



Executive Summary

The objectives of this assessment were:

- To assess the policies, procedures and practices used for activities related to award monitoring (grants and scholarships for researchers and universities), including review visits.
- To assess the usefulness of award monitoring to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the perceived usefulness to the universities.

Policies, procedures and practices used for activities related to the award monitoring

In our opinion, the policies, procedures and practices used for activities related to award monitoring are satisfactory as they allow NSERC and SSHRC (the Councils) to adequately assess the soundness of control frameworks put in place by universities in their management of research grants as trustees of the Councils. We have segregated our observations between good practices and areas offering opportunities for improvement, for which we provide recommendations.

A number of good practices have been identified. The most significant are:

- other tasks performed by the Financial Monitoring Team (FMT) allow them to maintain contact with universities and to make their job more interesting;
- binder with background information pertaining to universities;
- notification of upcoming visits to NSERC/SSHRC employees; and
- good interconnection between award monitoring and the NSERC and SSHRC Web sites.

The following areas for improvement, with recommendations, have been identified:

- policies and procedures on review visits, investigations and follow-up of review reports need to be more formalized;
- incomplete documentation and paper trails of review files;
- high turnover of the Financial Monitoring Team; and
- joint visits with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), although manageable, do not always work adequately.

Usefulness of award monitoring to the Councils and the universities

Although there is no doubt that award monitoring activities present positive outputs for the Councils and the universities, the communication of information obtained through these activities still needs improvement before these activities reach their full potential. We provide examples of good practices and areas for improvement with recommendations.



We have identified a number of good practices. The most significant are:

- good communication between the FMT and universities during the review process;
- opportunities for feedback and benchmarking provided to universities;
- professionalism of FMT staff; and
- exchanges of useful information between the FMT and Award Administration.

We have identified the following areas for improvement, with recommendations:

- some sections or aspects of review reports need modification or clarification;
- perceived discrepancy between the tone used at the debriefing in comparison to the content of the review report;
- late issuance of final review reports; and
- opportunities for sharing more information obtained through review visits with other groups within NSERC and SSHRC.