FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

CGS Masters Scholarship
Student Workshop

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2016
The application and selection process
Criteria for selection
Preparing the application
General tips
Questions
The Tri-council: CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC

CIHR
Canadian Institute for Health Research

NSERC
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council

SSHRC
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
Tri-Council Canada Graduate Scholarships (CGS) – Master’s Level

- **CIHR**: Frederick Banting and Charles Best CGS
- **NSERC**: Alexander Graham Bell CGS
- **SSHRC**: Joseph-Armand Bombardier CGS

- Value: **$17,500** for one year, non-renewable.

- Not sure which TriCouncil you fall into? **Ask them!**
  
  [Visit here](http://www.science.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=en&n=FEE7261A-1)
  
  - **CIHR** cgsma@cihr-irsc.gc.ca
  - **NSERC** schol@nserc-crsng.gc.ca
  - **SSHRC** fellowships@sshrc-crsh.gc.ca
Top Reasons to Apply for a Tri-council Scholarship

- Experience in applying for funding and in scholarly writing (especially proposals).

- Prestige! Tri-council success is a broad metric across Canada.

- Your success helps the university/program distribute funding to others.

- You do not want to wait until the first time you think you have a legitimate shot at a scholarship to try preparing an application!
CGS Masters applicants will be automatically considered for QEII scholarships through the Faculty of Graduate Studies based on ranking in the university competition (annual value of $10,800 for Master’s)

Your program also receives a quota of QEIIIs to distribute in addition to any success in the Tri-council competition.

Apply to the Tri-council and you have **two** chances at QEII awards, otherwise only one.
All applicants to the CGS Masters competition submit through a common online portal.

Applicants apply to the university they plan to carry out their studies (may be different from their present locale).

Applicants can apply to up to 5 schools.

Universities receive a quota per Tri-council and the awards are determined by the University (FGS) committee (application does not go to Ottawa).

Eligibility

- Must be a Canadian Citizen or permanent resident of Canada.

- Be enrolled in, or intend to apply for full-time admission to an eligible graduate program at the master’s or doctoral level at a Canadian university with a CGS M allocation.

- Have achieved a first-class average, as determined by the host university, in the last two completed years of study (full-time equivalent) > 3.5 GPA in the last two years.
You must:

- have completed, as of Dec. 31 of the year of application, 0-12 months of full-time (equivalent) studies in:
  - The master’s program for which you are requesting funding for; or
  - The doctoral program for which you are requesting funding (if you went straight into a PhD or are in a combined Master’s-PhD program); or
  - A master’s program, but you are requesting funding for a doctoral program (i.e. fast-track from master’s to a doctoral within 12 months of starting your master’s and seeking funding for first 12 months of doctoral)

- not have previously held a CGS M
CGS-M Selection Criteria

Selection Criteria Weightings

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<th>CGS M (percent)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Academic excellence</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research ability or potential</td>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Characteristics and Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>20</td>
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Our internal Graduate Awards Competition uses these criteria at weightings of 40:40:20 for both Masters and Doctoral.
Applications are submitted electronically through the Research Portal.

CGS Masters Deadline: December 1, 2016
If you are currently registered as a master's student at the University of Calgary, and you are not applying for this award at other universities, you may request copies of your transcripts from the University Designate (gsaward@ucalgary.ca).

Send an email to gsaward@ucalgary.ca indicating ‘CGS_Master’s transcripts_your last name’ in the subject line.

In the body of the email, include:

- your full name
- UC student ID number
- statement that you are a Master’s student at UCalgary, your research area (NSERC, CIHR, SSHRC)
- your program
- a list of all transcripts from every post-secondary institution you have attended. (Ensure the University has your most recent and complete transcripts.)

Deadline to request is November 10.
How will I find out if I am successful?

- On the same day in the first week of April, all universities will send out results by email: Successful, Unsuccessful, or Waiting List.

- As applicants have applied to multiple schools, there is a tumble down of offers as awards are declined (initially and also some months later).

- Offer of a scholarship from a university does not mean acceptance to a program at that university!
What do you need to submit?

- Application through Research Portal (opens Mid-September)
- Outline of proposed research (max 1 page plus max 1 page bibliography and citations)
- All required undergraduate and graduate transcripts
- The CGS-M Canadian Common CV (CCV)
  - To be completed then uploaded through Research Portal
- Two reference assessments
  - Uploaded through Research Portal
Selection Criteria

- **50% Academic Excellence**
  - Transcripts
  - Awards
  - Reference assessments (x2)

- **30% Research Potential**
  - Research proposal
  - Common CV
  - Reference assessments (x2)

- **20% Personal Characteristics and Interpersonal Skills**
  - Common CV
  - Reference assessments (x2)
Academic Excellence (50%)

As demonstrated by past academic results, transcripts, awards and distinctions:

- **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
    - ‘Glitch’ in grades compensated by outstanding remaining years? Have one of your referees address it!

