



Reviewing for the Doctoral Research Awards Programs

Title

Welcome to this learning module for peer reviewers of the Doctoral Research Awards Programs. The goal of this module is to ensure that reviewers understand the Doctoral Research Awards Programs and feel prepared to effectively participate in the review process.

Navigation

This course is designed to be self paced.

Use the playbar below to resume playback, navigate between slides, mute and unmute audio, and toggle closed captions. You can also browse the full table of contents, and collapse or move the playbar.

Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to identify key features of the Doctoral Research Awards Programs, understand the Evaluation criteria and rating scale used in the evaluation of applications and summarize the steps in the peer review process for the Doctoral Research Awards Programs.

Objective 1: Doctoral Research Awards Programs

In this section, you will learn about the Doctoral Research Awards Programs and the eligibility criteria for applicants.

The Doctoral Research Awards Programs

The Doctoral Research Awards Programs provide support for highly qualified candidates in all areas of health research at the PhD degree stage. It offers recognition and funding to students early in their academic research career, providing them with an opportunity to gain research experience.

- The Canada Graduate Scholarships Doctoral (CGS D) program provides special recognition and support to students who are pursuing a doctoral degree in a health-related field in Canada.
- The Doctoral Foreign Study Award (DFSA) provides special recognition and support to students who are pursuing a doctoral degree in a health-related field abroad.

The evaluation of the Doctoral Research Award applications focuses on the applicant's track record, research ability and potential as well as relevant experiences and achievements obtained within and beyond academia.

The Doctoral Research Awards Programs

The annual value of both the Canada Graduate Scholarships - Doctoral Program and Doctoral Foreign Study Award is a \$35,000 stipend and the term of the award is 36 months. As a result of Budget 2024, funding levels are expected to be adjusted following the launch of this Funding Opportunity.

CIHR staff have reviewed all applications to confirm the eligibility of the applicants. Reviewers may flag eligibility cases in the review process, if they believe an application that should have been screened out was allowed into the competition.

*Valid interruptions include childrearing, health-related family responsibilities, illness, disabilities, trauma and/or loss, pandemic impact, or other circumstances. These were taken into account in the review of the eligibility.

Objective 2: Evaluation Criteria and Rating Scale

In this section, you will learn about the Evaluation criteria and rating scale used for the evaluation of the Doctoral Research Awards applications.

Assignment of Applications

In the Doctoral Research Awards Programs, you will primarily be assessing the candidate. As such, it is not essential for your research expertise to align directly with the research area of the application. Reviewers are asked to apply their research expertise generally when assessing the diverse array of application assignments.

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation of the application should be based on the following Evaluation criteria: Research ability and potential and Relevant experience and achievements obtained within and beyond academia.

Please note that expectations may differ by research area and/or discipline, particularly in the social sciences.

Weighting of Criteria

Relevant research ability and potential accounts for 50% of the score. The indicators of research ability and potential are as follows:

Quality of research proposal:

- specific, focused, and feasible research question(s) and/or objective(s);
- clear description and soundness of the proposed methodology;
- significance and expected contributions to research.

Weighting of Criteria

There are numerous different types of contributions as shown here.

Weighting of Criteria

- 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.
- Demonstration of originality, initiative, autonomy, relevant community involvement and outreach.
- The ability to communicate theoretical, technical and/or scientific concepts clearly and logically in written and oral formats.

Weighting of Criteria

Relevant experience and achievements obtained within and beyond academia accounts for the other 50% of the score. Indicators of this criterion are as follows:

- Scholarships, awards and distinctions (amount, duration and prestige).
- Academic record, such as:
 - transcripts;
 - duration of previous studies;
 - program requirements and courses pursued;
 - course load; and
 - Relative standing in program (if available).

Weighting of Criteria

Professional, academic, and extracurricular activities and 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; and



- participating in departmental and/or institutional organizations, associations, societies and/or clubs.

The Rating Scale

The ranking of applications is completed using a structured review process.

In a structured review process, reviewers are asked to provide an assessment for each Evaluation criteria.

The score that you submit for each criterion on the 0.0 to 4.9 scale will be weighted automatically in the calculation of an overall score for each application you review in ResearchNet.

Reviewers should be assessing each application based on the information provided and should not be seeking additional information or outside opinion to supplement what is contained in the application.

Remember that all applications with a final rating of 3.5 or higher may be considered for funding.

As such, if you feel that an application should not be considered for funding, it is important that you assign a score below 3.5 to that application.

It is also very important that you use the full scale when evaluating applications.

Test your knowledge!

Test your knowledge!

