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Selection Committee Guide for Postgraduate Scholarships—Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships Programs

2019–2020

Foreword

This document is a guide for members of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Scholarships and Fellowships selection committees that are responsible for the evaluation of Postgraduate Scholarships–Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships applications. It describes the activities carried out by members and chairs of these selection committees, as well as the policies, guidelines and deliverables for each of these activities.

Applicants who refer to this document should note that the content is intended to guide members and outline principles rather than provide them with a set of rules.

For more information regarding scholarships and fellowships programs, policies, and guidelines contact [NSERC staff](#).

This document is updated annually.

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1. Overview of scholarships and fellowships

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.

There is a single application and review process for the CGS D and the PGS D programs. The top-ranked applicants are awarded the CGS D (\$35,000 per year, tenable only in Canada) and highly-ranked applicants in the next tier are awarded the PGS D (\$21,000 per year, tenable in Canada and abroad). The duration of these scholarships¹ is 36 months.

1.2 Postdoctoral fellowships

The Postdoctoral Fellowships (PDF) program provides support to a core of the most promising researchers at a pivotal time in their careers. These fellowships² offer doctoral graduates an opportunity to increase their research experience at an eligible Canadian or foreign institution or research laboratory. The PDF program is also intended to secure a supply of highly qualified Canadians with leading-edge scientific and research skills for Canadian industry, government, and institutions. These fellowships are valued at \$45,000 per year for a duration of 24 months.

2. Membership

2.1 Overview

Expert scientists and engineers from academia, industry, and government form the membership of [13 discipline-based selection committees](#). Members review and score scholarship and fellowship applications assigned to them according to policies and guidelines established by NSERC. For a complete list of members, refer to the NSERC [Selection Committees and Evaluation Groups](#) webpage.

2.2 Selection process

NSERC regularly solicits nominations for members of its selection committees from

¹ The term *Scholarships* refers to both the CGS D and PGS D programs throughout this document.

² The term *Fellowships* refers to the PDF program throughout this document.

institutions, industry, and government within Canada and abroad. Candidates are recruited based on expertise, stature in the research community, experience, and suitability, while taking into account equity, diversity, and inclusion considerations. For more information about the recruitment of members, consult the [Guidelines Governing Membership of Selection Committees](#).

2.3 Term of membership

Membership terms are usually limited to three years and approximately one-third of the membership changes each year. The rotation of members allows for broader representation of institutions, complementary expertise, and vitality of the selection committees. The presence of experienced members on the selection committees promotes consistency and continuity in the selection process and assists in the orientation of new members.

2.4 Roles and responsibilities

2.4.1 Members

Members participate in the review of applications and provide recommendations based on the selection criteria. Specific responsibilities include:

- completing the [Bias in Peer Review](#) training module;
- reading the [Instructions for completing an application](#) for the scholarships and fellowships programs;
- reading NSERC's [Framework on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#);
- participating in orientation meetings and discussions;
- submitting comfort ratings for all applications received;
- reading, scoring, and providing in-depth evaluations for a subset of applications;
- reading, participating in deliberations for, and scoring all applications discussed during the [review meeting](#);
- notifying NSERC staff of research proposals that are outside NSERC's mandate;
- providing feedback to NSERC staff and the chair on policy and procedural issues in preparation for the chairs' meetings;
- recommending potential new members.

2.4.2 Chairs

The selection committee chairs ensure the orderly and complete review of applications and the transmission of recommendations to NSERC. They lead the

selection committee's efforts to maintain the highest quality of evaluation, monitor consistency and equity of approach, and ensure that all important aspects of applications are considered. Chairs play an important oversight role, represent their respective selection committees, and provide policy advice and guidance on the delivery of the program. Chairs also share the roles and responsibilities of members.

2.4.3 Group chair

The group chair is appointed by NSERC to act as a liaison between the 13 selection committees listed on the [Selection Committees and Evaluation Groups](#) webpage and the [Committee on Discovery Research \(CDR\)](#), of which the group chair is a member. CDR is responsible for making policy recommendations to [Council](#) for various NSERC programs, including those related to the training of highly qualified personnel. In this capacity, the group chair acts in the best interest of all selection committees. The group chair is not considered a member of any of the selection committees and does not evaluate or score applications.

