

Graduate External Scholarship Selection Working Group – Interim Report

Introduction

The university has an allocation of over 40 scholarships across a number of federal and provincial scholarship programs to be held at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (the university). In addition, there are some scholarship competitions where selection is required in order to nominate an applicant(s) to a centrally adjudicated competition (ie, Tri-Agency doctoral awards).

Each of these scholarship competitions requires an internal selection process in order to review and assess applications that demonstrate the scholarship program criteria. A table of scholarship competitions can be found in [Appendix A: Summary of External Awards](#).

Current situation

In 2018, the working group was assembled to review the internal selection process for a number of external scholarships, particularly the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) selection process. The current process for selection was put into place in 2011 and has proven volume intensive as the number of scholarship applications has increased. With the OGS eligibility spanning multiple programs and disciplines, the University Selection Committee (USC) recommended finding a more efficient and effective way to review and make decisions on application files.

The working group membership and scope can be found in [Appendix B: Terms of Reference](#).

Review of best practices

The committee reviewed practices around the OGS competition at other universities, but found the information limited and the results varied. Larger universities have larger quotas and often distribute their quota to individual programs. Smaller universities were more likely to mirror our current practice, where programs are awarded a quota and the remainder are decided through a USC. Common practice was to use the Tri-agency selection criteria for master's and doctoral in order to assess applications.

Challenges with current processes

The committee identified the following challenges:

- Competition timelines run too far into the spring and may have an impact on acceptances of offers of admission. This could be addressed by finding efficiencies in the review and selection process.
- Committee members felt they did not have the discipline background, knowledge and expertise to rank application files in other Faculties or programs, which would lead to lengthy discussions or rankings not reflective of success in that discipline.
- The volume of OGS applications for review (upwards of 70 eligible applications), is onerous and time-consuming.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations from the working group:

1. Revise the current format of the Academic Assessment Report (Completed)

The committee wanted to ensure the Letters of Reference for the OGS competition addressed the Tri-agency criteria, included more meaningful scoring and provided the direction to justify the score. This would help provide the referee with better guidance, as well as the FSC and USC committees with clearer feedback.

The Academic Assessment Report was revised and automated for Fall 2018, with a separate online form for [master's](#) and [doctoral](#). For a sample of the new form, see [Appendix C: Academic Assessment/Letter of Reference](#).

2. Maintain the current USC format for the OGS competition, with the following changes:

a. Establish the USC earlier in the competition process

This would ensure that scheduling delays do not impact assessment of applications, ensure adequate orientation of USC members prior to the review and assessment of files, and determine strategic direction of the committee (see recommendation 2.b).

b. Establish discipline-specific sub-committees (ie, CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC).

In order to address volume of work on USC members, as well as ensure that applications are reviewed by individuals with expertise in the discipline, the working group recommended that the USC review the overall application pool and establish discipline-specific sub-committees with adequate representation.

c. Encourage multi-year terms for USC committee members.

In order to ensure adequate training and continuity of process, the working group recommended that there be a standing USC committee with multi-year membership. These members would be trained and experienced and may serve on multiple scholarship committees throughout the academic year.

3. Implement a Selection Committee Ranking Forms

The Faculty Selection Committee (FSC) would be asked to complete the FSC Ranking Form. This would provide a summary of the applicant's merits, as well as ensuring consistency in the scoring and justification of the ranked applicants in each Faculty. Members of the USC felt there was not sufficient guidance to the FSC or information from the FSC around the decisions. The proposed FSC Ranking Form can be found in Appendix B.

In addition, the members of the discipline-specific sub-committees will be required to complete a USC Ranking Form to justify the ranking and score for review by the USC.

4. Modify the OGS Internal Selection Guidelines to address the proposed changes.

In order to implement some changes for the current competitions, the working group recommended making modifications to the current internal guidelines, recognizing that the committee would need to review the effectiveness of these changes in the coming year. These changes are noted in [Appendix E: DRAFT OGS and QEII-GSST Internal Selection Guidelines](#).

Conclusion

There were a number of solutions and recommendations discussed, however, the committee recognized that it is important to choose a few key recommendations to put forward and execute on a trial basis. The committee would then revisit the changes and discuss other process improvements following the completion of this year's OGS selection process.

