

Tips for a Successful NSERC Scholarship Application

From a Former Chemistry Selection Committee Member

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3 Types of applications – 3 review processes

- Masters – CGS-M – reviewed at the University
- Doctoral – PGS-D/CGS-D – reviewed by an NSERC Selection Committee
- Postdoctoral – PDF – reviewed by same NSERC Committee but by different criteria

Indicators – CGS-M

Selection criteria

The merit review of CGS M applications will be carried out by institutions with an allocation and will be based on the following evaluation criteria:

Criteria	Description	Weight
Academic excellence	<p>As demonstrated by past academic results, transcripts, awards and distinctions.</p> <p>Indicators of academic excellence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Academic record■ Scholarships and awards held■ Duration of previous studies■ Type of program and courses pursued■ Course load■ Relative standing (if available)	50%

Indicators – CGS-M

Research potential	<p>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, and any anticipated outcomes.</p> <p>Indicators of research potential:</p> <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 and autonomy;■ Research experience and achievements relative to expectations of someone with the candidate's academic experience.	30%
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Indicators – CGS-M

<p>Personal characteristics and interpersonal skills</p>	<p>As demonstrated by the applicant's past professional and relevant extracurricular interactions and collaborations.</p> <p>Indicators of personal characteristics and interpersonal skills:</p> <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 or scientific concepts clearly and logically in written and oral formats■ Involvement in academic life;■ Volunteerism/community outreach.	<p>20%</p>
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Outline of Ranking Process – Doctoral and PDF

- Each application is sorted into Quartiles for each of the selection criteria (Research ability and potential, Relevant experiences and achievements, Communication and Leadership Abilities)
- Each criterion is scored out of 100 independently based on evaluation criteria listed in the instructions. The whole scoring range (0-100) is used as much as possible!
- Final score comes from applying the appropriate weighting per criterion.

Note a similar scheme based on six “Merit bins” instead of Quartiles has been under trial for some subject areas (Chemistry + Earth Sciences). Each person in the same bin gets the same score for that criterion

Table 1: Relative weightings of selection criteria

Selection criteria	Weighting %	
	Scholarships	Fellowships
Research ability and potential	50	70
Relevant experiences and achievements obtained within and beyond academia	50	-
Communication, interpersonal and leadership abilities	-	30
Total	100	100

Selection criteria (weighting %)	Indicators	Scholarships (Doctoral Awards) Evidence
Research ability and potential (50%)	Quality of research proposal Feasible (refs, background), clear, significant (be explicit, not implicit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of proposed research
	<u>Relevant training</u> Can support feasibility of prop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic, research and other relevant work experience
	Research experience and achievements relative to the applicant's stage of study, lived experience, and knowledge systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships and other awards offered • Thesis most recently completed or in progress
	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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions and statements – Part I, II and III • Reports on the applicant <p>Highlight YOUR role in experiments, and paper writing Be explicit about significance and impact of work → impact on other projects in group, fields, citations, etc.</p>

Selection criteria (weighting %)	Indicators	Scholarships (Doctoral Awards)	Evidence
Research ability and potential (50%)	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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic, research and other relevant work experience • Scholarships and other awards offered • Thesis most recently completed or in progress • Contributions and statements – Part I, II and III • Reports on the applicant 	
<p style="text-align: center;">Give examples to support any claims – don't rely on references, advocate for yourself!</p>			

Selection criteria (weighting %)	Indicators	Scholarships (Doctoral Awards)	Evidence
Research ability and potential (50%)	Enthusiasm for research, originality, initiative, autonomy, relevant community involvement, and outreach	Give examples as support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships and other awards offered • Thesis most recently completed or in progress
	The ability or potential to communicate theoretical, technical and/or scientific concepts clearly and logically in written and oral formats Highlight significance of (uncommon) awards		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of proposed research • Contributions and statements – Part II and III • Reports on the applicant

Have a perfect quality application to support this – no typos, clear and logical etc – proofread many times

