

Preparing a Strong CGRS M Application

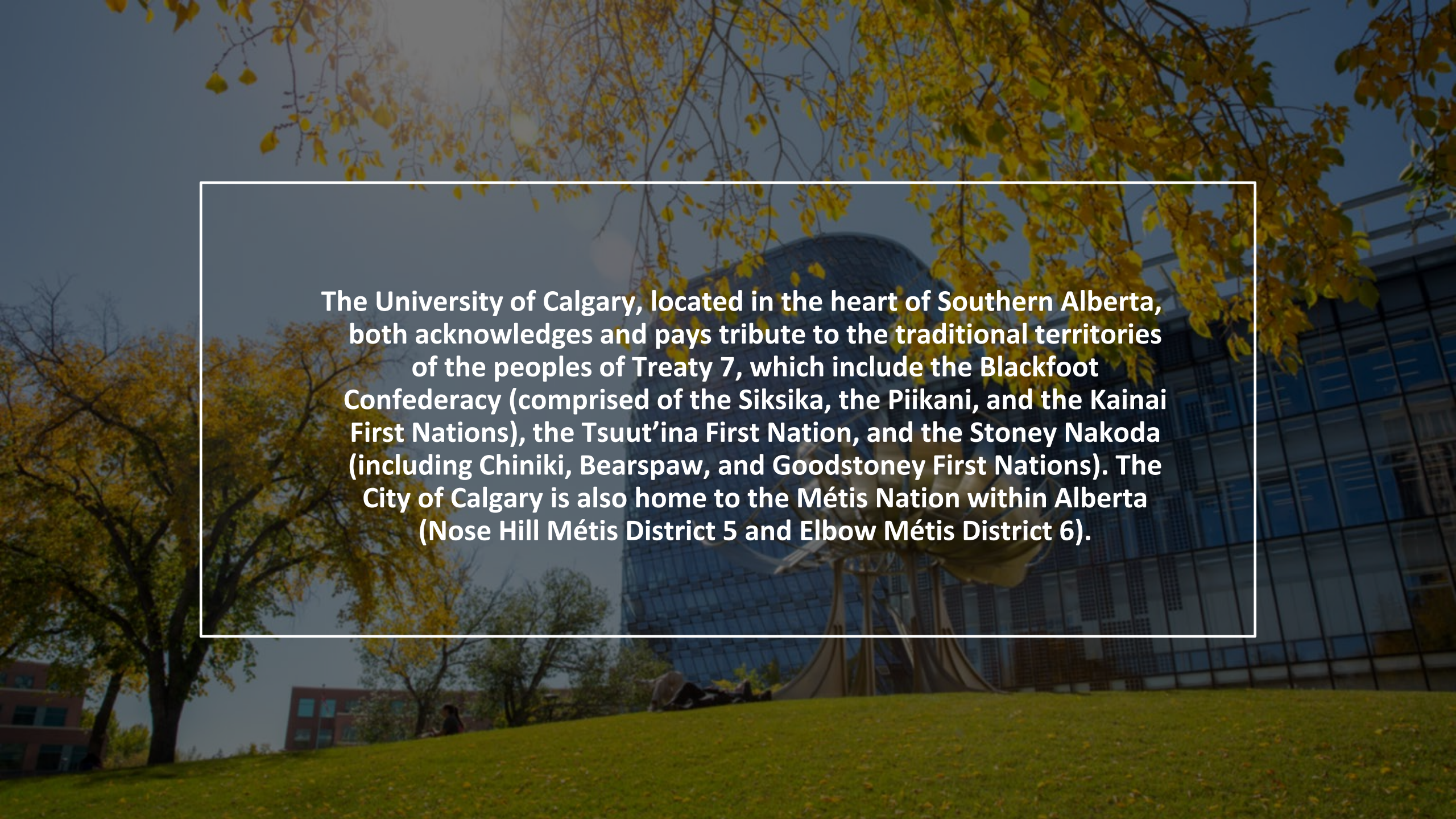
Dr. Daniel McGrath, Associate Dean, Grad Awards
Erin Coburn, Team Lead, Grad Awards

Graduate Leaders Circle Co-Chairs
Katelyn Horsley, NSERC CGS D Scholar
Philippa Ngaju, NSERC Vanier Scholar

October 2025



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

A photograph of the University of Calgary campus. In the foreground, there is a green lawn with some fallen yellow leaves. In the middle ground, there is a large, modern building with a glass facade and a distinctive curved, metallic sculpture in front of it. The background is filled with trees with yellow autumn leaves. The sky is a clear blue. The text is overlaid on the image, enclosed in a white rectangular box.