Scholarship	M	PhD	Quota	Value	Source
Ontario Graduate Scholarship	x	x	22	15,000	MAESD + Donor
Queen Elizabeth II (GSST)	x	x	6	15,000	MAESD + Donor
Ontario Graduate Fellowship	x	x	2	12,000	Interest from endowed funds
Ontario Trillium Scholarship		x	2	40,000	MAESD + Donor + Faculty
Canada Graduate Scholarship (CGS-M) CIHR	x		1	17,500	Tri-Agency
Canada Graduate Scholarship (CGS-M) NSERC	x		4	17,500	Tri-Agency
Canada Graduate Scholarship (CGS-M) SSHRC	x		4	17,500	Tri-Agency
Canada Graduate Scholarship (CGS-D/Fellowship) SSHRC		x	3	20,000	Tri-Agency
		x		35,000	Tri-Agency
Canada Graduate Scholarship (CGS-D/PGS-D) NSERC		x	2	21,000	Tri-Agency
		x		35,000	Tri-Agency
Canada Graduate Scholarships Doctoral Awards (CGS-D)* (CIHR)		x	N/A	35,000	Tri-Agency
Foreign Study Supplement				6,000	Tri-Agency
Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship (NSERC & SSHRC)		x	2	50,000	Tri-Agency

Graduate External Scholarship Selection Working Group (GESSWG) Terms of Reference

Members

Aziz Douai, Assistant Dean, Graduate Experiential Learning (Chair)
Andra Drinkwalter, Manager, Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
Kurshid Dain, Graduate Finance Coordinator

Faculty representatives

Shahram Heydari, Faculty of Business and Information Technology
Shahryar Rahnamayan, Faculty of Engineering and Applied Sciences
Bernadette Murphy, Faculty of Health Sciences
Chris O'Connor, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

Terms of Reference

Membership

The GESSWG will consist of representatives from each of the Tri-agency disciplines. Representative will be nominated by the Faculty dean. The working group will be Chaired by the Dean of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies or designate. The Manager, Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs and the Graduate Finance Coordinator will act as a resource for the working group.

Role of the Committee

The GESSWG will review the existing internal and external guidelines for the Tri-Agency and MTCU scholarships at the master's and doctoral levels and provide a recommendation to the September 2018 meeting of the Graduate Studies Committee for modifications to the internal selection guidelines/process. The GESSWG will:

- Identify and assess practices at other universities
- Review current guidelines/practices to identify challenges and opportunities, including how selection committees are assembled and specific assessment criteria
- Explore options for distribution of OGS award quotas: program enrolment-based vs. merit based

- Develop assessment metrics for Faculty Selection and University Selection Committees, including identifying criteria that demonstrates student success in specific disciplines
- Develop criteria for assessing non-standard scholarship applications (ie, to address the MAESDs approach to Indigenous applications and/or “special circumstances” statements identified by scholarship applicants
- Determine scope of USC authority. Can they override FSC decision such as: new information about the candidate; plagiarism or fraudulent information in the application; or a candidate being deemed not meritorious or worthy for other reasons as deemed by the committee.

Below is a sample of a test Academic Assessment/Letter of Reference

Referee information

Your name	test test
Your email address	andrea.brown@uoit.ca
University/institution	test
Position you currently hold	test

Candidate information

Student's name	test test
Student's UOIT student number (if known)	123456789
Student's master's program at UOIT	Applied Bioscience (MSc)
Number of months that the referee has known the candidate	test
Capacity in which the referee has known the candidate	test

Academic Excellence

Academic record / Scholarships and awards / Competitive awards and/or prizes based on academic excellence / Duration of previous studies / Type of courses pursued / Course load / Relative standing (if available)

Score (out of 50)	44
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Rationale of ranking

test

Research potential

As demonstrated by the applicant's research history/their interest in discovery/the proposed research, its potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field/any anticipated outcomes.

Examples of indicators of research potential include, but are not limited to 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; Judgment and ability to think critically; ability to apply skills and knowledge; initiative and autonomy; and research experience and achievements relative to expectations of someone with the candidate's academic experience.

Score (out of 30)	22
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Rationale of ranking

test

Personal characteristics and interpersonal skills

As demonstrated by the applicant's past professional and relevant extracurricular interactions and collaborations.

Examples of indicators of personal characteristics and interpersonal skills may include, but are not limited to work experience; leadership experience and project management including organizing conferences and meetings.