Scholarships (Doctoral Awards)

<p>Relevant experience and achievements obtained within and beyond academia</p> <p>(50%)</p>	<p>Scholarships, awards, and distinctions (amount, duration, and prestige)</p> <p>Highlight significance of (uncommon) awards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarships and other awards offered • Reports on the applicant
	<p>Academic record</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institution transcripts • Reports on the applicant • Academic background
	<p>Professional, academic, and extracurricular activities, as well as collaborations with supervisors, colleagues, peers, students, and members of the community</p> <p>Describe your role in initiating or working within collaborations, mentoring others, etc</p> <p>Highlight significance of (uncommon) awards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic, research and other relevant work experience • Scholarships and other awards offered • Contributions and statements – Part I, II and III • Reports on the applicant

Indicators PDF

(Note: page number references may be out of date)

<p>Research ability or potential</p> <p>70%</p>	<p>Research proposal (feasibility, merit, and significance)</p> <p style="color: red; text-align: center;">Use space wisely, be explicit about merit and sign, use REFERENCES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of proposed research
	<p>Contributions to research and development (publications, patents, reports, posters)</p> <p style="color: red; text-align: center;">Highlight YOUR role in experiments, and paper writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 5 –Thesis most recently completed or in progress • Contributions and statements – Part I, II, and III • Reports on the applicant
	<p>Academic training and relevant work experience</p> <p style="color: red; text-align: center;">Especially work relevant to proposed research – support feasibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 2 - Academic, research and other relevant work experience • Contributions and statements – Part III, applicant’s statement • Reports on the applicant
	<p>Scholarships/awards (competitiveness, value, duration and prestige)</p> <p style="color: red; text-align: center;">Highlight significance of uncommon awards in personal statement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 4 - Scholarships and other awards offered
	<p>Researcher attributes (critical thinking, application of knowledge, judgment, originality, initiative, autonomy, enthusiasm for research)</p> <p style="color: red; text-align: center;">Give examples to support any claims.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions and statements – Part III, applicant’s statement • Reports on the applicant • Outline of proposed research

Indicators – PDF

(Note: page number references may be out of date)

CRITERION (weight %)	INDICATORS	EVIDENCE
Research contd.	Justification for location of tenure (fellowships only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Page 6 - Justification for location of tenure (fellowships only)
	Ability to complete projects within an appropriate time period Justify a long (or short) degree	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Page 1 – Academic background• Page 5 – Thesis most recently completed or in progress• Reports on the applicant

Indicators PDF

<p>Communication, interpersonal, and leadership abilities</p> <p>30%</p>	<p>Professional and extracurricular interactions/collaborations with supervisors, colleagues, and peers (e.g., <u>teaching</u>, <u>mentoring</u>, <u>supervising</u>, project managing, chairing committees, organizing conferences/meetings, participating in elected positions, and industrial work experience)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 2 – Academic, research and other relevant work experience • Contributions and statements – Part III, applicant’s statement • Reports on the applicant <p>Don’t hope your references will point these things out!</p>
	<p>Awards for papers, reports, posters, or oral presentations</p> <p>No award is too small.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 4- Scholarships and other awards offered (e.g., best paper award at a conference) • Reports on the applicant
	<p>Participation in publication writing (e.g., contributions and statements)</p> <p>Be explicit about your role</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributions and statements – Part II, most significant contributions to research and development • Reports on the applicant
	<p>Quality of presentation of application</p> <p>Make it concise and perfect. Proofread... then do it again</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of proposed research • Contributions and statements – Part III, applicant’s statement • Page 6 - Justification for location of tenure (fellowships only)

Tips

- **There are always more good candidates than awards – STAND OUT. Make your best case by explicitly addressing all criteria. Write with instructions and criteria in hand! (note many areas of your application are indicators for scoring from multiple criteria)**
- Choose good Referees but do not simply hope that they point out things that you don't. Explain all relevant details yourself.
- Show that you can produce a polished document.