2.4.4 NSERC staff

NSERC staff are not members and do not evaluate or score applications. Staff oversee membership, provide advice on NSERC policies, guidelines, and procedures, determine application eligibility, assign applications to members, and help ensure consistency in the review of all applications assigned to a selection committee.

2.5 Orientation sessions and meetings

Throughout their term, members are required to attend virtual orientation sessions and review meetings. Depending on the selection committee and discipline, the frequency, format, and length of these meetings may vary.

2.5.1 Orientation session

At the start of the review process, an orientation session is held for all members. This session provides an overview of the review process and of NSERC's policies and guidelines. It also provides an opportunity for new members to ask questions and for returning members to share best practices and provide advice to new members.

2.5.2 Review meetings

After the initial [scoring](#) of applications, members may be required to participate in a virtual review meeting. During this meeting, a subset of applications is discussed and scored by all members who do not have a [conflict of interest](#).

Members have the opportunity to provide feedback on the review process through a policy discussion at the end of the meeting or by email.

2.5.3 Chairs' meetings

Prior to and after the review process, each selection committee chair and the group chair are invited to participate in a virtual meeting with NSERC staff to discuss policy-related issues. A summary of the major policy issues discussed is made available to [CDR](#).

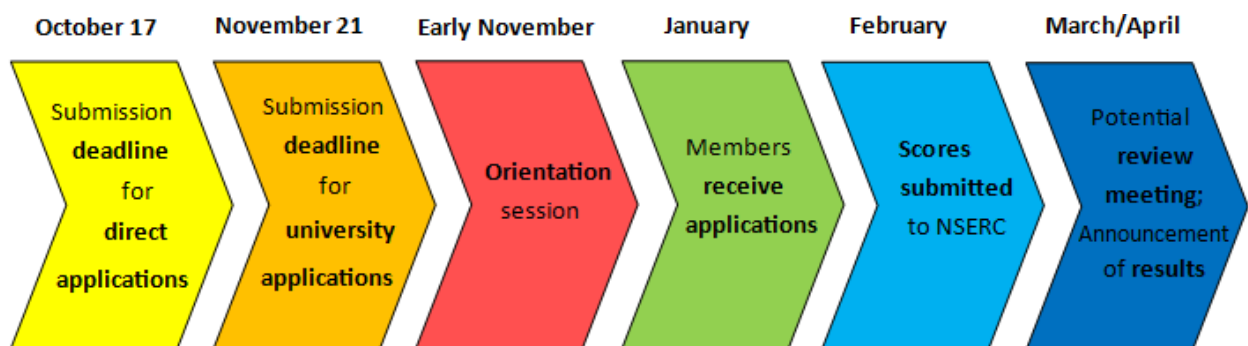
2.6 Time commitment

Participation of experts in the review of scholarship and fellowship applications is crucial to the success of the programs; serving in this capacity involves a significant time commitment. Contributing as a member demands periods of activity that may interfere with normal responsibilities. It is recommended that an appropriate amount of time is set aside for the thorough review of applications.