The University of Calgary, located in the heart of Southern Alberta, both acknowledges and pays tribute to the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7, which include the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprised of the Siksika, the Piikani, and the Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Goodstoney First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to the Métis Nation within Alberta (Nose Hill Métis District 5 and Elbow Métis District 6).



Agenda

- Major Changes
- Overview
- Supplements & Initiatives
- Timeline and Process
- Eligibility
- Selection Criteria
- Application Components
- How to craft a strong application
- Resources
- Questions

Major Changes

1. Master's funding program has been renamed the Canada Graduate Research Scholarship – Master's (CGRS M)
2. Increase of 300 additional awards at the master's level nation-wide
3. The master's-level Indigenous Scholars Awards and Supplements program currently offered by NSERC and SSHRC will be extended to CIHR for the 2025/2026 competition cycle

CGRS M Overview

Value	\$27,000
Duration	12 months
Tenure	<u>Eligible Canadian institutions</u>
Application deadline to UCalgary	December 1, 2025, before before 8:00 pm ET
How to apply	Refer to the <u>Application Procedures</u>
Results announced	April
Application forms & instructions	<u>Research Portal</u> and <u>Instructions</u>

https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PG-CS/cgrsm-besrm_eng.asp

Supplements & Initiatives

Additional funding streams available for eligible CGRS M applicants

- **Indigenous Scholars Awards and Supplements Pilot Initiative**
 - Supplement (\$5,000) for meritorious applicants
 - Award (\$27,000) for alternate candidates
- **Black Scholars Initiative** Additional support for Black student researchers
 - Up to 20 awards per agency
- **MINDS Scholarship Initiative** Dept. of National Defence & SSHRC; Social Sciences/Humanities
 - Indigenous Master's Scholarships (\$17,500)
 - MINDS Supplement (\$10,000)
- **CMHC–SSHRC Housing Research Scholarship Program** Housing-focused research; Social Sciences/Humanities
 - Supplement (\$10,000)

Timeline & Process



Timeline: Full Application → Results



Process

1. Create a [Research Portal](#) Account
 - **Note** Selecting **Health** as field of research = must register and provide **CIHR PIN**
2. Register for [Canadian Common CV](#) and Review [Instructions](#)
3. Identify and Contact Referees
4. Complete Full Application via Research Portal
5. Submit Full Application by **December 1, 2025, before 8:00 pm ET**
 - Incomplete / late applications will not be accepted
 - You may apply to up to 3 institutions
6. Selection Process and Results
 - Each institution will review the application separately
 - Result specific to each institution will be available in the Research Portal effective April 1
 - You may accept only 1 offer of award. The award must be held at that institution and cannot be transferred

Eligibility



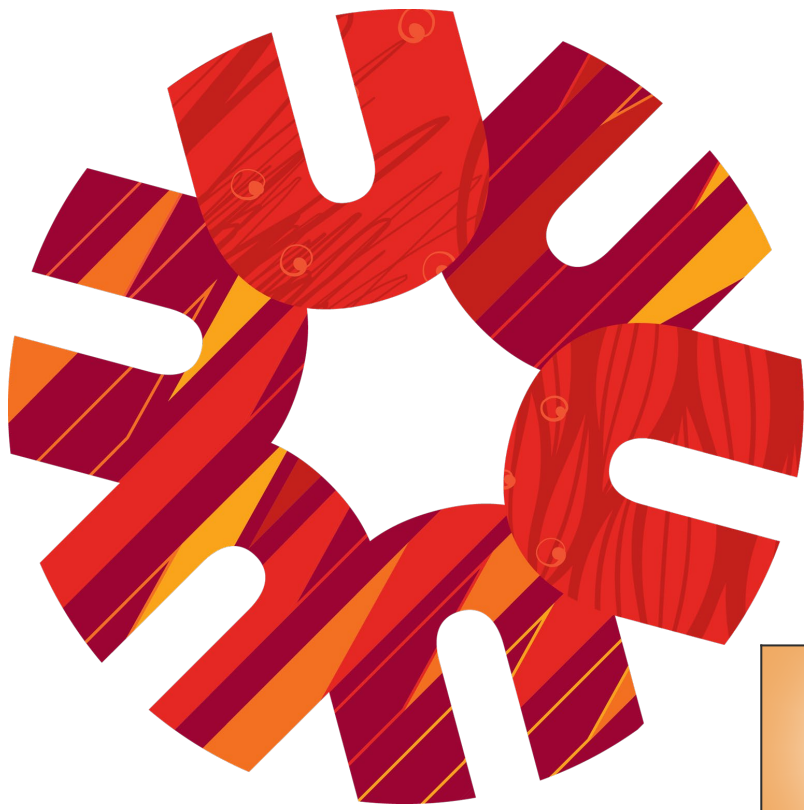
Eligibility Criteria

To apply, you must:

