

Graduate Scholarship Committee Handbook

A Manual of Policies and Procedures (Abridged Version)

September 2016

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PREFACE

The Graduate Scholarship Committee (GSC) is a standing committee of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) Council. This Handbook is intended as a primer for members of the GSC as well as FGSR Councillors and graduate program administrators. The Handbook contains information about the management of those scholarships administered by the GSC.

September 2016

GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

Authority

Section 26(1)(m) of the *Post-Secondary Learning Act* empowers General Faculties Council (GFC) to "make rules and regulations respecting academic awards." Responsibility as it concerns awards for graduate students registered in the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research has been delegated to the FGSR Council, and responsibility as it concerns all other students has been delegated to the Executive Committee. An FGSR Scholarship Committee, responsible to FGSR Council, was established to make recommendations concerning graduate scholarship policy, to approve all graduate awards and bursaries, and to adjudicate University of Alberta graduate scholarship applications (FGSR Council 58/01/17).

The Graduate Scholarship Committee (GSC) is a standing committee of the FGSR Council, and is responsible for locally administered graduate awards. It acts as a selection committee for scholarships and fellowships awarded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). It also is involved in some other provincial and national award programs.

Members of the GSC represent the University of Alberta in its efforts to identify and reward scholarly excellence. The Committee recognizes that the attributes that define scholarly excellence may vary, from high achievement in coursework at the early stages of a graduate career, to demonstrated research productivity and originality at later stages.

Membership

The GSC is composed of experienced academics who are aware of various scholarly traditions and standards of excellence at universities. The FGSR Council approves the faculty members from the range of graduate programs on campus to serve on the GSC following the recommendation by the GSC chair. The normal term of appointment is three years, beginning in September. Appointments are made in recognition of the scholarly profile of members, including recognition of the need to balance the interests of large research areas, and of basic versus applied research traditions. Members are not representatives of individual departments or disciplines; they represent the University as a whole. Each member takes part not only in the work of the Committee as a whole, but is also appointed by the Chair to a subcommittee (see Appendix C, D and E).

Members of the Graduate Scholarship Committee

Dean, FGSR or delegate (Chair)	<i>ex officio</i>
Associate Dean, FGSR	<i>ex officio</i>
Associate Dean, FGSR	<i>ex officio</i>
Associate Dean, FGSR	<i>ex officio</i>
18-20 NSERC-area Faculty members	
18-20 SSHRC-area Faculty members	
10-15 CIHR-area Faculty members ¹	
Graduate Students' Association (GSA) Representative ²	
Graduate Awards Supervisor, FGSR (Secretary, non-voting)	<i>ex officio</i>

¹ FGSR administers limited number of CIHR-area awards and the numbers (quotas and allocations) for these awards are not very high compared to other research areas (NSERC and SSHRC).

² The Graduate Students' Association selects the GSA representative. The GSA representative may attend policy meetings, but does not attend meetings at which award recipients are selected.

Occasionally, when insufficient GSC members will be available, the committee may be supplemented by ad hoc members. Ad hoc members may be called for adjudication of a specific competition to fill the vacancies to reach the number of adjudicators required for the competition.

The GSC membership list may be posted on the FGSR website.

Responsibilities

Select and/or approve recipients of graduate awards offered by the University of Alberta and administered by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, including:

- Izaak Walton Killam Memorial Scholarships
- Dorothy J Killam Memorial Graduate Prizes
- Andrew Stewart Graduate Research Prizes
- Governor General's Gold Medals
- Alberta Innovates - Technology Futures (AITF) Graduate Student Scholarships
- University of Alberta Recruitment Scholarships
- Indigenous Graduate Award
- Interdepartmental Award Competitions

Review all applications submitted by students or forwarded from departments for the Tri-Agency competitions listed below. Prepare and submit a list of recommended applicants to the national selection committee in Ottawa, or select/approve recipients, according to the assigned limit.

- Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships
- Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Postgraduate Scholarships and Canada Graduate Scholarships - Doctoral and Master's
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) Doctoral Fellowships and Canada Graduate Scholarships - Doctoral and Master's
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Canada Graduate Scholarships - Master's
- Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplements

Review all applications submitted by students or forwarded from departments for the external competitions listed below. Prepare and submit a list of recommended applicants to the external selection committee according to the assigned limit.

- Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation Doctoral Scholarships
- W.L. Mackenzie King Memorial Scholarships
- Canadian Association of Graduate Studies (CAGS)/UMI Distinguished Dissertation Awards
- Western Association of Graduate Studies (WAGS)/UMI Distinguished Master's Thesis Awards
- Gary McPherson Leadership Scholarship
- Other external graduate award competitions, as necessary

Approve terms and conditions of all new graduate awards and bursaries at the University of Alberta.

Develop policies to guide and improve the graduate awards program at the University of Alberta.

Responsibilities of the GSC Chair

The Chair of the GSC is the Dean, FGSR, or delegate. The Chair is responsible to ensure that the mandate of the GSC is met.

The Chair works with departments to: 1) help enhance their efforts to maintain the existing standards of excellence; 2) support their efforts to improve success in scholarship competitions and in recruitment; and 3) create new scholarships.

The Chair assists departments and other campus units, including the Graduate Students' Association, to organize workshops for students on how to successfully apply for scholarships.

The Chair interacts with Student Financial Support in the Office of the Registrar, the Research Services Office, the Office of Advancement, the Office of the Vice-President (University Relations), graduate departments and faculty development officers to assist in the promotion and establishment of new graduate scholarships.

The Chair acts as the liaison with the national (SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR) and provincial (AITF) granting agencies and Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education.

The Chair supervises the adjudication of all award competitions administered by the Graduate Scholarship Committee and is responsible for dealing with concerns related to those competitions.

The Chair serves on the Killam Trusts Scholarship Committee.

The Chair prepares and presents an annual report on the activities of the GSC to the FGSR Council.

Responsibilities of the GSC Secretary

The Secretary to the GSC is the FGSR's Graduate Awards Supervisor. The Secretary is responsible for organizing relevant competitions and adjudication meetings, for preparing the agenda and taking minutes of GSC meetings, and for the general day-to-day administration of the GSC's business and the business of the FGSR's awards programs.

POLICIES OF THE GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE

Definitions

The GSC administers Scholarships, Fellowships, Prizes, Medals and Awards in accordance with the following definitions:

Scholarships and Fellowships

Scholarships and fellowships are intended to support future work, and can only be awarded to students with first-class academic standing (equivalent to a grade point average of 3.5 or greater on the University of Alberta grading scale); additional selection criteria may be considered. Scholarships and Fellowships are awarded competitively.

Prizes and Medals

Prizes and medals recognize past accomplishments and are not intended to support future work.

Awards

Generally, awards are intended to support future work and are awarded competitively to students with satisfactory academic standing (equivalent to a grade point average of 3.0 or greater for awards offered to students newly admitted to a graduate degree program, or a grade point average of 2.7 or greater for awards offered to students continuing in a graduate degree program); additional selection criteria may be considered, and may include financial need.

Eligibility

Students registered in master's programs are eligible to hold awards during the first four years of their program unless stated otherwise in the terms of reference for the award. Consideration for funding for the fifth year of a master's program may be considered if a compelling explanation (ie. illness, parental leave, personal catastrophe) outlined in a letter of support from the department is provided.

Students registered in doctoral programs are eligible to hold awards during the first six years of their program unless stated otherwise in the terms of reference for the award. Consideration for funding for the seventh year of a doctoral program may be considered if a compelling explanation (ie. illness, parental leave, personal catastrophe) outlined in a letter of support from the department is provided.

Full-time Registration

Full-time thesis-based students are required to be registered full-time in each term for the duration of the award.

Full-time course-based students and thesis-based students who commenced their graduate degree program prior to Fall 2011 are required to be registered full-time in each Fall and Winter term.

Ineligible Student Categories

Part-time students are not typically eligible, unless specified in the terms of reference for the award. If a student is selected as the recipient of one of the limited number of awards for which part-time students are eligible, the student is required to register in each term for the duration of the award.

Students registered in Graduate Certificate and Diploma programs are not typically eligible, unless specified in the terms of reference for the award. If a student is selected as the recipient of one of the limited number of awards

for which Graduate Certificate and Diploma students are eligible, the student is required to register in each term for the duration of the award.

Qualifying students, students on academic probation, visiting students and students in cost-recovery programs are not eligible to hold FGSR-administered awards, unless specified in the terms of reference for the award.

Concurrent Awards

Students may hold any number of UAlberta graduate awards concurrently and at full value, unless otherwise specified in the terms of reference for the award.

UAlberta graduate awards can be held concurrently with external awards. However, in some cases, the UAlberta award is then designated as being an Honorary award, and its value, if greater than the value of the external award, is reduced by the value of the external award. If the value of the UAlberta award is less than the value of the external award, the value of the Honorary UAlberta award is reduced to zero. Honorary scholarships are noted on a student's transcript.