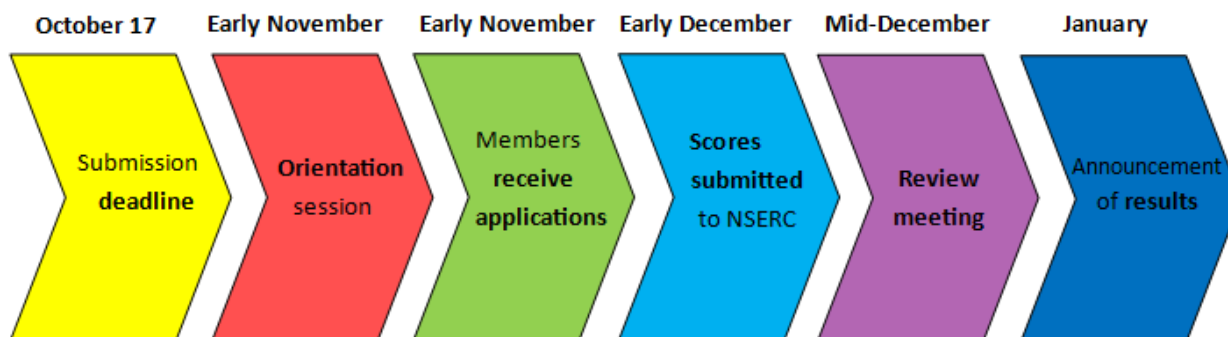
3. Review process

3.1 Process overview

Scholarships



Fellowships



3.2 Receipt of applications

Scholarship applications are submitted to NSERC either through a Canadian institution or directly by the applicant. Each Canadian institution is assigned a quota of applications for the scholarships programs that can be forwarded to NSERC. Fellowship applications are submitted directly to NSERC by the applicant.

3.3 Assignment of applications to selection committees

Scholarship and fellowship applications are reviewed by one of the 13 selection committees listed on the [Selection Committees and Evaluation Groups](#) webpage. Each application is assigned to a selection committee based on the applicant's chosen [research subject code](#). If appropriate, NSERC staff may transfer an application to a different selection committee based on the proposed research. Applicants are notified if their application is transferred. Members should notify NSERC staff if they feel that an application should be reviewed by another selection committee.

3.4 Assignment of applications to members

To assist in the assignment of applications, members are asked to provide individual expertise comfort levels (high, medium, low) and identify conflicts of interest for applications received by their selection committee. The program officer responsible for each selection committee uses this information to assign applications to members, balancing workload while taking into account potential conflicts of interest, language considerations, and members' expertise. Members are responsible for reviewing a subset of the applications; each application is assigned to three members. Given the broad range of topics covered by each selection committee, members may be asked to review applications outside their primary area of expertise. Members should advise NSERC of any potential issues with the assignment of applications as soon as possible.

3.4.1 Conflicts of interest

Members are responsible for declaring any conflicts of interest prior to the review of applications. In the context of scholarship and fellowship applications, NSERC adheres to the following guidelines:

- If an applicant is, has been, or will be under the direct supervision of a member, or if there is a personal link, the member must withdraw from the discussion and scoring. The member may not act as a reviewer for such applications.
- If an applicant is, or will be, in the same department but not working directly with the member, the member must withdraw from the discussion and the scoring. The member may not act as a reviewer for such applications.
- If an applicant is, or will be, at the same institution but in a different department, the member is permitted to participate in the discussion and scoring. The member may act as a reviewer for such applications.

Guidelines of this nature cannot foresee all possible situations, and NSERC relies on the judgement of members. In cases where these guidelines do not clearly describe a situation or where a member has difficulties making a decision about a particular situation, NSERC staff makes the decision.

3.5 Review of applications

The review of applications must be based solely on the information provided in the application. Members are asked not to obtain extra information (such as updates to the publication status of the applicants' research papers) for the applications they are reviewing.

Members are reminded that, according to the [Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement for Review Committee Members, External Reviewers, and Observers](#), they must ensure that all review materials are stored in a secure manner to prevent unauthorized access. When no longer required, review materials must be destroyed in a secure manner.

Members have access to the following documents in a secure electronic environment:

- all scholarship and fellowship applications for the given selection committee;
- scoring spreadsheets for assigned applications;

- blank scoring template³ to assist in reviewing applications;
- scoring instructions and procedures;
- institution grading systems table.

Members should consult the following documents available on the NSERC website:

- [Program Guides for Students and Fellows](#)
- [Instructions for completing an application – Form 201 – Postgraduate Scholarship–Doctoral or Postdoctoral Fellowship](#)
- [Guide for Applicants: Considering equity, diversity, and inclusion in your application](#)

Applicants are expected to follow the instructions set out in these documents. This includes indicating how sex, gender and diversity considerations have been taken into account in their proposed research design, if applicable. Accounting for sex, gender, and diversity makes research more ethically sound, rigorous, and useful. Members' scores should reflect whether the requirements outlined in these documents have been followed.

If any of the information listed above is missing or cannot be accessed, members may contact NSERC staff.