- Be a **Canadian citizen, permanent resident, or Protected Person** (per *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*)
- Be **enrolled in or applying for** full-time admission to an **eligible Master's or Doctoral program** at a **Canadian institution with a CGS M allocation** (i.e. UCalgary)
- **Meet your institution's internal application deadline**
- Have completed, as of **Dec. 31**
 - **0–12 months** of full-time study in your current eligible program, **or**
 - **4–12 months** in a master's program transitioning to a PhD at the same institution.
- **Not hold** (or have held) a **CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC, or Indigenous Scholars** master's award
- Hold a **first-class average** in your **last two years of study**
- Submit **only one** application per year to **CIHR, NSERC, or SSHRC** — the first submitted is the one considered

Selection Criteria





Full Application Selection Criteria

	Academic Excellence	Research Potential	Personal Characteristics and Interpersonal Skills
CGRS M	50%	30%	20%

Each application reviewed by 3 committee members based on field of research (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC)

Application Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Description	Key Indicators
Academic Excellence (50%)	Demonstrated through past academic performance, transcripts, awards, and distinctions	• Academic record • Scholarships and awards held • Duration of previous studies • Type of program and courses pursued • Course load • Relative standing (if available)
Research Potential (30%)	Demonstrated through research history, proposed research, and potential contributions to knowledge in the field	• Quality and originality of research contributions • Relevance of experience and training • Significance, feasibility, and merit of proposed research • Sound judgment and critical thinking • Ability to apply knowledge and skills • Initiative and autonomy • Research experience and achievements relative to stage of study
Personal Characteristics & Interpersonal Skills (20%)	Demonstrated through professional and extracurricular collaborations and leadership experiences	• Work experience • Leadership experience • Project management (e.g., organizing conferences, meetings) • Communication skills (oral and written) • Involvement in academic life • Volunteerism and community outreach

Evaluation Criteria – EDI Considerations

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Principle

- **Tri-agency commitment** Achieve a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive Canadian research enterprise to advance impactful, innovative research addressing local, national, and global challenges
- Guided by the [Tri-Agency Statement on EDI](#) and the [EDI Action Plan](#)
- Self-identification and consent may be used to determine eligibility for additional awards or priority funding for underrepresented groups

Application Components



Application Components

1. **Application Overview** Identification, title, field, host institution, etc.
2. **Activity Details** Themes, ethics, sex and gender-based analysis, keywords, special circumstances
3. **Outline of Proposed Research** 1-page proposal + 1-page bibliography
4. **Transcripts** official, up-to-date PDFs
5. **Canadian Common CV (CCV)**
6. **References**

Additional information https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/ResearchPortal-PortailDeRecherche/Instructions-Instructions/CGS_M-BESC_M_eng.asp#a2

Research Proposal - Criteria

Single Attachment (2 Sections, 1 Page Each)

Outline of Proposed Research

- Describe your project during the award period
- Include background, objectives/hypothesis, methods, and significance
- For non-thesis/artistic projects, describe the research component
- Must be written independently with proper citations

Bibliography & Citations

- List all references cited in your proposal
- Follow your discipline's citation format
- Ensure clarity and completeness for reviewers

Additional information https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/ResearchPortal-PortailDeRecherche/Instructions-Instructions/CGS_M-BESC_M_eng.asp

Transcripts - Criteria

Requirements

- Include **official, up-to-date transcripts** for all undergrad & grad studies (including current fall semester)
- Include original transcripts for **transfer credits**
- Needed to verify **months of graduate study, first-class average, and current registration**

Standards

- Issued by the **registrar's office** (electronic copies OK)
- Must meet **institutional requirements**; scanning envelopes does not make unofficial
- Languages other than English/French require **certified translation**
- If no transcripts available, submit **official letter from the dean/registrar**

File Specifications

- Single PDF (B&W recommended), max **15 MB**
- Page size: **Letter (8.5×11 in) or A4**
- Include **one copy of the transcript legend**

