Graduate Science Education

Internal Peer Review for Tri-Council Scholarship applications

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Why Internal Peer Review?

- Creates a culture for applying for funding, that we take scholarships seriously
- Provides experience in reviewing that can be useful in your career path
- Provides experience in mentoring
- Helps our students be successful in obtaining scholarships
GSE is developing a reviewer pool for scholarship competitions

Modeled on internal peer review site for faculty grant applications

Currently information available on GSE website https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/gse/prospective/awards-and-financial-support and our D2L pages

We are working on Sharepoint-based Scholarship Hub, which should be active this fall
Application should have two internal reviewers

- Expert in the project area
  - Supervisor, senior lab member
  - Supervisory committee member

- Arms length
  - Scientist in general area but not expert
  - Representative of committee members
  - Your role as internal peer reviewer
Matching reviewer and applicant

- Key words provided by reviewer and applicant used to match
- Reviewers will get one or two applications to review
- Matching based on need
  - Research areas
  - Number of students requesting review
  - Reviewing for CIHR, NSERC and possibly other competitions
Internal Peer Review

- Provide comments to the student about their application
  - Is it clearly written
  - Do you understand the project
  - Completeness

- Role is not to rewrite the application!
  - Student must write their application parts themselves
Applicant and reviewer will receive matching letter from me.

How you work together is up to you and the applicant:
- Virtual or face-to-face meetings

You have a right to set deadlines and say no to unreasonable requests:
- Respect!!!
Competitions

- **Tri-council doctoral**
  - CIHR: Deadline Oct 1
  - NSERC: Deadline Oct 15
  - SSHRC

- **Tri-council M.Sc. (CGSM)**
  - Deadline Dec 1

- **GAC awards**
  - Early Winter deadlines
CIHR funds medically-motivated research
NSERC funds basic science
NSERC eligible: Studying virus growth and replication, and virus/host interactions within a normal state host immune system*
NSERC ineligible/CIHR eligible: Studying virus growth and replication in the diseased state to understand disease progression*
NSERC will reject applications unreviewed if they do not fit agency mandate

*Thanks to David Schreimer
CIHR applications adjudicated using a virtual committee

- Students apply directly to CIHR.
- Application goes to FGS, but they do not review it for content or completeness
- Reviews performed on line. No face to face meetings
- Two reviewers per application.
CIHR adjudication

- **Achievements and Activities (35%)**
  - Publication activity (10%): CV, publication list
  - Other Research Activity (10%): CV, publication list
  - Academic Performance (15%): Transcripts, letters of reference

- **Characteristics and Abilities (40%)**
  - References, research proposal, training expectations

- **Research Training Environment (25%)-written by student and supervisor**
  - Training program for candidate (most written documents, 10%)
  - Scientific Activity of Supervisor (5%)
  - Research Resources of Supervisor (5%)
  - Training Record of Supervisor (5%)

- **Student and supervisor must submit a Common CV**
Applications first go to FGS for review

Top applications sent on to NSERC
  — Based on quota assigned to U. Calgary

NSERC uses peer review committees (Selection Committees)

Two tiers of awards for highly ranked applicants
  — CGS D: top tier, 35K/year for 2-3 years
  — PGS D: next tier. 21K/year for 2-3 years
Selection Criteria: NSERC

- **Academic excellence (30%)**
  - Transcripts, Scholarships and awards
  - Reviewers also consider relevant work experience, international studies

- **Research ability or potential (50%)**
  - Research proposal, contributions to research, referees

- **Communication, interpersonal and leadership abilities (20%)**
  - Referees, publications, proposal, quality of presentation of application (did you follow all the rules)

- No supervisor section or Common CV
At a minimum, students will send you their research proposal for review.

Ideally, the student will also include
- Training Expectations
- List of publications
- CV
- Lay abstract

Agencies want to see a well-integrated application package
- Tri-council funds the student, not just the research project
- Student needs to sell themselves to the agency as to why they should be funded.
Experiences Tri-council adjudicators, FGS, examination of CIHR reviewer comments

Content, context and/or impact of research not clearly stated.

Not following instructions – i.e. addressing criteria, or stretching rules.

Diluting genuinely important/impressive material by describing generic material at length.

Not addressing possible weaknesses in the application.

Proposal lacks hypothesis/research objective, and has insufficient detail in the method.
Top things the adjudicator wants to know

- What is this person going to do?
- Is the research feasible?
- What will be the outcomes and their impact? Is it new? Who will care?
- Do I have a picture of who this person is? What are their long term goals?
- Is this a good investment?
- Used by reviewers to get an overview of project
- This should be at a level that non-scientists can understand
- Often overlooked by student, but agencies consider it very important
- Is the work in the proposal clear and easily understood?
- Is the proposal free of jargon? Are acronyms defined?
- Is the proposal well written, and lacking grammatical and spelling errors?
- Are page limits and formatting correct?
Proposition

- **Introduction:** High level, explain motivation/rationale for the study
  - This should be written at “newspaper article level”
  - Importance of the research question and novelty of the work should be evident in this section.

- The proposal should have a clearly defined, testable hypothesis or research objective/question.

- The methods should include enough detail to convince you that the student can perform the research
  - Methods also used to assess research environment. Are the facilities/equipment/expertise available to support the proposed research
  - Address potential pitfalls/mitigation strategies
Expected outcomes/ Key Deliverables:
- What will we learn from your research?
- Stress novelty, innovation, advances to field
- Future directions
  - Follow up studies, knowledge translation

Significance (realistic)
- Tie into priority areas for agency in the subject area
Training Expectations

— Why U. Calgary?
— Why the supervisor?
— Program?
— Where do trainees from the lab go/what do they do?
— Who can they collaborate with?
— What extracurricular opportunities will the have?
— How is this concordant with the agency/U. Calgary Strategies?
— Show intangibles –
  ▪ Access to leadership/mentorship?
  ▪ Access to editorial/reviewing?
  ▪ Committee membership?
— Linked in one cohesive document

Slide courtesy of Dr. Lisa Hughes
Publications and other Research Contributions

- Publications found in Common CV (CIHR) and as an attachment
  - *NSERC also has most significant contributions*

- This provides room for a short description of the paper including
  - Their role in the research
  - The significance/impact of the work in their field

- Provide as much background information as possible
  - adjudicators outside of your discipline may not be aware of the prestige of awards you have received, conferences at which you have presented or the prominence of the journal in which you have been published.
Application includes

- Proposal
- CV
  - Publications
  - Awards
  - Work and research experience
- Proposal and academic excellence important for this award
- More information about reviewing after Oct 15
Contacts

- rdevinne@ucalgary.ca; awardsgse@ucalgary.ca
- GSE Web site
  - Current Students – Scholarships and Financial Support
  - https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/gse/prospective/awards-and-financial-support