Score (out of 20)	12
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Rationale of ranking

test

TOTAL SCORE (OUT OF 100)	40
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FACULTY/UNIVERSITY SELECTION COMMITTEE RANKING SHEET

NAME:
OVERALL SCORE

ID

WEIGHTINGS:

Academic excellence (30%)

Research ability or potential (50%)

Communication, interpersonal, and leadership abilities (20%)

CRITERION	SCORE	RATIONALE
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE		
RESEARCH POTENTIAL		
LEADERSHIP (POTENTIAL AND DEMONSTRATED ABILITY)		

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES (IF APPLICABLE)		
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Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) and Queen Elizabeth II – Graduate Scholarship in Science and Technology (QEII-GSST) - Internal Guidelines

Purpose

This document outlines the procedures for selection of recipients of the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) and Queen Elizabeth II Graduate Scholarship in Science and Technology (QEII-GSST) to be held at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology. This document ensures compliance with the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities scholarship guidelines. These procedures are maintained by the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies and are approved by the Graduate Studies Committee. The OGS is a merit-based scholarship that should be awarded to the highest-achieving students.

Value, Duration and Quota

The value of the awards are \$5,000 per term for a minimum of two terms and a maximum of three terms. The total award is normally valued at \$15,000. Students must re-apply each year. UOIT has a quota of 22 Ontario Graduate Scholarships and 6 Queen Elizabeth II-GSST for the 2017-18 academic year. Of these, only one can be awarded to an international student and up to two can be awarded to Indigenous applicants. According to the OGS/QEII guidelines, this quota will be re-calculated annually according to a formula based on enrolments.

Eligibility and GPA Requirements

As in previous year, SGPS will assess applications for completeness and eligibility in accordance with the OGS/QEII Program Guidelines from the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

Eligibility

In order to be considered for an OGS, students must be:

- A Canadian citizen, Permanent Resident, or Protected Person [under subsection 95(2) of the Immigration and Refugee Protections Act (Canada)] at the time of the OGS application deadline date.
- Enrolled at a publicly-assisted university in Ontario in a full-time program of study that leads to a graduate degree and is approved for operating grant purposes by the ministry; and
- Enrolled in 60% or more of a full course load as defined by the university, or 40% or more for students with permanent disabilities
- Within their standard program length (normally two years of full-time study (or equivalent) for a master's student and four years full-time study (or equivalent) for a doctoral student

- In addition, to be considered for a QEII-GSST award, a student must be enrolled in a research master's or doctoral program in a science and technology discipline (See Appendix One for a list of eligible science and technology disciplines)

International Students

International students who are studying in Ontario with a student study permit under, under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada) are eligible for the allotted OGS international student awards. However, they are ineligible for QEII-GSST awards.

Indigenous Students

Each University may allocate up to 2 OGS awards to indigenous graduate students. The university will make its best effort to allocate these awards to qualified indigenous students. However, if the institution is unable to provide the award(s) to indigenous students, it may allocate the award(s) to qualified domestic students.

For the purposes of the scholarship, an indigenous person is a person who self- identifies as a First Nations (Status/Non-Status), Métis, or Inuit.

GPA Requirements

The Graduate Admissions and Registration Officer(s) will perform GPA calculations according to existing OGS guidelines, included below for information.

The applicant must, at minimum, meet the following OGS academic requirements:

- Students entering the first or second year of graduate studies at the time of the application deadline: *must have achieved a first-class average, as determined by the host institution, in each of the last two completed years of study (full-time equivalent).*
- Students entering the third year or beyond of graduate studies at the time of the application deadline: must have an overall average of at least A- (or equivalent) on all graduate courses completed.
- If master's or doctoral degree marks used for calculating an applicant's grade point average (GPA) are not available (for example, courses were graded on a pass-fail basis), then the university's Graduate Studies Office will use the most recently available undergraduate or graduate marks to calculate a student's GPA.

Please note, that where a student has been enrolled in the Bachelor of Education concurrent or consecutive programs, these courses will not be included in the GPA calculations as these are not evaluated for admission to a graduate program and are not equivalent to honours bachelor's degree studies.

Application Process

Applications will be made available no later than October each year.

Current UOIT graduate students or interested students with an application for admissions to UOIT will submit their complete OGS application to SGPS no later than December 1 each year.

Plagiarism

Applications that are determined not to be an applicant's original work will be removed from the competition.

Selection process

Faculty selection committee (FSC)

Where there is more than one applicant from a Faculty, each Faculty will coordinate a (FSC) and, using the criteria provided in appendix B, provide SGPS with a ranked list. The FSC should include comments on the merits of their top-ranked applicant files and provide the USC with any discipline-specific notes for consideration. For example, publications in SSHRC discipline or Computer Science are less common than conference presentations.

The committee that reviews the applications and determines the overall ranks must consist of a minimum of three faculty members.