3.6 Selection criteria and indicators

Table 1: Relative weightings of selection criteria illustrates the applicable selection criteria and relative weightings for each program.

Table 1: Relative weightings of selection criteria

| Selection criteria | Weighting % | |
|---|--------------|-------------|
| | Scholarships | Fellowships |
| Research ability and potential | 50 | 70 |
| Relevant experiences and achievements obtained within and beyond academia | 50 | - |
| Communication, interpersonal and leadership abilities | - | 30 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

³ The scoring template is provided only as a tool to help ensure that all selection criteria are taken into account when reviewing applications; NSERC does not collect this information.

Members should refer to [Appendix A](#) and [Appendix B](#) for a summary of selection criteria indicators and respective locations of evidence within the application for each program.

3.6.1 Selection criteria and indicators for scholarship applications

Scholarship applications are evaluated based on the following selection criteria:

- [research ability and potential](#)
- [relevant experiences and achievements obtained within and beyond academia.](#)

Research ability and potential

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

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.

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

Relevant experiences and achievements obtained within and beyond academia

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

Academic record, such as:

- transcripts
- duration of previous studies
- program requirements and courses pursued
- course load
- relative standing in program (if available)

Members should consider the entire academic record when assessing academic excellence. Members should favourably consider situations where an applicant has demonstrated an improving trend or provided an appropriate explanation for their academic record in the Applicant's Statement section of the application. The experience of members plays a key role in this evaluation. It is important to note that members are not expected or required to calculate GPAs manually.

For assistance in interpreting and comparing academic transcripts, members are provided with the Institution Grading Systems Table, which summarizes the undergraduate and graduate grading systems at the various Canadian institutions. This document also shows the approximate conversion to a percentage scale and the maximum and minimum grade attainable.

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

3.6.2 Selection criteria and indicators for fellowship applications

Fellowship applications are evaluated based on the following selection criteria:

- [research ability and potential](#)
- [communication, interpersonal, and leadership abilities.](#)

Research ability and potential

The following elements are examples of what should be considered in the evaluation of research ability and potential:

Research proposal

- specific, well-focused, and realistic statement(s) of objectives
- clear and detailed description of the proposed methodology
- significance and expected contributions to research

Contributions to research and development

- publications, conference presentations and/or proceedings, poster presentations, technical reports, or patents

Members should consider the stage of the applicant's academic career and any relevant research or work experience in the assessment of the contributions to research and development. The assessment must be based on the quality and impact of all contributions, not only on the number of publications or conference presentations. Members must be mindful of the different publication practices in different disciplines. Where publications are prepared in collaboration with other students, postdoctoral fellows or researchers, the applicant should describe their role and involvement in both the research and the preparation of contributions.

Academic training and relevant work experience

- complementarity of the applicant's expertise and the proposed research
- applicant's capacity to undertake the proposed research (technical skills, lab techniques, experience, etc.)

Scholarships and awards

- awards and/or prizes based on research ability and potential

Researcher attributes

- critical thinking, application of knowledge, judgment, originality, initiative, autonomy, and enthusiasm for research

Justification for location of tenure

- appropriateness of the location for the proposed research
- accessibility of necessary equipment and resources

In most circumstances, applicants are not permitted to hold a fellowship at their PhD-granting institution; however, an exception can be requested. The request must be

based on medical reasons (for example, proximity to required health care facilities), family reasons (for example, a spouse's career) or scientific reasons (for example, availability of specialized equipment) that would make it extremely difficult for the applicant to leave a particular institution. Applicants are encouraged to propose an alternate location of tenure in case their request for an exception is not granted by the selection committee. Applicants will not be granted permission to hold the fellowship with their PhD supervisor, even if the PhD supervisor changes research institutions.

If an exception is requested, members must be prepared to discuss the strength of the justification during the review meeting. The selection committee votes on the decision.