Additional information https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/ResearchPortal-PortailDeRecherche/Instructions-Instructions/CGS_M-BESC_M_eng.asp

Canadian Common CV - Criteria

Purpose

- Highlight experience & achievements, within and beyond academia, in a standardized format

Requirements

- Start as soon as possible... this takes a lot longer than you think

Additional information [Canadian Common CV](#) and [Instructions](#)

Reference Assessments - Criteria

Purpose

- Provide an informed, credible assessment of the applicant's academic excellence, research potential, and personal qualities to support their suitability for master's funding, in the context of the broader application

Requirements

- 2 Reference Assessments must be completed, submitted, and linked to your application *BEFORE* your application can be submitted
- Applications that are not submitted by the deadline because of missing reference assessments cannot be accepted



It is your responsibility to ensure your reference assessments are complete and submitted early enough to allow you to submit your completed application in the Research Portal before the December 1 deadline

Instructions for Referees

- Reference must be complete prior to application deadline

Additional information

Student https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/ResearchPortal-PortailDeRecherche/Instructions-Instructions/CGS_M-BESC_M_eng.asp

Referee https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/ResearchPortal-PortailDeRecherche/Instructions-Instructions/CGSM_REF-BESCM_REF_eng.asp

How to Craft a Strong Application



General Strategies For Crafting a Strong Application

-  **Address Evaluation Criteria** Directly respond to each criterion with clear, structured language
-  **Emphasize Impact** Go beyond listing activities—highlight outcomes and contributions (e.g., “Led X, resulting in Y”)
-  **Create a Coherent Narrative:** Show how experiences, training, and research goals form a focused trajectory; avoid repetition
-  **Be Specific & Evidence-Based** Use concrete examples, data, and metrics; avoid vague statements.
-  **Align with Tri-Agency Priorities** Frame research to reflect the funding agency’s focus
-  **Edit & Seek Feedback** Have mentors, peers, or supervisors review for clarity, completeness, and relevance

Research Proposal – Overview

Craft a clear, concise plan describing the research you intend to carry out during your masters' studies

- Outline your specific research question or objective
- Detail the methods you will use to achieve your goals
- Explain the significance of the work



Research Proposal

- **Keep in mind the different styles of each agency**
 - **Example** NSERC vs CIHR vs SSHRC proposal styles
- **Ensure writing is**
 - Hooks the reader
 - Logical, clear, concise, and flows well from start to finish
 - Write mainly for non-specialists but ensure specialists can follow
 - Use descriptive titles and define discipline-specific terms and acronyms.
- **Make sure that the implications of the research are clear**
 - Reader should understand **prediction** in the context of the field, **how** it will be evaluated, **why** it matters, and **what** is its significance
 - I.e. A logical story of why your project should get funded over others
- **Think of the proposal as an academic story of your research**
 - Stories are methodical in the **choice and timing** of their words

Research Proposal - CIHR Example (Part 1)

- **Title** *Sleep Quality as an Early Determinant of Cardiovascular Risk in Young Adults*
- **Background** Cardiovascular disease (CVD) remains the leading global cause of death, yet preventive efforts often target middle age, long after early risk factors have emerged.¹ Mounting evidence shows that **insufficient and poor-quality sleep** contribute to elevated **blood pressure, reduced heart-rate variability (HRV), and arterial stiffness**—all precursors of CVD.^{2,3} Despite these findings, few studies examine **young adults**, a group increasingly exposed to irregular sleep patterns due to academic and occupational pressures⁴. Understanding how sleep behavior shapes early cardiovascular markers could identify an accessible target for **primary prevention**.
- **Objectives and Hypothesis** Therefore, **the objective of this project is to** determine how **sleep duration and quality** relate to **cardiovascular function** in adults aged 18–30. Specifically, **I predict that** individuals with **shorter sleep and lower sleep efficiency** will exhibit **higher mean blood pressure, lower HRV, and greater arterial stiffness**, even after controlling for demographic and lifestyle factors.

Research Proposal - CIHR Example (Part 2)

- **Methods** **To test this hypothesis**, a sample of **80** healthy, adult participants will undergo **seven consecutive nights** of sleep assessment using **actigraphy** and **validated sleep diaries**. Following the monitoring period, participants will complete **24-hour ambulatory blood-pressure monitoring**, a **5-minute resting HRV test**, and **pulse-wave-velocity (PWV)** measurement using a non-invasive oscillometric device. Participants' **physical activity**, **diet**, and **stress levels** will be recorded to adjust for confounds. Data will be analyzed with **multiple linear regression** and **path analyses** to test the predictive value of sleep metrics on cardiovascular outcomes.
- **Significance** By clarifying the link between **everyday sleep patterns** and **physiological markers of cardiovascular risk**, **the results of this project will** address a modifiable behavior with far-reaching public-health implications. Results will inform **evidence-based sleep guidelines** for young adults and guide **preventive interventions** that can reduce lifetime CVD burden. This aligns directly with CIHR's mission to translate health research into tangible improvements in population well-being.