Computer Science will have its own review and ranking committee.

Each research program has received a quota of one (1). The students ranked 1 from each program with a quota will automatically be awarded an OGS (program quota). After the program quotas are filled, the University Selection Committee will perform the central adjudication.

Each member of the FSC should complete the FSC Ranking Form, and a consolidated Ranking Form should be provided for each of the applicants.

The university selection committee (USC) will make the final determination on the nominees.

University selection Committee (USC)

The university selection committee will consist of a representative from each faculty selection committee. A non-voting chair for this committee will be appointed by the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies. The chair's role will be purely procedural. The chair can be from a general discipline area outside of the applicant pool. In order to ensure applications are reviewed by individual with expertise in each discipline (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC), the USC will delegate the review of applications to discipline-specific sub-committees. The chair will ensure, where possible, that the discipline specific committees will have adequate representation from each Faculty and/or program (where appropriate). The USC may also choose to elect first and second reader on applications within the discipline-specific committees.

The USC Ranking Form will be completed for each applicant by the discipline-specific committee. Should information become available to the USC regarding an applicant not being meritorious, the USC may override an FSC decision.

~~SGPS will consolidate the FSC rankings into one spreadsheet, by grouping all applicants ranked 1 into group A, all applicants ranked 2 into group B, and so on until all applicants have been grouped.~~

~~Each member of the USC will review and rank all application files, FSC rankings and comments in detail, using the criteria and weightings in **Appendix A**. The rankings should be submitted to SGPS in advance of the scheduled USC meeting. USC members may be asked to rank applicants within each group (Group A, Group B, etc.) and/or rank all application files from 1—xx.~~

~~At the meeting, the USC will discuss the committee member rankings and provide a final ranking of all applicants, following the standard scholarship ranking process outlined below:~~

- ~~● Step 1: Group A students are compared, and a student is selected amongst this cohort to move forward in the ranking. This leaves a vacancy in Group A.~~
- ~~● Step 2: Group B cohort students are compared, and a student is selected to move forward to Group A.~~
- ~~● Step 3: Group C cohort students are compared, and a student is selected to move forward to Group B.~~
- ~~● Step 4: Group D cohort students are compared, and a student is selected to move forward to Group C.~~

~~Now that all groups have been considered and repopulated from top to bottom, the Step 1 selection process continues. Where possible, the university selection committee will attempt to distribute the awards evenly across disciplines. Using this process, a waitlist will be established should an applicant decline the award or be unable to hold it for other reasons.~~

Waitlist

The top 20 applicants will be ranked to ensure that if an applicant declines an OGS there is an available candidate. In addition, eligible students without an OGS on the ranked list would be offered a QEII-GSST or may be considered for other scholarship opportunities. Individuals on the waitlist will automatically be considered for an Ontario Graduate Fellowship, as per the OGFF Internal Guidelines.

Consideration for gender equity and diversity:

The OGS selection process will keep in mind the NSERC Framework on Gender Equity and Diversity that builds on the premise that excellence in research is achieved through inclusiveness and gender diversity. While committee members play a critical role in the selection process and should endorse only the highest-calibre candidates, equity and diversity must be considered at all levels of the selection/recruitment, endorsement and review processes.

Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

All aspects of the university scholarship competitions are confidential, including applicant names, application content, GPA calculations, committee discussion and committee decisions, and must not be shared with the application or other university community members not directly involved in the review process.

During the FSC and USC processes, professors with conflicts will clearly identify the conflict and will excuse themselves from discussion and rankings on individual files as needed.

Special circumstances

Applicants that may not meet the minimum eligibility and who identify special circumstances will be highlighted and forwarded to the FSC and/or USC.

Competition Results

The proposed timing of the OGS competition will allow results to be released in April as part of a more attractive funding package that includes the OGS. This will ensure that we are able to attract and retain high-quality students and allow researchers to plan accordingly.

The results of the competition will be communicated to Deans and program directors, as well as student supervisors.

