Overview of Awards

Frederick Banting and Charles Best Canada Graduate Scholarship
• Master’s (CIHR CGSM): $17,500/year; for 1 year

Alexander Graham Bell Canada Graduate Scholarship
• Master’s (NSERC CGSM): $17,500/year; for 1 year

Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship
• Master’s (SSHRC CGSM): $17,500/year; for 1 year

Other Tri-Agency Awards:

Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplement
• Up to $6,000 for a period of research study abroad
Eligibility Criteria

• Canadian Citizen or Permanent Resident of Canada

• Graduate program with a significant research component

• Completed no more that 12 months of full-time studies in the graduate program as of December 31, 2019

• Have at least a 3.5 GPA in each of the last two completed years of study (full-time equivalent)

• Have not received any other Tri-Council funding for a master’s program
Application Process

• Apply via the CGSM Research Portal (https://portal-portail.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/).

  Deadline: December 1, 2019 (6:00 PM Mountain Time, 8:00 PM Eastern Time)

• You may select up to 3 institutions for your proposed study.

• If not yet admitted to a graduate program, you must also apply for admission at University of Alberta no later than February 7, 2020 or by the department program deadline, which ever comes first, in order to be considered for the CGSM at the University of Alberta.

• After December 1, 2019: FGSR reviews CGSM applications for eligibility and completeness and forwards applications to departments

• Departments conduct preliminary evaluations, rank applications and forward to the FGSR Graduate Scholarship Committee for final adjudication.

• Decisions are announced via Research Portal on April 1, 2020.
Application Components

• A completed application form

• An outline of proposed research (one page max, plus one page for citations)

• CV (to be completed on the Canadian Common CV online system)

• Two letters of reference (to be uploaded online by referees before December 1st)

• Official and up-to-date transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended, including University of Alberta transcripts (scanned and uploaded).
A Note about Transcripts...

• Students are required to upload all of their original, up-to-date transcripts to the Research Portal.
• Detailed instructions regarding transcript requirements (and definitions of “official” and “up-to-date” are available on the CGSM Application Instructions web page.
• If your transcripts are uploaded incorrectly OR your transcript record is incomplete, the application could be marked as ineligible.
• You are required to provide a complete academic history of your post-secondary education.
  – All transfer credit transcripts (even if they were transferred to this university)
  – OFFICIAL University of Alberta transcripts
  – All transcripts of incomplete work/non-degree study/qualifying years, etc.
  – In almost all cases, FGSR will not release transcripts back to student, even if we have them on file.
Selection Criteria

**Academic excellence**
- As demonstrated by past academic results, transcripts, awards and distinctions
- Weight: 50%

**Research Potential**
- 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
- Weight: 30%

**Personal Characteristics and Interpersonal Skills**
- As demonstrated by the applicant’s past professional and relevant extracurricular interactions and collaborations
- Weight: 20%
Questions?

**For program-related info:**
FGSR Awards Services
grad.awards@ualberta.ca
Tel: 780-492-9460
uab.ca/gradstudies

**Tri-Agency Contact Info:**
Available on the [CGSM Application Instructions](#) webpage or on the [CGSM Program Information](#) webpage.

**For Research Portal issues/questions:**
Contact the Research Portal [Helpdesk](#).
Reference Letters

How to make sure they are *helpful* to your application

Dr. Ann McDougall
Professor
Department of History & Classics
Graduate Scholarship Committee Member
Reference Letters

Organization of Presentation

- What parts of your application do Reference Letters actually speak to?
- What are evaluators (who write such letters) asked to address?
- How does this (knowledge) influence:
  - who you should ask for a reference?
  - what information you should provide?
  - when you should make your request?
Categories to which Reference Letters Apply

Academic Excellence (50%)

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

Rating: Top 2%  Top 5%  Top 10%  Top 25%  Below Top 25%  Unable to comment

Provide an assessment of the applicant's skills, abilities, achievements, awards, experience and contributions related to this criterion. Use concrete examples.
Criteria for this Category

• 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)
Categories to which Reference Letters Apply

Research Potential (30%)

“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.”