Research Proposal – NSERC Example (Part 1)

- **Title** *Quantifying the Ecological Impacts of Overfishing in Canadian Freshwater Systems Background and Rationale*
- **Background** Fishing beyond sustainable yield (i.e., overfishing) has led to widespread **ecosystem degradation, loss of biodiversity, and declines in fish stocks globally**. Recent analyses indicate that **63% of global fisheries** are currently exploited at or beyond sustainable limits.¹ While overfishing has traditionally been associated with **commercial marine fisheries**, evidence now shows that **inland recreational fisheries**—including Canada's **\$8.4 billion per year freshwater fishery**—are also being **overharvested**.^{2,3} Recreational fishing mortality often goes **unreported**, masking its cumulative ecological effects. Overfishing not only reduces **target species abundance** but also disrupts **trophic interactions** and **ecosystem resilience**.⁴ To maintain the sustainability of Canada's freshwater ecosystems, it is essential to **quantify how recreational overfishing alters ecosystem function**, particularly regarding **energy flow and food web stability**.
- **Research Objectives and Hypotheses** Therefore, the overarching objective of this project is to **evaluate how overfishing affects energy transfer and community structure** in freshwater ecosystems. Specifically, we will (1) **quantify changes in trophic structure**—including predator–prey biomass ratios and species diversity—across lakes with varying fishing pressure, and (2) **model how declines in top-predator biomass affect ecosystem energy transfer and nutrient cycling**. Together, these approaches **will test the hypothesis that** lakes exposed to greater fishing pressure will exhibit **reduced predator biomass, simplified food webs, and lower ecosystem resilience**, consistent with predictions of **trophic downgrading**.

Research Proposal - NSERC Example (Part 2)

- **Methods** **To test this hypothesis,** I will use a **comparative field-based design** across 12 Saskatchewan and Manitoba lakes representing a gradient of fishing intensity (from minimally exploited to heavily fished). Fish community composition will be quantified using **standardized gill-net surveys** and **acoustic biomass estimates**. **Stable isotope analysis ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$ and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$)** will be employed to assess food-web structure and energy flow. Fishing effort will be estimated from **provincial creel surveys and angler-derived datasets**. Data will be analyzed using **generalized linear mixed models (GLMMs)** and **network analysis** to relate fishing pressure to trophic metrics and ecosystem stability indices.
- **Significance** This project will generate **empirical data** linking recreational overfishing to **ecosystem-level consequences** in Canada's inland waters—a critically under-studied domain. **The results of this study will** advance understanding of **anthropogenic impacts on aquatic food webs**, inform **evidence-based management strategies**, and help ensure the **long-term sustainability of freshwater fisheries**. By integrating **field ecology, isotopic analysis, and quantitative modeling**, this research directly supports **NSERC's mandate** to promote discovery and application of knowledge in the **natural sciences**.

Research Proposal – SSHRC Example (Part 1)

- **Title** *Preschoolers' Sensitivity to Group Variability in the Formation of Social Stereotypes*
- **Background** By the time children reach preschool, they already notice **social categories** like gender and language and often start to form **general beliefs** about what people in these groups are like.¹ These early stereotypes can affect how children **treat others, share resources, and choose friends**.² However, children also notice when people in the same group are **different from one another**.³ This awareness of **individual differences** may help them keep their ideas about groups more flexible.³ What we do not yet know is how children balance what they learn about a **group as a whole** with what they see about **individual members**, or how their **experiences with diversity** shape this balance. Learning more about these early thought patterns can help us understand how **stereotypes develop and change** over time.
- **Objectives and Hypothesis** Therefore, **the objective of this research is to** investigate how exposure to groups with different degrees of **trait variability** shapes preschoolers' social inferences. More specifically, **I predict that** exposure to **highly variable groups** will lead children to prioritize **individual traits**, whereas **homogeneous groups** will encourage **category-based reasoning** consistent with stereotyping.