OGS Selection Criteria

Removed previous chart. New chart based on Tri-agency. Applications should be assessed based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria – Master’s Level Awards

Criteria	Examples	Weight
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE	As demonstrated by past academic results, transcripts, awards and distinctions Academic record (first class average) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships and awards held • Duration of previous studies • Type of program and courses pursued • Course load • Relative standing (if available) 	50
RESEARCH POTENTIAL	As demonstrated by the applicant’s research history / their interest in discovery / the proposed research, its potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field / any anticipated outcomes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Judgment 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 	30
PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	As demonstrated by the applicant’s past professional and relevant extracurricular interactions and collaborations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work experience • Leadership experience • Project management including organizing conferences and meetings • The ability or potential to communicate theoretical, technical and/or scientific concepts clearly and logically in written and oral formats • Involvement in academic life • Volunteerism/community outreach 	20

Evaluation Criteria – Doctoral Level Awards

Criteria	Examples	Weight
ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic record • Scholarships and awards • Competitive awards and/or prizes based on academic excellence. • Work experience. • International Studies. 	30
RESEARCH POTENTIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significance, feasibility and merit of research proposal. • Contributions to research and development (publications, conference presentations and/or proceedings, poster presentations, technical reports, or patents). • Academic training and relevant work experience. • Scholarships and awards. • Researcher attributes (critical thinking, application of knowledge, judgment, originality, initiative, autonomy, and enthusiasm for research). • Ability to complete projects within an appropriate time period (if applicable, the applicant's explanation of any special circumstances must be taken into consideration) 	50
PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional, academic, and extracurricular interactions and collaborations with supervisors, colleagues, peers, students, and members of the community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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, societies, and/or clubs; - industrial work experience. • Awards for papers, reports, posters, oral presentations, teaching, and/or volunteer/outreach work. • Participation in publication writing. 	20

Eligible disciplines for QEII-GSST (Excerpt from MAEDS guidelines)

The QEII-GSST program supports graduate students enrolled in research master's and doctoral programs in science and technology disciplines. Collaboration, inter-disciplinary study, and innovation are encouraged. The following are the eligible disciplines:

1. Applied Sciences:

- Aerospace (may include Aeronautical Engineering)
- Biomedical Engineering
- Chemical Engineering
- Civil Engineering and Architecture (may include Landscape Architecture)
- Computer Engineering
- Electrical Engineering
- Engineering Science (may include Engineering, Engineering Physics, and Nuclear Engineering)
- Mechanical Engineering
- Mining, Metallurgy, and Materials Science (may include Metallurgical Engineering)
- Systems and Industrial Engineering (may include Systems/Design Engineering and Operational Research)

2. Biological and Life Sciences:

- Biochemistry and Biophysics (may include Medical Biophysics)
- Environmental Sciences (may include Agriculture, Ecology, Forestry, and Toxicology)
- General Biological Sciences (may include Biology, Botany, Entomology, Microbiology, Mycology, Plant and Animal Biology, and Zoology)
- Genetics, Cell, and Molecular Biology
- General Health Science (may include research-oriented programs in Epidemiology, Human Kinetics, Hygiene, Nutrition, and Rehabilitation disciplines such as Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Audiology, and Speech Pathology)
- Human Biology (may include Anatomy, Biomedical Sciences, Food Science, Immunology, Neuroscience, Pathology, Pharmacology, and Physiology)
- Medical and Veterinary Sciences (may include research-oriented programs in Dentistry, Medical Sciences, Nursing, Optometry, and Pharmacy)

3. Physical Sciences:

- Chemistry
- Computer Science (may include Information/Systems Science)
- Earth Sciences (may include Geology and Geophysics)
- Mathematics and Statistics
- Physics (may include Astronomy, Meteorology, and Space Science)

Program Quotas

Program quotas are provided below.

Unused quota: If a program is unable to allocate its quota due to an insufficient number of qualified applications in a given competition year, this scholarship falls back into the pool for central adjudication.

Program award recipient declines: If the program's original program recipient declines the scholarship or admission or is unable to hold the award, the program may award the scholarship to the next eligible individual in their program.

Faculty/Program	Quota
Business & Information Technology	0
Computer Science (MSc and PhD)	1
Education	1
Energy Systems and Nuclear Science (MAsc & PhD)	1
Engineering & Applied Science	
Automotive Engineering (MAsc)	1
Electrical & Computer Engineering (MAsc & PhD)	1
Mechanical Engineering (MAsc & PhD)	1
Health Sciences (MHSc & PhD)	1
Science	
Applied Bioscience (MSc & PhD)	1
Materials Science (MSc & PhD)	1
Modelling & Computational Science (MSc & PhD)	1
Social Sciences & Humanities	
Criminology (MA & PhD)	1
Forensic Psychology (MSc & PhD)	1

Total Program Awards	12
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Awards for Central Adjudication	
OGS Remaining*	9
International (visa) award	1
QEII-GSST	6
OGFF	2

* Up to 2 awards can be allocated to qualified Indigenous applicants