OntarioTech
Graduate &
Postdoctoral Studies

Vanier and Canada Graduate Scholarship – Doctoral (CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC) Scholarship Information

Land acknowledgement

Ontario Tech University acknowledges the lands and people of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. We are thankful to be welcomed on these lands in friendship. The lands we are situated on are covered under the Williams Treaties and the traditional territory of the Mississauga, a branch of the great Anishinaabeg Nation, including Algonquin, Ojibway, Odawa and Pottawatomi. These lands remain home to a number of Indigenous nations and people.

KEY ASPECT
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
what is required & averages

- 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)

- Follow agency specific instructions on attaching transcripts.

- **For NSERC, send all your transcripts to SGPS**

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

CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT
PhD/PDF only

- Use the lettering of sections, as provided on the application package – notice I had no "(b)"

- (a) Articles Published in Refereed Journals
  - [1] Collins, C.; Tobin, J.; Shvedov D., Palepu, R.; Tremaine, P. R. (2000) Thermodynamic properties of aqueous diethanolamine (DEA), N,N-dimethylethanolamine (DMEA), and their chloride salts: Apparent molar properties at elevated temperatures and pressures. *Canadian Journal of Chemistry* **78**: 151-165. (undergraduate summer work)
- (c) Other refereed contributions
  - [2] Collins, C. Stability Constants for Glycine Under Hydrothermal Conditions Using Colorimetric Indicators. Honours Dissertation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2001.
  - [3] Collins, C. Thermodynamic properties of aqueous diethanolamine (DEA), N,N-dimethylethanolamine (DMEA), and their chloride salts. Poster, Atlantic Student Chemistry Conference, UPEI, 1998.
- (f) Contributions Resulting from Participation in Industrially Relevant Research Activities
  - [4] Collins, C. and White, B. MOTSIM Geometry Editor (software). Marineering Limited, 2001.
  - [5] Collins, C. Recent Improvements to Automated Speech Recognition Using Prosodic Features, literature review, University of Toronto, 2002.
  - [6] Collins, C. Oil Sand Consolidation (internal report). Alberta Research Council, 1998.

MOST SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS / APPLICANT STATEMENT

- You have many years of University experience, so tell the judges about it! Consider carefully (perhaps get a second opinion) before leaving anything out.

- If requested for the scholarship (PhD/PDF), carefully select three specific contributions and explain them using examples, importance to the advancement of the field, etc.
  - You can use your "proposal" to briefly highlight your experiences by relating them to the proposal.

- Include full description of your responsibilities in any project where you worked with others – i.e. were you involved in project planning? Supervising undergraduates? Were you directly writing any co-authored works? How did your work contribute to a large multi-year project, etc.

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. I ask my mother.
    - 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 UOIT 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).

Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship

Canadian citizens, permanent residents of Canada and foreign citizens are eligible to be nominated for a Vanier CGS

Eligibility:

- be pursuing your first doctoral degree;
- not have completed more than 20 months of doctoral studies as of May 1, 2022
- have achieved a first-class average, in each of the last two years of full-time study or equivalent.

Deadline: September 17

Value: $50,000 per year

Quota: 1 – NSERC; 1 - SSHRC

IMPORTANT

- Canada's three federal granting agencies, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) have launched a harmonized CGS-D program with a common deadline .

- You will complete and submit one application to your chosen granting agency to be considered for both a CGS-D scholarship and an agency doctoral award. CGS-D scholarships are offered to top-ranked eligible applicants.

Canada Graduate Scholarships - Doctoral Postgraduate Scholarships/Fellowships CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC

- Eligibility:
  - Canadian citizen / permanent resident

- Be conducting research under the relevant agency mandate
  - refer to official site for Subject Matter Eligibility and **speak to a faculty member** to confirm your proposal meets the mandate

- Deadline: October 5 (internal)

- Value: CGS-D $35,000   PGS-D/Fellowship: $20,000 - 21,000

- Quota: 12 (3 CIHR), (3 NSERC) and (6 SSHRC)

Tri- Agency Selection Criteria Weightings

- **Research Ability or Potential (50%)**
  - 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

Tri- Agency Selection Criteria Weightings

ensure your application addresses these criteria

- **Relevant experience and achievements obtained within and beyond academia (50%)**
  - Scholarships, awards and distinctions (amount, duration and prestige)
  - Academic record:
    - Transcripts
    - Duration of previous studies
    - Program requirements and courses pursued
    - Course load
    - Relative standing in program (if available)
- 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

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.