

# Guidance, Tips & Tricks: Preparing a *Successful* Graduate Student Award Application

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# Master's & PhD Awards

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Master's	PhD
Unified CGS	Not unified (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC)
Academic Excellence Research Potential Personal Characteristics / IP skills	Research Ability & Potential Relevant Experience & Achievements obtained within & beyond academia
2 references	2 references

CGS M applications allocated to McMaster:

[http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/CGSAllocations-QuotasBESC\\_eng.asp](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/CGSAllocations-QuotasBESC_eng.asp)

# Due Dates!!

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## Master's

- Around December 1st

## PhD

- McMaster internal ResearchNet deadline: October 1, 2019, 11:59 pm
- Sponsor Assessments, submit online by September 29, 2019, 12pm
- Top 40 candidates' applications submitted by McMaster to CIHR/SSHRC by November 21, 2019

# Outline:

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- ✓ Eligibility
- ✓ Lay Abstract or Summary of Proposal
- ✓ Division of Time
- ✓ Training Expectations
- ✓ Research Project Summary or Outline of Proposed Research
- ✓ Space, Facilities and Personnel Support
- ✓ Sponsors' Assessments
- ✓ Explanations of Ratings
- ✓ Common CV & attachments

# Eligibility

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- Check the eligibility criteria on the websites!
- Pay particular attention to the number of months/years in the program
- When in doubt, call and ask!

# The Rating Scale!

4.5 – 4.9	outstanding	}
4.0 - 4.4	excellent	
3.5 - 3.9	very good	
3.0 - 3.4	good	}
2.0 - 2.9	average	
1.0 - 1.9	below average	
0	not acceptable	

This is where  
you need to  
aim to be!

not fundable

# Formatting

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- Check margins, word counts
- Pay attention to font and spacing
- Enter content online to make sure it “fits” before the deadline date
- Read all instructions very carefully – there is no wiggle room for errors or oversights

# Lay Abstract / Summary (both)

- Keep the audience in mind – who will be reading the application?
- Build the argument for *why* this work needs to be done, *what* the work is and *what* your contribution will be
- What will your results uniquely contribute?
- Relative importance of the work – context is important



# Division of Time (PhD)

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- Spend  $\geq 75\%$  of time in proposed research training (Research + Course work) throughout duration of studies
- Make sure it adds up to 100%!
- Include all student commitments
  
- ✓ Research (should be the vast majority)
- ✓ Teaching (TA)
- ✓ Clinical Practice?
- ✓ Course work

# Training Expectations (PhD)



4.5 - 4.9 outstanding

4.0 - 4.4 excellent

3.5 - 3.9 very good

3.0 - 3.4 good

2.0 - 2.9 average

1.0 - 1.9 below average

“Most candidates will be conducting research outside your research specialty. From a non-specialist's perspective, assess the intellectual challenge and excitement of the research in which the candidate will be involved.”

“Consider the extent to which the training program appears to fit with the candidate's training expectations and the resources available.”

# Training Expectations

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**You have 2 pages – use them wisely!**

## Objectives:

- How will training contribute to your productivity and research goals?
- Why did you choose to do research at this centre/location?
- What will you learn from the training experience?

# Training Expectations

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- \*\* Put this into context!
- Environment
  - ✓ access to “top” people (reputation), equipment, databases, research programs, techniques, programs
- Learn skills – critical thinking, people, “soft” skills
- Teaching / mentoring (undergrads, jr students)
- Course work
- Journal club

# Training Expectations

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- Student groups (lab meetings and beyond...)
- Multidisciplinary environment
- Presentations (all levels) – meetings, conferences
- Networking – travel?
- Community work (related to degree, e.g., LTS)

**If/when you get stuck on this section,  
come back to the objectives!**

# Research Project Summary (both)

- Only 1 page – use it wisely!
- Provide a detailed description of proposed research
- Be as specific as possible.
  - Provide background info to position your research in the context of the current knowledge in the field.
  - State objectives and hypotheses, outline experimental or theoretical approach (citing literature pertinent to the proposal), describe methods and procedures to be used.
  - State significance of proposed research to a field in the health sciences, natural sciences/engineering or social sciences/humanities

# Research Project Summary

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- Complete this with your supervisor
- Write in general scientific language (understandable non content experts)
- Specify the hypothesis and your role
- An overview of each part of the overall research plan, specific project aims, and methodology
- Articulate the significance of the project

# Research Project Summary

- is it feasible / achievable? (part of a big project?)
- is it innovative?
- why is it important / relevant?
- Be specific, use sub-headings:
  - ✓ Introduction / background / context
  - ✓ aims, hypotheses
  - ✓ methods / approach / experimental plan
  - ✓ student's role
  - ✓ context / clinical significance to CIHR, SSHRC



# Space, Facilities & Personnel Support (PhD)

Review the candidate's training expectations and proposed doctoral research program.

