OntarioTech
Graduate &
Postdoctoral Studies

Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master's (CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC) Scholarship Information

KEY ASPECTS
of a successful application:

- Official and complete transcripts

- Well thought-out and well-written research proposal

- Strong reference letters

- Follow all steps of the scholarship and university instructions

TRANSCRIPTS

- For your Tri-Agency application, **official transcripts** are required for your current and previously attended postsecondary institution(s) that are listed on your application (Best practice: if you list the institution, you need the transcript)

- A- average in each of the last two completed years of study (full-time equivalent)

- For CGS-M you will scan and upload all transcripts via the application portal

TRANSCRIPTS

- Some institutions are experiencing delays in processing transcript requests. Ensure you submit your request **early** to allow adequate time for printing and mailing.

- Unofficial transcripts will not normally be accepted for the CGS-M competition unless despite every efforts, official ones cannot be obtained.

- You are responsible for requesting all transcripts required to complete your application.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL
what to write

- For the tri-agency applications, your research proposal MUST fall under the mandate of the agency to which you are submitting your application (refer to Selecting the Appropriate Federal Granting Agency)
  - You should **review your proposal with a faculty member** for advice and to ensure adherence to the agency mandate

- Be as **specific as possible**: If you have not yet decided on a specific project, you must still provide a detailed description of a research project that interests you

- Write your proposal in **lay language**: The committees reviewing the applications are interdisciplinary but members may not necessarily specialize in your area of research

RESEARCH PROPOSAL
Structure

- State your hypothesis and the methodology in which you will conduct your research

- Emphasize the importance of your research on society

- Ensure you follow the standards for presentation and attachments that are outlined in the application instructions for all free form pages

- Proofread and have colleagues review your proposal

RESEARCH PROPOSAL
Impact

- Contextualize your research: Why is it important to your field? to the community?

- Find a balance:
  - Do not over-generalize (i.e. "I will work towards a cure for cancer")
  - Do not over-complicate (i.e. too much jargon)
  - Pretend you are writing for a high-level general journal

COMMON CV

- Common CV system for establishing your research and leadership record.

- This is where your research publications (if any) and other relevant experience will be listed.

DON'T BE TOO MODEST

- Reiterate if your research was supported by a granting agency:

  - "As an NSERC CGS-M scholar at the University of Toronto, I have begun a research program in Computational Linguistics"

  - "During my tenure as an NSERC scholar at the Alberta Research Council, I was placed in a position of high independence, early in my undergraduate career."

DEMONSTRATE YOUR ABILITIES

- List all publications – be sure to consistently use a standard reference format

- If you list is quite short, include lectures you gave, especially significant projects (i.e. a literature review), internal reports, etc.
  - Be clear what is peer-reviewed and what is not!

- Organize the section clearly using the lettering provided in the application package

RELEVANT ACTIVITIES
Part of applicant statement

- This section often doesn't get enough attention!
- Highlight volunteering, elected positions, etc. Don't go back too far – start with your undergraduate degree.

- Indicate a timeline to avoid the appearance of "padding":
  - "After just two months of serving on the Council of the Graduate Students' Union, I was elected the 2002-2003 President."
  - "Since moving to Toronto in August 2001, I have volunteered for two hours each week with the LGBT Peer Support phone line."
  - "For the fall 2001 term, I participated in twice weekly meetings of the steering committee for conference X, hosted by my department."

- NOT: "I attended the walkathon in 1999 for cause X." or "I was captain of my grade 10 hockey team."

RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

- Use only activities which support the criteria of the award: communication skills, creativity, leadership.
- If you cannot fill this section with relevant volunteer or elected activities, use employment or leisure activities:
  - Working as a TA
  - Working in your department as a host for visiting lecturers
  - Mentoring new students
  - Working in a customer-service position like retail or restaurant
  - Participating in clubs or organizations, orchestras, etc.
- **Indicate your position, the time commitment involved, and why you think your participation is relevant to this application.**
- Don't underestimate this section – it can set you apart from all the other academically outstanding applications. It can make you the "well-rounded" candidate who gets noticed.

FORMATTING ATTACHMENTS

- Communication skills count in the final evaluation: the appearance of your application is a good indicator of your communication skill

- Don't use fancy fonts! Don't disobey font size requirements – you might fit more info on the page, but the judges will not read it

- Do not exceed allotted space for each section
- Maximize space – fill every space on the page, but avoid clutter. Use headings, indentation, etc.