In the application you are reviewing, the candidate has provided a 2-page document which defines their role in multi-authored publications as well as environmental factors that affected their capacity to publish. Which evaluation criteria does this apply to?

- a) Research ability and potential
- b) Relevant experience and achievements obtained within and beyond academics or



- c) All of the above.

Test your knowledge!

Which of the following does not apply when considering “Relevant experience and achievements obtained within and beyond academia” in your evaluation:

- a) Sponsor’s assessment letter about candidate;
- b) Undergraduate Academic Transcripts and graduate transcripts
- c) Training expectations and the proposed Research Project Summary or
- d) Leaves of Absence and impact on Research Section of the Common CV (if provided) and/or Special Circumstances document (if provided).

True or False?

True or False. To ensure that all applications are treated equally, reviewers should NOT complete additional research in addition to their evaluation on the content of the application.

Objective 3: The Review Process

In this section, you will learn about the peer review process for the Doctoral Research Awards Programs.

Peer Review Process

The peer review process of the Doctoral Research Awards Programs consists of:

- Assigning applications to committees;
- Identifying conflicts of interest;
- Conducting reviews of assigned applications;
- Submitting reviews and ratings;
- And participating in re-review, if required.

Assignment of Applications

Applicants, in consultation with their supervisor, determine the most appropriate scientific area (representing more than fifty percent) for the application. There are two options available to applicants - Biomedical Research or Health Research. It is the scientific area chosen by candidates and their supervisor that determine the most appropriate peer review committee to which the application is assigned by CIHR.

Identify Conflicts

In ResearchNet, you will first need to agree to the Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement, which includes the expanded version of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Self-identification Questionnaire. Completing this questionnaire is a requirement for peer review committee members, enhancing our ability to understand the degree of diversity in peer review committees.

The questionnaire is accompanied by a [Privacy Notice Statement](#) which outlines CIHR's intended purpose and uses of the self-identification data.

Next, to start conducting your reviews, click on the "Manage Conflicts/Ability to Review" task.

Identify Conflicts

This will bring you to the set of applications that have been assigned to you. Select each application by clicking on the hyperlinked application numbers.

You will have access to the relevant information to determine if you are in conflict.

Please indicate if you are in conflict with the application. You can find more information on when you might need to declare a Conflict of Interest by clicking the button at the bottom of your screen.

As previously mentioned, the assignment of applications is not based on specific expertise of reviewers. As such, the reviewers' mandate is to review each application with a generalist's perspective and assess the overall quality of the research proposed. There should be no conflict declared due to lack of expertise with an application.

Conduct Reviews

Please ensure you are familiar with the Evaluation criteria for the Doctoral Research Awards programs. You can now start working on your reviews by clicking on the “Conduct Reviews” task.

To assess the applications, click on the hyperlinked application numbers.

From this screen, insert your numeric rating and ensure you provide written feedback to highlight the application’s strengths and weaknesses for each evaluation criterion.

The applicant will be given access to these comments. Therefore, they must be written in a constructive manner and must be a reflection of the attributed ratings.

Submit Reviews

When you are ready to submit your reviews, you will first need to select the reviews and then click on “Submit Selected Reviews”.

Participate in re-review, if required

When all reviews are submitted, a calculation is applied to determine which applications have received discrepant scores. In this instance, CIHR will ask these reviewers to discuss the application in order to reconcile their scores. If you are requested to do a discrepancy review on an application, you will be notified by e-mail with the coordinates of the other reviewer and your access to that specific application on ResearchNet will be reopened. The goal of this process is to have reviewers listen to and consider each other’s opinion. In the end, you are not obliged to change your score but we ask that you re-submit.

Once all re-reviews are submitted, CIHR will re-assess to determine if applications are still at risk of an unfair decision because of a wide spread between the 2 reviewers’ scores. If the response is still “Yes”, then CIHR will ask an additional reviewer to evaluate the discrepant application and the final score will be determined by taking the average of all scores. You may be asked to act as an additional reviewer at this stage to settle discrepant scores. Finally, following the submission of all the reviews, CIHR will generate ranking lists for each committee.



Applications are recommended for funding starting with the highest ranked as far as the total competition budget allows.

Summary

Congratulations! You have now completed the learning module for peer reviewers of the Doctoral Research Awards Programs. You should now be able to:

- Identify key features of the Doctoral Research Awards programs;
- Understand the Evaluation criteria and rating scale used in the evaluation of applications and;
- Summarize the steps in the peer review process for the Doctoral Research Awards Programs.

Survey

Please complete the survey to help CIHR track completion and improve the quality of our learning materials.

Additional Resources

This page contains additional resources. Click on them below to view important links for peer reviewers of the Doctoral Research Awards Programs.