The Graduate Scholarship Committee does not limit the number or total value of external awards that students may hold.

Employment While Holding an Award

The Graduate Scholarship Committee does not limit the number of hours of employment that award-holders can undertake. Notwithstanding this, award-holders are expected to devote most of their working time to the completion of their graduate degree.

Award-holders may hold graduate teaching or research assistantships at any point in the duration of their award.

New Awards and Award Nominations

The terms of reference for all new nomination awards must be reviewed and approved (on behalf of the Committee) by a subcommittee consisting of the Chair and the Secretary.

A nominator must be a Faculty of the University of Alberta, a Department or some other subdivision of a Faculty, or the delegate of a Faculty or subdivision of a Faculty. It is the specific intention of this definition that a nominator must not be a person or donor external to the University of Alberta (UAPPOL Creation of New Awards and Bursaries for Undergraduate Students Procedure Section 5).

Conflict of Interest

Donors must not be part of any selection committee responsible for the selection of recipients of awards for which they are the donor (UAPPOL Creation of New Awards and Bursaries for Undergraduate Students Procedure Section 5).

GSC members are not representatives of individual departments or disciplines; they represent the University as a whole. When adjudicating, members may make objective statements about students whom they know, and

provide insights pertinent to their disciplinary backgrounds. However, they shall neither adjudicate nor advocate for students whom they supervise or co-supervise.

Post-Adjudication

After adjudication is complete, FGSR award staff will remove GSC access to shared GoogleDrive folder containing scholarship applications and adjudication materials. GSC members should not disseminate, distribute or copy the shared documents with those unauthorized to view them. At the conclusion of the adjudication process, all copies of files (paper, electronic and etc.) and transitory documents must be destroyed. GSC members are responsible to comply with Alberta's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP) and University policy (UAPPOL Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Policy) when distributing or utilizing personal student information provided by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

Appendices



APPENDIX A: Establishing New Awards at the University of Alberta

The minimum value of a named graduate award at the University of Alberta is \$1,000. The FGSR has developed a set of criteria to assist donors and departments in establishing a new award and terms of reference for the award are developed based on the intent of the donor and the information provided. Once the terms of reference for the proposed award are finalized, the award is forwarded to the GSC for formal approval. Only those graduate scholarships administered by the GSC and offered on the basis of superior academic achievement will appear on a student's University of Alberta transcript.

Endowment Funding

One way of establishing a named graduate award is through an endowment. When an endowment is established, the initial donation is invested in the University's endowment pool and the fund commences earning income. A portion of the annual income accumulated from the endowment pool is used to fund the award.

The University of Alberta Endowment Investment Policy recognizes the need for endowed funds to maintain their real purchasing power and value over time. In accordance with the University policy, our fund managers endeavor to maximize returns within an acceptable level of risk to maintain capital and to provide for an appropriate level of spending. All assets are combined in the Unitized Endowment Pool (UEP). Each endowment fund is issued a number of units based on the unit market value of the UEP at the time new funds are invested.

A spending allocation is provided to each endowment fund. This is based on a percentage of the three-year moving average of the UEP unit market value and the number of units of each endowment fund in the UEP. Contributions to an award may be made over several years if the donor so desires. The University issues a charitable donation income tax receipt.

Annual Funding

A second method of establishing a named graduate award at the University of Alberta is through an annual donation of a minimum of \$1,000 per year, based on a commitment for at least five years. The University opens an account; the scholarship funds are deposited into the account annually, and are disbursed directly to the award recipient. The University will issue a charitable donation income tax receipt.

Terms of Reference

It is the policy of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research and the Graduate Scholarship Committee that its graduate scholarship program be based on academic standing. With this in mind, and in consultation with the specific faculty or department where applicable, the terms of reference for a new award are established following a standard format. Once approved by the GSC, the award is posted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research website. Only scholarships that are administered by the GSC will be recorded on University of Alberta academic transcripts.

APPENDIX B: Observations and Advice from the GSC on the Effective Preparation of Applications

Academic Record and Research Potential

The GSC places emphasis on research potential and research results as criteria for awarding scholarships and prizes. In general, the further along the students are in their program, the more the GSC examines the research record.

Grades

First class standing (GPA of 3.5 or greater at the U of A) generally is the minimum for recipients of scholarships. The U of A transcript provides the individual grade of the student and the class averages so the Committee can determine how the students perform in comparison to their peers. The Committee is attentive to the unique traditions among faculties and departments.