Ability to complete projects within an appropriate time period

- if applicable, the applicant's explanation of any [special circumstances](#) must be taken into consideration

Communication, interpersonal, and leadership abilities

The following elements are examples of what should be considered in the evaluation of communication, interpersonal and leadership abilities:

Professional, academic, and extracurricular interactions and collaborations with supervisors, colleagues, peers, students and members of the community

- teaching, mentoring, supervising and/or coaching
- managing projects
- participating in science promotion, science/community outreach, volunteer work and/or civic engagement
- chairing committees and/or organizing conferences and meetings
- participating in departmental or institutional organizations, associations, safety committees, societies and/or clubs
- industrial work experience
- showing leadership and active participation in the area of safety, including laboratory safety

Awards for papers, reports, posters, oral presentations, teaching, and/or volunteer/outreach work

Participation in publication writing

- When publications have been prepared in collaboration with other students, postdoctoral fellows, or researchers, the applicant should describe their role and involvement in both the research and the preparation of contributions.

Quality of presentation of application

- adherence to the [NSERC On-line Presentation and Attachment Standards](#)
- grantsmanship
- proper spelling and grammar

The onus is on the applicant to provide a clear and complete application that demonstrates attention to detail and permits a comprehensive assessment. For applicants whose mother tongue is neither English nor French, members should consider the length of time the applicant has been in Canada.

3.6.3 Additional factors in the review of applications

All applications are reviewed with the same expectations in terms of the quality and potential of the contributions that have been, or will be, produced or undertaken. Some additional factors that may influence the review of any or all of the selection criteria are detailed below.

Work experience

In some instances, an applicant may return to an institution for graduate studies after obtaining work experience. Members should place an increased emphasis on relevant work experience and a decreased emphasis on academic record in these situations. The number of years of work experience should be factored into the evaluation of academic excellence.

International studies

If an applicant has completed previous studies at an institution outside of Canada and is applying through a Canadian institution, the institution may provide NSERC with a supporting statement describing the applicant's academic strength and the foreign institution's reputation. This additional information is provided to assist members in evaluating academic excellence.

Subject matter eligibility

NSERC supports research whose major challenges lie in the Natural Sciences and Engineering (NSE), other than the health sciences. Research primarily in the NSE that advances NSE knowledge is eligible for NSERC support, even if it may have potential future applications in human health—such as diagnosis or treatment. Proposals that include the use of methodologies, tools, techniques, and knowledge from the NSE are not automatically considered eligible. Members who have doubts as to whether the research proposed is eligible for support by NSERC should review the application on the same basis as all others, but should alert NSERC staff to the potential problem(s)

as soon as possible. For more information, members can consult the following documents:

- [Selecting the Appropriate Federal Granting Agency](#)
- [Addendum to the guidelines for the eligibility of applications related to health](#)
- [Eligibility Criteria for Students and Fellows](#)

Final decisions on subject matter eligibility are the responsibility of NSERC staff. Applicants whose proposals are deemed ineligible by NSERC staff are informed in writing.

Implicit or unconscious biases

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. To assist members in recognizing potential bias, all members are asked to complete the [Bias in Peer Review](#) online learning module. Members are also encouraged to complete one of the [Sex and Gender](#) training modules produced by CIHR.

NSERC is actively engaged in increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion practices in its review processes, enhancing the integrity of the selection process and ensuring access to the largest pool of qualified participants, including all under-represented and disadvantaged groups. For reference, see NSERC's [Framework on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) and available resources such as [Strengthening Canada's Research Capacity: The Gender Dimension](#) and [NSERC 2020: A Strategic Plan](#).

NSERC strongly encourages the use of inclusive language (for example, "the applicant" or "they" instead of "he/she"). Any discussions should be free from words or sentences that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped or discriminatory language of particular people, groups or their institution. Use of inclusive language has been shown to decrease unconscious bias during the review process. For further information on unconscious bias, consult the Department for Women and Gender Equality's [Unconscious Bias – Additional Resources](#) webpage (formerly Status of Women Canada).

Special circumstances

Members must consider any special circumstances that have had an effect on the

performance and/or productivity of the applicant. This includes delays in disseminating research results due to 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 (that is, excluding the period of special circumstances).