PROOFREADING

- Proof-read your entire application
  - Start with each section individually and wait a while before going to the next section. Pay attention to how the section content fits the heading
  - Re-read the sections consecutively
    - Delete any repetition
    - Make sure you haven't forgotten anything
    - Check for consistent writing style

- Ask others (at least 3) to proof-read for you:
  - Your supervisor
  - Other professors, especially if they have sat on scholarship panels
  - Your referees
  - Ask a non-scientist who knows you well:
    - May not understand the scientific content, but this helps highlight particularly unclear sections which colleagues may not catch
    - Will likely pay more attention to the personal statement and details of overall appearance, spelling, cohesion

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

- List all previous scholarships, fellowships, etc.

- Don't assume anything is "too small" to include, unless you are constrained by space

- Make sure to include $ amounts, and the jurisdiction (institutional, provincial, national) of the competition. Use a table if possible

- Highlight previous tri-agency support (for example, a summer research scholarship during your undergrad)

REFERENCE LETTERS
Selecting referees

- **Strong reference letters** are one of the key components to a strong application package

- Ask someone who can speak with some experience about your abilities, attributes and potential; someone who has recent knowledge of both where you have been and where you want to go (each competition will suggest examples of allowable referees)

REFERENCE LETTERS
Selecting referees

- Consider very carefully who you will ask for a reference letter – diversity is an advantage and will help avoid duplication
  - your supervisor
  - a course instructor you know well
  - your program director if you know them well
  - a researcher from outside UOIT with whom you have collaborated
  - an employer familiar with your research or leadership abilities

- Ask "can you write me a **good** reference?"
  - guard against lukewarm / unhelpful references

REFERENCE LETTERS
supporting referees

- In order for your referees to highlight your attributes, provide them with a package containing
  - an up-to-date CV
  - transcripts (no need for official copies here)
  - a list of contributions (research and leadership)
  - your research proposal (even if it's still a draft)

- Some professors will appreciate additional help. You can offer your referee (ask before providing):
  - highlights you would like them to focus on
  - examples from your interactions with them to help jog their memory

- This helps them write well and save time, and further demonstrates your organization skill

REFERENCE LETTERS
Supporting referees

- Follow up with the reference after a week or two to make sure they didn't forget you!
- Make sure they know they can contact you for more information

- **Do NOT provide a draft letter for them!**
  - If absolutely required, make it unique
  - When I sat on a judging panel for an internal award, a candidate had 2 identical references!

- Consider encouraging them to point out one *minor* "weakness", something they can say they know you are working to improve. Completely glowing letters are rarely believable.

REFERENCE LETTERS
Timing

- To further assist your referees, provide them with the **eligibility and selection criteria** of the scholarship, as well as the **instructions** for completing the assessment

- Be prepared:

  - **Know the deadline** by which you need it, clearly state it to the referee

  - Know to whom the letter needs to be addressed (if applicable) and to whom it should go

  - Provide them with enough time to write an appraisal for you (at least 2 weeks!)

KEY STEPS

- Confirm your eligibility

- Request your transcripts

- Contact potential referees now – 2 or 3 referees required, depending on competition

- Read the website and application instructions

- Apply for admission to a graduate program at Ontario Tech by Feb. 1 if applicable

- Start your award application and submit as instructed by the firm deadline – make sure you are applying to the correct agency (if applicable).

Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master's (CGS-M) CIHR / NSERC / SSHRC

- Eligibility:
  - Canadian citizen / permanent resident
  - Intend to pursue a Master's program with a significant research component

- Deadline: December 1

- Value: $17,500 per year

- Quota: 11 (1 CIHR), (5 NSERC) and (5 SSHRC)

Tri- Agency Selection Criteria Weightings (Master's)

ensure your application addresses these criteria

- Academic Excellence (50%)
  - First class average
  - Duration of previous studies
  - Scholarships and award held

- Research Potential (30%)
  - Quality and originality of contributions to research
  - Significance of proposed research
  - Initiative, independence

- Personal Characteristics & Interpersonal Skills (20%)

Important Links

- Canada Graduate Scholarships – Master's
  - [SGPS CGS-M website](#)
  - [Official CGS-M website](#)
- [Scholarship Tips and Tricks](#)

Questions ?

- If you have any questions about this or any other scholarship competition, or to sign up for a virtual meeting, we recommend that you complete the [External Scholarships Question Submission Form](#)

- or contact gradscholarships@ontariotechu.ca.

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