Research Achievements

In considering research achievements, the GSC and national selection Committees rely on refereed published works, exhibitions, productions or other examples of scholarly and creative endeavours as are appropriate to each discipline. These Committees look at the number of publications and also the quality of the journals in which they appear. It should not be implied that a publication is refereed if it is not; non-refereed publications should be in a separate section under their own heading. Conference presentations are considered meritorious, especially if they are international in character. In some disciplines, evidence of research productivity is normally not available until after the dissertation is complete (eg the dissertation is published as a book or a major production). The members recognize such cases and obtain evidence of scholarly promise from the program statement, letters of reference and departmental nomination letters.

Program Statement/ Research Proposal

Program statements and proposals should demonstrate evidence of solid and wide knowledge of the discipline and should be written by the student, not the supervisor. The most effective proposals are clear, concise and coherent yet demonstrate a clear focused approach, explaining how the research would advance the discipline. When describing the methodology, students should be careful not to present too technical a description. Proposals should be clear not only to people within the field, but also to a general audience.

Reference Letters

Reference letters are given substantial weight as assessments of research quality, productivity, and performance in classes.

Reference Letters are collected under the Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. They are required to evaluate the applicant for admission to a graduate program and/or for scholarship purposes. Reference letters are considered to be supplied in confidence and will be used only by individuals and committees who evaluate the applicant. If the applicant files an access request, this reference or portions of this reference may become available to the applicant under the provisions of the Act.

External agencies have policies regarding letters of reference, which differ from FGSR's policies. It is suggested that referees familiarize themselves with each agency's policies regarding letters of reference.

The strength of the departmental recommendation is an important source of information. Letters and departmental comments should testify to academic potential and research/industrial career promise (eg NSERC), not just the interest of the dissertation. Note that some applicants have been awarded SSHRC and NSERC scholarships without specific dissertation proposals.

The referee should be provided with complete information about the student. Letters should support the information in the application, be enthusiastic, focus on the applicant's skills, past achievements and potential, stress strengths and personal attributes, comment on publications (indicate whether peer-reviewed and the quality of the venue if possible), and demonstrate why the applicant is of superior calibre and worthy of an award. Extremely brief or cryptic letters are a disadvantage to scholars.

Applicants should not request a reference from referees who either do not know them well, or who are past employers and not familiar with graduate student programs and academic expectations.

Departments should not be shy about asking for technical retouching or even substantial rewriting of individual letters of recommendation if it would be beneficial to the student's application.

Departmental Ranking of Applications

The Graduate Scholarship Committee and national selection Committees consider the ranking to be high priority. The departmental comments and the ranking should be undertaken seriously and consistently, using the information provided with the application.

Departments are encouraged to include the following information with their ranking:

- The process for soliciting applications
- The size of the applicant pool
- The method of ranking (ie performed by one individual or by a committee)
- The criteria used in ranking (ie what factors were considered in determining the excellence of the applicants)

Departmental Considerations

The departmental Graduate Committee should determine which students are eligible for awards. These students should be encouraged to apply.

These students should be advised to prepare a preliminary application for perusal and discussion by an internal Committee in advance of the FGSR deadline. The final draft should be polished and visually tidy. Letters of reference might go through a draft-to-Committee stage.

Several of our colleagues have served on the adjudication Committees of NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR, or the GSC, and may be consulted and used as a resource to assist students with their applications.

Noted Inadequacies in Applications

- Failure to follow formatting guidelines for completing the application form (minimum font size, maximum number of allowable pages, margins, etc).
- Failure to provide a paragraph of clear introduction.
- Misperception of the audience; successful applications are written for a panel of readers from the general discipline, not for a group of specialists in the narrow sub-discipline of the research.

- Failure to point out how the research proposal aligns with the student's long-term program and career plan.
- Rhetorical weaknesses and the use of too much jargon.
- Master's and doctoral dissertations are on the same topic (especially SSHRC area).
- Range of coursework and research too narrow.
- Research topic trendy or uninteresting, not leading to new knowledge.
- Letters of recommendation requested from people with whom the applicants are comfortable, but who may be junior academics and/or not in the same field as the applicant.
- Dissertation exclusively the focus (especially SSHRC area).
- Point form is used instead of the requested essay form.
- Departmental marking and ranking figures are inconsistent.
- Poor spelling and sloppy visual presentation.
- Inclusion of outdated letters.
- Letters from referees are casual with grammatical errors, typos, etc, giving the impression that the student's application is not worthy of attention to detail.
- Citation of trivial awards.