Applications in engineering and applied sciences

Research in engineering can involve the creation of fundamental new knowledge; novel design or innovative approaches to improve existing processes, products and services; or major improvements in performance. The same is often true for research in the applied sciences. The indicators of excellence and contributions to research in engineering and the applied sciences reflect the different nature of that research and may be significantly different from those in the natural sciences. Specific guidelines have been issued by NSERC for use in reviewing applications in these areas. For additional information, consult the [Guidelines for the Preparation and Review of Applications in Engineering and the Applied Sciences](#).

3.7 Scoring applications

Note: These processes may differ for some selection committees as different initiatives are piloted; members will be informed if this is the case for their selection committee.

3.7.1 Initial scoring

Members provide an initial score between 1 and 100 (where 100 is the highest possible score) for each selection criterion for their assigned applications. Members should not apply weighting factors to their scores, as these are applied by NSERC. For each selection criterion, members must place 20% of their assigned applications into each of the following quartiles: 1–25, 26–50, 51–75 and 76–100. The remaining 20% of their assigned applications can be placed into any quartile. It is very important that members use the full range of scores and that they be consistent in their scoring of applications.

Applications are scored relative to the other applications on each member's assigned list. For this reason, scores placed in the lower quartiles may not be indicative of poor quality. Instead, they may represent a worthy application within a group of exceptional applications.

3.7.2 Compilation of scores

Once the three reviewers' initial scores have been returned to NSERC, they are compiled and the applications are ranked accordingly. The three reviewers' scores are averaged and a ranked list is produced. Large discrepancies and applications around the funding cut-off line may be discussed at a [review meeting](#). For larger selection committees, a subset of top-ranked applications may be pre-awarded without being discussed. Applications that have been flagged by members or NSERC staff, for any reason, may also be discussed by the selection committee during this meeting.

3.7.3 Scoring applications at the review meeting

Top-ranked fellowship applications are discussed at the fellowships review meeting. Scholarship applications surrounding the funding cut-off line may be discussed at a review meeting, if necessary. All members meet virtually to discuss the applications that are brought forward to the review meeting. Before the meeting, NSERC staff provides members with a list of the applications to be discussed. All members must read these applications prior to the meeting, as they are expected to discuss and provide a score for each one.

With the exception of members with a conflict of interest, the entire selection committee is present for the discussion of each application. The first reviewer assigned to the application summarizes its strengths and weaknesses. Following this assessment, the second and third reviewers highlight areas of agreement or disagreement with the first reviewer's analysis. Comments or questions may be raised by the other members and a general discussion follows as required. After the discussion, each member confidentially provides a score for each selection criterion.

3.7.4 Final scores

NSERC applies the relative weighting for each selection criterion and calculates the final score for each application based on the three reviewers' scores or the scores allocated by the entire selection committee, depending on whether or not the application was discussed at the review meeting. Based on these scores, a final ranked list is produced. The final ranked list consists of up to three parts: pre-awarded applications, applications discussed at the meeting, and those neither pre-awarded nor discussed.

3.7.5 Collection of self-identification data

Equity, diversity, and inclusion strengthen research communities and the quality,

social relevance, and impact of research. Self-identification data provides information on the diversity of the population applying for and receiving agency funds. This data is important for monitoring the fairness of our programs and informing future measures to increase equity, diversity, and inclusion among all those involved in the research enterprise.

Self-identification data is collected as part of the application process and is not seen or used neither by NSERC's selection committee members nor by the applicant's references. Institutions are permitted to recommend an unlimited number of self-identified Indigenous applicants to the PGS D program above their application quota. In order to be considered for this, Indigenous applicants must provide consent in the application form to share this information with their institutions and NSERC.

NSERC may increase equity and diversity among qualified applicants by giving award priority to meritorious applicants who self-identify as Indigenous and/or as a woman if sufficient funds become available. Information on gender and linguistic capabilities may also be used by NSERC staff to identify prospective reviewers.

3.8 Communication of results

Scholarship and fellowship applicants are notified of their results in April and January, respectively.

The selection committee's final score on each selection criterion for an individual application is made available to the applicant. This provides feedback to the applicant on the relative strengths and weaknesses of their application. Due to the large number of applications received, members do not provide written comments.