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

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

Since this is worth 50%, do everything you can to make sure you address each of the selection criteria:

— Reference assessments
— Address potential weaknesses head-on
Research Potential (30%)

- 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
- Work experience
  - CCV
- Leadership experience
  - CCV, reference assessments
- Project management incl. organizing conferences and meetings
  - CCV, reference assessments
- The ability or potential to communicate theoretical, technical and/or scientific concepts clearly in written and oral formats
  - Research proposal, references, awards, CCV
- Involvement in academic life
  - references, CCV
- Volunteerism/community outreach
  - references, CCV
What is “leadership”? 

- **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:**
  - community involvement in charity or not-for-profit organizations.

- **Civic engagement:**
  - parliamentary page positions and internships;
  - political activity; and/or
  - elected positions.
Demonstrating Research Potential and Personal Characteristics

- These account for 50% of the selection criteria
- Where do they come from?
  - Research Proposal
  - Common CV
  - Reference Assessments
Rule 1: Keep it simple! Reviewers may not be experts in your field, so write for a broad audience. Jargon in your field does not make you look like an expert, it says you can’t communicate outside your field.

Suggestion: Keep intro very general and easy to understand, add SOME highly technical terms to the methods to make your project seem state-of-the-art (but be sure to explain them), and then bring everything back to general terms for your expected results/significance section. Think newspaper article style.
Rule 2: Make it visually appealing. The last thing reviewers want to see is a massive block of text. Separate sections, underline key points. Less is more. Do not make it hard to find important points.

Rule 3: Impact of your work is more important than impact of your research field. Make sure to emphasize what your project will do.
Rule 4: Explain your role in the proposed project and envision what your next moves might be if everything works perfectly. Convince the reviewer that the project is feasible and important.

Suggestion: Provide evidence for why your training environment is going to help you excel in the program and link to national/university priority areas (if applicable).
The results of this research will be important because photodynamic therapy (PDT) offers many advantages over traditional cancer treatments such as surgery and radiotherapy. PDT is non-invasive and highly targeted, resulting in less damage to healthy tissue and faster healing with less scarring. PDT treatments can also be repeated without health concerns, unlike radiotherapy. With a more reliable dosimetry measurement technique, PDT treatment can be individually optimized, and can bring improved treatment capabilities to patients. - L. Conroy

Why the research area is interesting/novel

Role of the proposed project (fill a “gap”)

Expected outcome and impact of project
- Use this to your advantage!
- Start early – can be tedious.
- Keep criteria from each section in mind (Academics, Research Potential, Personal Characteristics).
- Demonstrate that you are well-rounded.
It is always a good idea to use your supervisor. If you are a new student, use this as an opportunity to discuss your goals for the next few years with your supervisor. Chat with them about this.

Tri-councils are research awards, so it is best to have researchers write your assessments.

This section is important for your score: ensure that your referees know this and write accordingly.

Have the assessments complement your application.

Give your referees some time (2 weeks minimum).
Do not just ask someone for a reference. Be proactive and make it easy for your referee to write a good assessment:

- Provide the review criteria.
- Provide transcripts and a CV: highlight areas you wish to have covered in the assessment.
- Meet to discuss: what criteria do you think they should address?
- Be strategic in choosing your referees in terms of covering the criteria.
Address the criteria in each sub-field.

Characteristics and abilities are mostly assessed from references. Leadership is not just extracurriculars, address the personality traits and comment on where you think this student will end up in their career.

Be specific. Back a point up with an anecdote.
Reference Assessments: Tips for Referees

- Guide on writing a reference – send this
- Remind of the deadline!

Tips for Success

The Graduate Scholarship Office wants you to succeed in your program and in your funding applications. We encourage you to take the necessary time to properly prepare your application to improve your chance of success.

Before You Apply for Funding

- Search the Graduate Award Database to generate a list of internal University of Calgary awards you may be eligible for
- Read Creating Strong Funding Applications
- Consider which publications to list on your scholarship application
- Check the event calendar and GRADpost for scholarship workshops

Reference

- Plan ahead. Ask for a reference well in advance of the due date.
- Provide this guide on writing a reference to your referee

Before You Submit Your Application

- Check every item and page for accuracy
- Ask someone not in your field to read it
- Ensure you have included all the documents requested
- Make certain all documents are in the correct format
- Ensure you send your application to the correct location
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?

Scan Test:
- Have someone outside your field read you application quickly (scan it, ~ 5 minutes).
- What major point(s) do they take away from it? Is it what you wanted them to?
Top Reasons Good Students Don’t Get Funded

- A generic reference. The assessment is positive but gives no specifics and does not address criteria.
- Content, context and/or impact of research not clearly stated. (“So what?”)
- Not following instructions (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.
FGS Contacts

- **Graduate Scholarship Officers:**
  - CIHR: Jamie Pryde ([jpryde@ucalgary.ca](mailto:jpryde@ucalgary.ca))
  - NSERC: Erin O’Toole ([erin.otoole@ucalgary.ca](mailto:erin.otoole@ucalgary.ca))
  - SSHRC: Erin Coburn ([ecoburn@ucalgary.ca](mailto:ecoburn@ucalgary.ca))

- To request a copy of the Slides: [gsaward@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gsaward@ucalgary.ca)

- Support from Grad Leaderships: [gradlead@ucalgary.ca](mailto:gradlead@ucalgary.ca)
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