Rating: Top 2%  Top 5%  Top 10%  Top 25%  Below Top 25%  Unable to comment

Provide an assessment of the applicant's skills, abilities, achievements, awards, experience and contributions related to this criterion. Use concrete examples.
Criteria for this Category

• 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, autonomy and independence

• Research experience and achievements relative to expectations of someone with the candidate’s academic experience
Categories to which Reference Letters Apply

Personal Characteristics/Interpersonal Skills (20%)

“As demonstrated by the applicant’s past professional and relevant extracurricular and interactions and collaborations.”

Rating: Top 2%  Top 5%  Top 10%  Top 25%  Below Top 25%  Unable to comment

Provide an assessment of the applicant's skills, abilities, achievements, awards, experience and contributions related to this criterion. Use concrete examples.
Criteria for this Category

• 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
Who should you ask?

- Consider what kinds of information your referees are being asked to ‘assess’:
  - who, among your professors, are best positioned to address that information?

  e.g. Academic Excellence: at least one should have taught you, preferably in more than one class and/or in a range of levels (300-level lecture, 400-level seminar)

  e.g. Research: at least one, preferably both, should be familiar with the subject of your proposed research; at least one should be knowledgeable in the field
Who should you ask?

- Consider what *kinds* of information your referees are being asked to ‘assess’:

  e.g. **Personal**: if possible, referees should have interacted with you in some context, outside the classroom or at least be aware of your activities within, contributions to the department and/or beyond

  (e.g. student associations, sports, community)
Who should you ask?

General Considerations:

• Chose someone who knows you personally: more important than (say) Professor with whom you have highest marks

• marks speak for themselves – these letters are assessments of what those marks mean in terms of criteria listed above
Who should you ask?

General Considerations:

• This is NOT about status: Chairs, Deans, other ‘important’ administrators *do not carry extra weight* here and normally are not good choices (unless they know you well)

• That said, permanent Faculty members are preferred over Contract Instructors; they *do carry more weight* because they are known and more familiar with what is required in these recommendations
Who should you ask?

General Considerations:

• If in 4th year (entering MA 2020): letters should be from 4th year if possible; if not, then from second term previous year – as recent as can be arranged keeping other criteria in mind

• If in 1st year (in MA autumn 2019): one letter should be from 4th year (whether at UofA or elsewhere), the other from your (UofA) supervisor (s/he needs to speak to your research proposal)
What Information to Supply?

Consider what *kinds* of information your referees are being asked to ‘assess’:

*And make sure they have that information!!*

- CV (easiest to provide them with your SSHRC CV; alternately – one that shows awards, work experience, volunteer work etc.)

- Research Proposal – the *exact one* you are submitting
What Information to Supply?

- **Transcript** – this helps assessor see you in ‘big picture’ of your academic achievements and background (other courses you have taken relevant for your project etc.)

- also, if there is a ‘red flag’ in terms of marks, you can draw attention to it and explain (Letter -- *see below*)
When (and how) to Ask?

At least TWO WEEKS (if not earlier) before Due Date:

Send letter explaining:
- what you are applying for
- what the referee will be asked to provide (in this case, on-line electronic form)
- what you will provide as information (and when)
- WHEN EXACTLY this reference would be due.

**ASK** if Professor would be willing to provide this (do not assume – even your supervisor deserves to be ‘asked’)**
When and How to Ask?

If response is ‘YES’: immediately send LETTER with attachments (Proposal, CV, Transcript)

- Letter should draw attention to anything you especially would like your assessor to mention: awards; personal ‘extracurricular’ activities; special circumstances -- explain what they are, why they are significant

You can’t tell your referee what to write but . . .

You CAN make his/her job easier by providing easily accessible information in a paragraph or two 😊
When and How to Ask?

Do Not Forget to Say: “THANK YOU”
And . . .

Not required but appreciated: let your referees know the outcome of your application.

Hopefully it is good news but if not, you’ll probably be re-applying at some point; best to keep referees ‘on your side’.