Include project, resources available and planned non-research activities.

- 2000 characters
- Use *these* sub-headings to address all points
- Provide enough information! Don't assume the reviewer knows/understands your environment
- Put it into context to help the reviewer!

# Transcripts & Signatures

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- Transcripts must be “official” – you can’t print them from mosaic
- If you’ve attended >1 post secondary institution, you need them all
- This takes time! Leave yourself enough
- Signature pages also take time – don’t leave this to the last minute!!

# Identify References / Sponsors

- 2 for Master's, 3 for PhD
- should be someone who the applicant has trained under and/or who can assess their potential for research.

“...completed by persons capable of making an informed assessment.”

- A person *very familiar* with your research/other abilities, e.g., current research/industrial supervisor (co-op)
- A person *sufficiently familiar* with your research/other abilities to provide a meaningful commentary

For PhD, use Master's supervisor & members of cmte

# References' Assessments



- ✓ Comment on each evaluation criterion listed below, and provide a justification of your assessment;
- ✓ Rather than providing general comments, assess the applicant's strengths and limitations for each criterion; and
- ✓ Include **examples** of the applicant's accomplishments and contributions to support your assessment.

# Sponsors' Assessments (both?)

CHARACTERISTICS	DESCRIPTION	Rarely exhibits	Sometimes exhibits	Often exhibits	Always exhibits	Unable to judge
CRITICAL THINKING	Judicious evaluation of all information, regardless of its source	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
INDEPENDENCE	Pursuit of knowledge or taking of action on own initiative, seeking guidance only when appropriate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
PERSEVERANCE	Determined persistence in pursuit of goals despite obstacles or discouragement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ORIGINALITY	Imagination or ingenuity in problem solving	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS	Systematic, careful planning and coordination of activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
INTEREST IN DISCOVERY	An inquiring mind and a strong desire to pursue new knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
RESEARCH ABILITY	A natural talent or acquired proficiency for scientific investigation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
LEADERSHIP ABILITY	Potential for, or demonstrated, significant contribution to an area of research	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Explanations of Ratings

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- Choose your sponsors CAREFULLY
- HELP your sponsors!
  - ✓ give them your CV
  - ✓ volunteer to give them examples
  - ✓ consider offering to write the letter yourself – don't be too humble, but be honest!
- Give them LOTS of time to write it
- Give them a deadline, perhaps a reminder email
- Be responsible – YOU are in charge!!!

# Other Info for Sponsors

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- How long has sponsor known you / context?
- USE SUBHEADINGS
- Add additional (personal?) qualities – motivation, mentorship abilities, IP skills, communication, etc.
- Publications – emphasize *your role* and CONTEXT!! (i.e. journal type)
- Presentations & meetings
- Awards
- Work in progress – papers, research milestones
- Special circumstances? Consider these....

# Your Common CV (both)

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- This takes a huge amount of time! Do it correctly!
- Publications are important!
- ✓ Candidates should list all pubs (no page limit).
- ✓ All candidates must, for each multi-authored publication, *define their role* in the publication and *indicate their percent contribution* to the team effort.
- ✓ Candidates, with or without publications, are invited to comment on environmental factors that affected their capacity to publish.



# Your OWN CV - Pubs

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- Publications, list of articles
- “Assess publication activity of candidate relative to your expectations of someone with their academic experience.”
- “Consider breadth of science covered, frequency of publication, scientific impact of the journals” (context is important here too)
- “Candidate's input to the publications, prominence of the candidate's name on the list of authors”

# CV – Other Research Activity

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- “Review information on presentations, research prizes, other indicators of candidate's research productivity”
- **Assess other research activity relative to your expectations of someone with their academic experience.**
- Consider breadth of science covered, size and importance of meetings involved, frequency of conference presentations and research honours or awards.

# Weightings of Evaluation Criteria

## Master's

As demonstrated by past academic results, transcripts, awards and distinctions.