Research Proposal – SSHRC Example (Part 2)

- **Methods:** **To test this hypothesis,** 50 preschoolers aged 4–5 will complete **computer-based categorization and prediction tasks** involving novel social groups distinguished by color and described with varying mental-trait consistency. Group variability and the type of exposure (group-focused vs. individual-focused) will be manipulated experimentally. Children's choices and justifications will be coded for reliance on group versus individual cues. Data will be analyzed using **mixed-effects logistic regression**.
- **Significance:** **The results of this research will** illuminate the **cognitive foundations of stereotype formation**, offering insight into how children learn to balance generalization and individuality. Findings will inform **early-education practices** and **equity-oriented curricula** that promote inclusive social reasoning. By advancing understanding of social-cognitive development, this project supports SSHRC's goal of fostering a **more just and inclusive society**.



References Assessments

- Provide your Referees with the details of how your application will be assessed so that they can ***address the criteria***
 - Provide examples of your relevant experience and achievements obtained within and beyond academia
 - Refer to the website for specific activities suitable for your application
- If there are special circumstances or alternate career paths, ask them to speak to these
- Provide details of scholarships and awards that could be referred to in the letters
- Provide your research proposal and contributions
- Have a conversation in person/via Zoom/phone
- **Make your request ASAP & Follow up with reminders**

Canadian Common CV

Know the Purpose

- Structured database for research, publications, awards, and contributions
- Enables consistent comparison across applicants

Tailor to the Award

- **NSERC** Natural sciences/engineering
- **CIHR** Health
- **SSHRC** Social sciences/Humanities

Highlight Research Productivity

- Publications, presentations, grants, awards, lab experience
- Quantify contributions when possible

Show Leadership & Impact

- Teaching, mentoring, outreach, committee work
- Emphasize outcomes, responsibilities, and real-world impact

Accuracy & Consistency

- Use full citations, consistent formatting, correct co-author order
- Proofread carefully

Optional & Additional Contributions

- Software, policy briefs, creative works, community engagement

Keep it Up-to-Date & Aligned

- Regularly update before applications
- Ensure CCV aligns with proposal and personal statement

Transcripts



**IDENTIFY AND GATHER
REQUIRED DOCUMENTS EARLY**



**ORGANIZE MATERIALS IN THE
PROPER FILE FORMAT**



**VERIFY COMPLIANCE WITH
AGENCY-SPECIFIC
REQUIREMENTS**



Before You Submit

- Read the application instructions again
- Review your application one last time, check for spelling, grammar, formatting, or factual errors
- Ask [Writing Support Services](#) to review application
- You will increase your chance of success by following these tips and following the instructions exactly

Resources



CGRS M Scholarship Cafes and Drop-In Mentoring

Registration Details and links are available on the [UCalgary](#)
[CGRS M Website](#)

One-on-one mentoring

The Graduate Leaders Circle (GLC) is hosting scholarship cafes, dedicated one-on-one mentoring sessions for students applying for Tri-agency master's scholarships. Scheduled sessions are available.

If you have eligibility questions or you experience difficulties with the portal, please contact the Faculty of Graduate Studies office (gsaward@ucalgary.ca) or contact the research portal directly.



GLC scholarship cafes

Students will be able to register for one 30 minute mentoring session. Signing up for more than one time slot reduces the number of spaces available for students

CGRS M Cafe #1:

Nov. 3, 2025 | 10 am - 12:00 noon

[Register](#)

CGRS M Cafe #2:

Nov. 19, 2025 | 10 am - 12:00 noon

[Register](#)



GLC scholarship drop-in

CGRS M Drop In #1:

Nov. 21, 2025 | 1 pm - 2:30 pm

[Register](#)

CGRS M Drop In #2:

Nov. 26, 2025 | 10 am -11:30 am

[Register](#)

CGRS M Drop In #3:

Nov. 28, 2025 | 1 pm - 2:30 pm

[Register](#)

Other Sources of Support

Writing Support Services

- Language and writing support
- <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support>

Supervisor, Colleagues, Family, & Friends

- CGRS M applications benefit from multiple sources of support, so reach far and wide for feedback.



Contacts

Crafting a Strong Application, Cafes/Drop-in

- GLC gradlead@ucalgary.ca

Eligibility & Application Criteria

- Review the CGRS M [Criteria](#) and [Instructions](#)

UCalgary Criteria (Deadlines, Administrative Support etc.)

- Graduate Award Office gsaward@ucalgary.ca

Questions





UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Connect with us on social media



@ucalgaryfgs



@UCalgaryGradStudies