APPENDIX C: Social Sciences and Humanities Sub-committee Membership

<u>Member</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Term</u>
Bryan Hogeveen (Chair, GSC)	Sociology	<i>ex officio</i>
Joan Greer	Art & Design	Jan 1, 2016 – Dec 31, 2018
Michael Maier	Business MBA	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Sarah Moore	Business PhD	Sept 1, 2015 – TBD
Bonnie Stelmach	Educational Policy Studies	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Anna Kirova	Elementary Education	Jan 1, 2016 – Dec 31, 2018
Christopher Bracken	English & Film Studies	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Jerry Varsava	English & Film Studies	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Samira El Atia	Faculte Saint-Jean	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2017
Ann McDougall	History & Classics	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Juhani Jarvikivi	Linguistics	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
David Gramit	Music	Sept 1, 2016 – Aug 31, 2019
Pirkko Markula- Denison	Physical Education & Recreation	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Reza Hasmath	Political Science	Jan 1, 2016 – Dec 31, 2018
Peter Dixon	Psychology	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Thomas Spalding	Psychology	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Dominique Clement	Sociology	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Michelle Meagher	Women's & Gender Studies	January 1, 2017 – Dec 31, 2019
Jana Grekul	Sociology	Sept 1, 2016 – Aug 31, 2019
Amy Kaler	Sociology	Sept 1, 2016 – Aug 31, 2019
Carrie Smith-Prei	Modern Languages & Cultural Studies	Sept 1, 2016 – Aug 31, 2019

APPENDIX D: Natural Sciences and Engineering Sub-committee Membership

<u>Member</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Term</u>
Suzanne Kresta (Associate Dean, FGSR)	Chemical & Materials Engineering	<i>ex officio</i>
John Nychka (Associate Dean, FGSR)	Chemical & Materials Engineering	<i>ex officio</i>
David Bressler	Agricultural, Food & Nutritional Science	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2017
John Locke	Biological Sciences	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Enrico Scarpella	Biological Sciences	Nov 1, 2015 – Oct 31, 2018
Vinay Prasad	Chemical & Materials Engineering	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Wolfgang Jaeger	Chemistry	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Davood Rafiei	Computing Science	Jan 1, 2016 – Dec 31, 2018
Lindsey Leighton	Earth & Atmospheric Sciences	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Marek Reformat	Electrical & Computer Engineering	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Yau Wong	Mathematical & Statistical Sciences	Jan 1, 2016 – Dec 31, 2018
James Hogan	Mechanical Engineering	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Andrzej Prus- Czarnecki	Physics	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Lawrence Le	Radiology & Diagnostic Imaging	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Alan Wilman	Biomedical Engineering	Jan 1, 2016 – Dec 31, 2018
Manisha Gupta	Electrical & Computer Engineering	Sept 1, 2016 – Aug 31, 2019
Aman Ullah	Agricultural, Food & Nutritional Science	Oct 1, 2016 – Sept 30, 2019
Samer Adeeb	Civil & Environmental Engineering	Sept 1, 2016 – Aug 31, 2019

Christopher Dennison	Mechanical Engineering	Sept 1, 2016 – Aug 31, 2019
Michael Gänzle	Agricultural, Food & Nutritional Science	Sept 1, 2016 – Aug 31, 2019
Eric Rivard	Chemistry	Sept 1, 2016 – Aug 31, 2019
Janelle Harms	Computing Science	Sept 1, 2016 – Aug 31, 2017
Albert Vette	Mechanical Engineering	Sept 1, 2016 – Aug 31, 2019

APPENDIX E: Health Research Sub-committee Membership

<u>Member</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Term</u>
Deborah Burshtyn (Associate Dean, FGSR)	Medical Microbiology & Immunology	<i>ex officio</i>
Carla Prado	Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
David Stuart	Biochemistry	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Thomas Simmen	Cell Biology	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Tammy Hopper	Communication Sciences & Disorders	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Patrick Flood	Dentistry	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Edan Foley	Medical Microbiology & Immunology	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Hanne Ostergaard	Medical Microbiology & Immunology	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2017
Sean McMurtry	Medicine	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Shannon Scott	Nursing	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2017
Alan Underhill	Oncology	Dec 1, 2015 – Nov 30, 2018
Sujata Persad	Pediatrics	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Esther Fujiwara	Psychiatry	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Sentil Senthilselvan	Public Health	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Thomas Churchill	Surgery	Sept 1, 2015 – Aug 31, 2018
Sharon Marsh	Pharmacy & Pharmaceutical Sciences	Sept 1, 2016 – Aug 31, 2019