Indicators of Academic Excellence:

- Academic record (first class average)
- Scholarships and awards held
- Duration of previous studies
- Type of program and courses pursued
- Course load
- Relative standing (if available)

Academic  
Excellence

50%

This comes from your transcripts and your CV!

# Weightings of Evaluation Criteria

## Master's

Demonstrated by the applicant's research history, interest in discovery, proposed research, potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field, & anticipated outcomes. Indicators of Research Potential:

- Quality and originality of contributions to research and development
- Relevance of work experience and academic training to field of proposed research
- Significance/feasibility/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%

## Research Potential

This comes from your CV and reference letters!

# Weightings of Evaluation Criteria

## Master's

Applicant's past professional and relevant extracurricular interactions and collaborations.

Indicators of Personal Characteristics and Interpersonal Skills:

- 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%

Personal  
Characteristics  
Interpersonal  
Skills

This comes from your CV and reference letters!

# Weightings of Evaluation Criteria

## ➤ Research Ability & Potential = 50%

1. Quality of research proposal
2. Relevant training (academic training, lived experience and traditional teachings)
3. Research experience and achievements “relative to expectations of someone with the candidate’s academic experience”
4. Quality of contributions and of advancement of field of research (e.g., publications,, posters, abstracts, presentations)
5. Demonstration of sound judgment and ability to think critically
6. Demonstration of responsible and ethical research conduct
7. Enthusiasm for research, originality, initiative, autonomy, relevant community involvement and outreach
8. Ability/potential to communicate theoretical, technical and/or scientific concepts

# Weightings of Evaluation Criteria

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- Research Ability & Potential comes from...
  - Training Expectations
  - Research Project Summary
  - Common CV
  - “Publication List” attachment, if provided
  - Sponsor’s Assessments
  - “Leaves of Absence and Impact on Research” section of the Common CV, if provided

# Weightings of Evaluation Criteria

➤ The other **50%** ??

“Relevant experience & achievements obtained within & beyond academia”

1. Scholarships, awards and distinctions (amount, duration and prestige)
2. Academic Record (Transcripts, Duration of previous studies, program requirements, courses pursued, course load, relative standing)
3. Professional, academic, extracurricular activities, collaborations with supervisors, colleagues, peers, students etc. (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/meetings, participating in departmental or institutional organizations, associations, societies and/or clubs)



# Weightings of Evaluation Criteria

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- Relevant experience & achievements
  - Common CV
  - Transcripts
  - Training Expectations
  - Sponsor's Assessments
  - “Leaves of Absence and Impact on Research” section of the Common CV, if provided

# Summary

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1. Highlight achievements, tread carefully
2. Your CV takes TIME - accurate & complete!
3. Put everything (including sponsors' letters) into context
4. Give sponsors plenty of time
5. Know your deadlines – the website gets VERY busy at the last minute!

# Summary

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6. PROOF READ over and over and over and OVER again!!! Errors in spelling and grammar are NOT easily forgiven (for you or sponsor)
7. HELP your sponsor – their weightings COUNT!
8. Make the reviewers' jobs easy!

# Links to check out!

- **CIHR Reviewers' Guide for Doctoral Research Awards:**
- <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/33043.html>
- [Appendix A – CIHR Doctoral Research Awards Adjudication criteria](#)
- [Appendix B – CIHR Doctoral Research Awards Reviewer Worksheet](#)
- [http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/ResearchPortal-PortailDeRecherche/Instructions-Instructions/CGS\\_M-BESC\\_M\\_eng.asp](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/ResearchPortal-PortailDeRecherche/Instructions-Instructions/CGS_M-BESC_M_eng.asp)

# Links to check out!

- <http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/fellowships/doctoral-doctorat-eng.aspx><http://cou.on.ca/about/awards/ontario-womens-health-scholars/>
- [http://www.grad.uwo.ca/postdoctoral\\_scholars/prospective/funding.html](http://www.grad.uwo.ca/postdoctoral_scholars/prospective/funding.html)
- <https://www.uottawa.ca/graduate-studies/postdoctoral-fellows/fellowships>
- <https://www.postdocs.ubc.ca/awards-funding/funding-opportunities>
- <http://www.wowjobs.ca/careers-postdoctoral-jobs-in-Hamilton+ON>



**Thank you!**



**Questions?**