4. Legal and ethical information

4.1 Confidentiality of application material

Members appointed to the selection committee are asked to read and sign the [Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality for Review Committee Members, External Reviewers, and Observers](#), describing NSERC's expectations and requirements.

All application material (electronic copies of applications, print-outs, notes, etc.) is provided to members in confidence and must be used for review purposes only. Such material must be kept in a secure place, not accessible to colleagues or students. In addition, material that the member no longer requires must be destroyed in a secure manner (that is, shredding). All personal notes and documents must be securely

destroyed at the conclusion of the review process. All applications and documentation provided to members electronically must be deleted. If NSERC requires assistance in providing additional information for particular cases after the review process, new copies of relevant material will be provided.

4.2 Confidentiality of recommendations

All funding recommendations are subject to approval by NSERC. Outcomes may be changed for reasons such as budget, administrative error or lack of full adherence to NSERC policies.

All matters discussed during the fellowships review meeting are confidential and must not be divulged to others. Notifying applicants of the results of deliberations is the responsibility of NSERC staff, following official approval. Results must not be disclosed by members. If approached by an applicant or other individual concerning a decision or any other matter, members must decline discussion and refer the person to NSERC. Staff will act as the liaison between the selection committees and the applicant.

4.3 *Privacy Act and Access to Information Act*

NSERC must adhere to the [Privacy Act](#). Personal information provided by applicants must be used only for the purpose of assessing applications and making funding decisions. The use or disclosure of such information for any other purpose is forbidden.

The information collected for this purpose must be collected directly from the individual. It may be collected from other sources only as part of the formal review process. For this reason, members must not use or consider information about an applicant that has been obtained in any other way (for example, by a member by virtue of their involvement in other activities).

Members are not asked to submit written comments to NSERC about an applicant or application. As per the [Access to Information Act](#), applicants have a right to access information about themselves that is held by NSERC. A written opinion of a reference about an application (for example, Report on the Applicant) is available to the applicant; the name of the reference is not.

[Lists of members](#) are published regularly by NSERC on its website.

4.4 Official Languages Act

NSERC, like all other federal institutions, has a key role to play in the implementation of the [Official Languages Act](#). NSERC has an obligation to ensure that the public can communicate with, and receive services from, the agency in either official language.

Selection committees must ensure that all applications receive a full and detailed review, regardless of the official language of presentation. On occasion, this may entail consultation with NSERC staff to identify members with adequate linguistic capability.

4.5 Other considerations

Applicants must adhere to a number of [requirements for certain types of research](#), all of which are available on the NSERC webpage.

Reviewers must alert NSERC to any potential concerns or problems related to the above items that are observed in information sessions or during the review process. Here are some examples:

- Inadequate sensitivity to the potential concerns of human subjects and/or inadequate provisions for the participation of human subjects in experiments, as required by the [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans](#).
- Use of animals in experiments when the significance of the proposed research does not appear to justify either the use of animal subjects or the proposed experimental protocol inclusion of controlled information in an application.
- Inadequate training of graduate students in the handling of hazardous chemicals or biological substances.
- Potentially harmful effects on the environment, or an inaccurate or incomplete assessment of these effects.
- Research that involves the use of human pluripotent stem cells where the applicant has checked the “Yes” on their application.

Concerns should be presented to NSERC staff to determine whether there is a means of resolving any apparent problems quickly, or whether the awarding of a scholarship or fellowship should be delayed pending resolution of the problem.

4.5.1 Responsible conduct of research

Canada’s federal granting agencies—the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Social

Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada—are committed to fostering and maintaining an environment that supports and promotes the responsible conduct of research. The [Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research](#) sets out the responsibilities and corresponding policies for researchers, institutions, and the agencies that together help support and promote a positive research environment.

4.5.2 Member concerns about the responsible conduct of research

The agencies expect the highest standards of integrity in the research that they fund and in the review process they manage. The electronic submission of an application to the agencies commits the applicant(s) to a number of principles, including compliance with the [Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research](#). Should members identify, during the review process, any apparent lack of integrity (for example, possible misrepresentation in an agency application or related document; providing incomplete, inaccurate or false information in a grant or award application or related document), they should bring their concerns to the attention of agency staff at the earliest opportunity. The agency will then refer any allegations to the Secretariat on responsible conduct of research for follow-up. Such allegations should not be a consideration during the review process, nor should they be part of the selection committee's discussions.