They DO care about your success and are happy to assist as needed. This follow-up helps ensure your referee will be there for you next time.
Application Elements

- **Summary**
  - 1800 characters

- **Outline of Proposed Research**
  - 1 page, single-spaced, Times 12 pt font (PDF)
    - **Objectives** (Purpose/Research Question(s))
    - **Context** (Literature review, policy context, social context, etc.)
    - **Significance** (Contribution to your field)

- **Bibliography/Citations**
  - 1 page
ENGAGE Your Reader

• Is your title memorable?
• 1st and last sentence
  – Ask a question: Have you ever known what was the right thing to do, but were unable to do it because of factors outside your control?
  – State a fact/statistic: “Distress” was among the top three feelings school principals selected to describe how they feel about their job (ABC Psychology Study (2018)).
  – Introduce a counterintuitive finding: Sleeping with your dog may enhance chronic pain sufferers’ quality and quantity of sleep.
  – Start/end opening paragraph with a purpose statement: The purpose of my proposed research is to ....
Objectives Section
(Purpose/Hypothesis/Research Question(s))

• As a reviewer I want to read this section and know:
  – What this research is about
  – What question drives this research proposal
  – The context from which this study emerges
  – That this research addresses an important challenge, problem, persistent issue
  – Who will benefit from this research
  – Why this study is intellectually exciting
Context Section

• Approximately 2 paragraphs
• Appropriateness of the literature review
• Is the literature review up to date?
• Is the literature cited relevant to the study?
• Does the literature review ARGUE for your proposed study?
• Does the literature review identify gaps in scholarship in a diplomatic, respectful way?
Methodology

• Most important section
• How are you going to address your research question?
• Hypotheses?
• Theoretical and/or conceptual framework
  – Explain the framework
  – Justify the framework—why is it appropriate for addressing your research question?
  – HOW will the framework be used as a lens through which to understand your data (if you’re collecting data)
• What steps will you take to conduct your study (e.g. methods of data collection or path of argumentation?)
Objectives

Context (or Literature Review)

Methodology

Significance
Characteristics of a Good Proposal

- Document – neat, well organized, easy to read
- Fresh insight into an important problem
- Writing that shows excitement, commitment
- Evidence that the applicant knows the field (strong lit review)
- Feasible work plan (methodology)
- “The best proposals teach” (Porter, 2005, p. 343)

Common Mistakes

- Writing that is vague, unfocused (takes too long for reviewer to figure out what it’s about)
- Dense academic prose (highly technical, esoteric...manage the curse of knowledge)
- No white space (LESS is MORE from reviewers’ perspective!)
- Jargon and/or acronyms (excludes reader)
- Research plan/methodology has a “trust me I know what I’m doing” feel – not enough description of how study will be conducted
- Sloppiness—typos, grammatical errors, etc.
- Laziness—cut ‘n paste (e.g. Summary and Proposal of Research Plan should be entirely different)
Tips & Tricks

Dr. Tracy Raivio
FGSR Associate Dean (Awards & Scholarships)
Graduate Scholarship Committee Chair
**CGS-M Tips and Tricks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>START EARLY</th>
<th>Use Online Resources</th>
<th>Choose References Wisely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every section of the application takes time, some aspects out of your control</td>
<td>Search ‘Canada Graduate Scholarships-Master’s Program Resources’</td>
<td>Find people who are reliable and can speak highly about you in all three categories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carefully Craft Research Proposal</th>
<th>Edit Proposal into Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have it edited by your supervisor(s), lab members, mentors, friends, etc.</td>
<td>1800 characters aimed towards a general audience, have your parents read it over</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“uplifting the whole people” — Henry Marshall Tory, Founding President, 1908
Correctly Format Attachments
Search ‘Research Portal Presentation and Attachment Standards’

Boost Your CV
Describe all leadership and work experience

Print for Final Review
Take it home and read it in a different environment

Submit Early
Create a safety net in case of website crashes, unexpected events, etc.

Don’t Panic
While writing application and after submitting

“uplifting the whole people”
— HENRY MARSHALL TORY, FOUNDING PRESIDENT, 1908