsc.gc.ca
Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships	vanier@cihr-irsc.gc.ca

Q5: My institutional regulations disagree with a regulation in this guide, what do I do?

A5: All institutional regulations must apply, and any request for leave or in any other situation covered by this guide, institutional approval must be sought.

Q6: Have the three federal granting agencies considered offering eight months of paid parental leave?

A6: Since 2014, the three federal granting agencies have been working together to harmonize the post-award policies for training programs, particularly paid parental leave. Originally, NSERC and SSHRC were offering four months of paid parental leave to award holders. In the past year, the three agencies have successfully harmonized to six months of paid parental leave. While the agencies understand that a paid parental leave of eight months is more in line with the academic cycle, the financial impact of the change to six months will first be assessed before deciding on a further course of action.

Q7: CIHR used to offer a paid medical leave, up to a maximum duration of six months. Why did the policy change?

A7: While a CIHR training award holder could request paid medical leave, up to a maximum duration of six months, the tenure of the award was not extended by the period of the leave. Therefore, in essence, the award holder had a shorter time frame to work on their funded research.

With this new policy, in all cases of deferment of award start date or interruptions, the award will be extended for the duration of the leave taken.

In addition, the part-time arrangements have been made more flexible to allow the award holder and their institution to come up with a personalized part-time schedule that is most appropriate to the award holder's needs. For example, if an award holder can only manage to work for a couple of hours every day due to their medical condition, then that is now an allowable part-time schedule. This flexibility is meant to allow the award holder to manage their own schedule based on their specific situation.