Members who raise concerns should rest assured that the matter will be addressed by the Secretariat in accordance with the [Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research](#); however, members will not be privy to the outcome of the matter, as the findings are confidential and no personal information is shared.

4.5.3 Member responsibilities in regard to the responsible conduct of research

Members of an NSERC selection committee who find themselves in the position of having to respond to formal allegations concerning the responsible conduct of research will not participate in the work of the selection committee while an investigation is underway.

In addition, members should notify the agencies of any conflict of interest—financial or otherwise—that might influence the agencies' decision on what applications the members can review. Members and reviewers are responsible for respecting the confidentiality of application material and for declaring conflicts of interest. Should members become aware of a situation that violates the integrity of the review process, they should discuss this immediately with agency staff.

Appendix A: Selection criteria and indicators for scholarship applications

Note: Members must consider any [special circumstances](#) that have had an effect on the performance and/or productivity of the applicant.

| Selection criteria (weighting %) | Indicators | Evidence |
|--|--|--|
| Research ability and potential (50%) | Quality of research proposal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of proposed research |
| | Relevant training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic, research and other relevant work experience |
| | Research experience and achievements relative to the applicant's stage of study, lived experience, and knowledge systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships and other awards offered • Thesis most recently completed or in progress |
| | 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. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions and statements – Part I, II and III • Reports on the applicant |
| | Demonstration of sound judgment and ability to think critically | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships and other awards offered • Thesis most recently completed or in progress • Outline of proposed research • Contributions and statements – Part II and III • Reports on the applicant |
| | 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 | |

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|---|---|---|
| | The ability or potential to communicate theoretical, technical and/or scientific concepts clearly and logically in written and oral formats | |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Relevant experience and achievements obtained within and beyond academia</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(50%)</p> | Scholarships, awards, and distinctions (amount, duration, and prestige) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships and other awards offered • Reports on the applicant |
| | Academic record | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institution transcripts • Reports on the applicant • Academic background |
| | Professional, academic, and extracurricular activities, as well as collaborations with supervisors, colleagues, peers, students, and members of the community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic, research and other relevant work experience • Scholarships and other awards offered • Contributions and statements – Part I, II and III • Reports on the applicant |

Appendix B: Selection criteria and indicators for fellowship applications

Note: Members must consider any [special circumstances](#) that have had an effect on the performance and/or productivity of the applicant.

| Selection criteria (weighting %) | Indicators | Evidence |
|--|---|---|
| Research ability and potential (70%) | Research proposal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of proposed research |
| | Contributions to research and development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thesis most recently completed or in progress • Contributions and statements – Part I, II and III • Reports on the applicant |
| | Academic training and relevant work experience | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic, research and other relevant work experience • Contributions and statements – Part III, applicant’s statement • Reports on the applicant |
| | Scholarships and awards | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships and other awards offered |
| | Researcher attributes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions and statements – Part III, applicant’s statement • Reports on the applicant • Outline of proposed research |
| | Justification for location of tenure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justification for location of tenure |
| | Ability to complete projects within an appropriate time period | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic background • Thesis most recently completed or in progress • Reports on the applicant |
| Communication, interpersonal, and leadership abilities (30%) | Professional, academic and extracurricular interactions and collaborations with supervisors, colleagues, peers, students and members of the community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic, research and other relevant work experience • Contributions and statements – Part III, applicant’s statement • Reports on the applicant |
| | Awards for papers, reports, posters, oral presentations, teaching, and/or | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships and other awards offered (for example, best paper award at a conference) |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | volunteer/outreach work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on the applicant |
| | Participation in publication writing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions and statements – Part II, most significant contributions to research and development • Reports on the applicant |
| | Quality of presentation of application | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of proposed research • Contributions and statements – Part III, applicant’s statement • Justification for location of tenure |