Transcript: NSERC CGSD, Part 2

[Introduction]

Welcome to the NSERC CGSD, Part 2: Application advice and support.

* What are the selection criteria?
* How do I prepare an application?
* What support is available?
* What are my next steps?

Learn more in this 18-minute recording presented by the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

While every effort has been made to provide accurate information, please refer to the NSERC program material as your primary source of information.

# Accessibility Statement

For a copy of these slides and a transcript of this recording (including hyperlinks), please visit the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) [Canada Graduate Scholarship – Doctoral](https://www.uvic.ca/graduatestudies/finances/search-funding/award-pages/canada-graduate-scholarships-doctoral.php) website. Content is available in Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, and other formats upon request.

If you experience accessibility barriers with this presentation please contact fgsaward2@uvic.ca.

# What are the Selection Criteria?

[CGSD selection criteria](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/students-etudiants/pg-cs/cgsd-bescd_eng.asp#a9):

Fifty per cent of your score is based on **research ability and potential**. This includes the quality of your research proposal.

* Is it specific, focused, and feasible?
* Is your methodology sound?
* What is the significance of your project and your expected contribution to research?
* Have you demonstrated the ability and potential to carry out the project?

The other fifty per cent of your score is based on **relevant experience and achievements within and beyond academia**, including scholarships and awards, transcripts, and activities such as teaching, mentoring, organizing conferences, community outreach, science communication, and participating in associations and clubs.

A complete description in available at the link.

# Indicators of Excellence

When you visit the link to find the selection criteria you will notice that the description refers to the examples as **indicators**. Indicators are the **evidence** you will provide that demonstrates how you meet the selection criteria, so it’s important to know what kind of evidence reviewers are looking for.

* The [Guidelines on the assessment of contributions to research, training and mentoring](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/Policies-Politiques/assessment_of_contributions-evaluation_des_contributions_eng.asp) describes how applications submitted to NSERC funding opportunities are assessed during the merit review process. This document applies to all NSERC funding programs – including research grants for faculty members – so focus on the sections that are relevant for your application. For example, contributions to research includes not only publications, but also creation of datasets, appropriate data stewardship, accessibility of research results, contributions to policy development, and communication of research results to non-specialist audiences.
* The Review committee guide for Postgraduate Scholarships – Doctoral and Postdoctoral Fellowships programs is the guide for NSERC reviewers who will evaluate your application in the national competition. This document is available to the public at the link provided. Section 3.6 and Appendix A can provide insight into the evaluation process.
* The [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/policies-politiques/DORA-DORA_eng.asp) (known as DORA) is an initiative to promote best practices in the assessment of research contributions: specifically, to avoid over-reliance on journal publications as indicators of research output.
* NSERC’s [Guide on integrating equity, diversity and inclusion considerations in research](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/Policies-Politiques/EDI_guidance-Conseils_EDI_eng.asp) provides guidance on applying a critical EDI lens at different stages of the research process.

There is considerable overlap among these documents so you don’t need to read them in their entirety, but you may find it helpful to look through the examples as you highlight the indicators, or evidence, that you want to present to reviewers.

# Your Application Strategy

The diagram on this slide is a circular flowchart in which three sections labelled **selection criteria**, **your qualifications**, and **application sections** are in a continuous feedback loop.

As you prepare your application, work back and forth between the selection criteria and indicators, your qualifications, and the different sections of the application to ensure that all of your relevant qualifications are reflected in the application.

Consult with your academic supervisor and referees to identify which of your qualifications will have the greatest impact. Provide them with a draft copy of your Outline of Proposed Research, your Contributions and Statements, and your CV. Ask your referees to include qualifications that may not be reflected in your application, such as a paper that has been submitted but yet accepted.

Think of your application not as a series of discrete text boxes and attachments, but as a single cohesive document.

# NSERC Form 201

You will prepare your application using Form 201 in the NSERC Online System. Consult the website to find [detailed instructions](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServices-ServicesEnLigne/instructions/201/pgs-pdf_eng.asp) and a [list for a complete application](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServices-ServicesEnLigne/instructions/201/pgs-pdf_eng.asp#a31).

Be sure to follow the NSERC [Online presentation & attachment standards](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServices-ServicesEnLigne/pdfatt2_eng.asp): this covers things like font size and page numbering.

Initiate your application, then edit and save frequently. Don’t wait until the last minute to initiate an application and upload your attachments. There are two reasons why this is helpful:

1. If you initiate an application, then send FGS an email, we can check the portal to ensure that we can see your application. This means you have selected the correct option to be in the UVic pool of applicants. If you don’t select the correct option, NSERC may disqualify your application.
2. In the event of a system-wide technical problem – which does happen from time to time – we will know that you are an applicant in this competition and we will be able to provide you with information and instructions.

NSERC has a help desk for support with the portal’s accessibility features.

And a reminder that technical support is through NSERC, not UVic.

# Personal Data

NSERC uses data from the **USER PROFILE** (e-Console section) to inform equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives. Information in this section is not available to UVic, referees, or reviewers. You must complete this section, but you may select “*I prefer not to answer*.”

The **PERSON PROFILE** section includes self-identification statements and consent related to the User Profile. Applicants who self-identify as Indigenous and consent in this section will be identified by FGS and NSERC personnel for the purpose of forwarding applications to the national competition.

# Equity Initiatives

[Indigenous student researchers](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/PG-CS/CGSD-BESCD_eng.asp#a15). As part of the Tri-Agencies commitment to supporting research by and with Indigenous peoples, institutions may recommend an unlimited number of applications from Indigenous students to the national competition.

[Black student researchers](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/policies-politiques/FAQBlackScholars-FAQUniversitairesNoirs_eng.asp). The Tri-Agencies have dedicated resources to address the disproportionate underfunding of Black scholars. This support will help strengthen efforts to address inequities, making Canada’s research culture more equitable, diverse, and inclusive.

In order to be considered for these initiatives, students are invited to self-identify in the User Profile and Person Profile sections of the online application.

# Who, What, and Where

Here are a few tips for the basic who, what, and where sections of your application.

Application profile: choose the correct option that reflects your current status (options A to D). You can find more information in the Where to Apply section of the Form 201 instructions.

Scholarship or fellowship information: this refers to the months of study in your doctoral program and relates to your eligibility.

Location of tenure: select up to 3 proposed institutions. If you plan to attend another institution for your doctoral program but you are currently registered at UVic, you will apply through the UVic pool of applicants.

Key words: check the funding supplements described in the previous recording. If you are eligible for a funding supplement that is awarded based on key words in your application, ensure that you select some of the key words listed on the supplement website.

Justification for eligibility of proposed research: this section is optional. If your research project overlaps with the SSHRC or CIHR mandate you will need to prepare a justification for submission of your application to NSERC. This section of the application will be reviewed by NSERC to determine your eligibility, but will not be evaluated by reviewers.

If you are in the position of preparing a justification, it is advisable to contact NSERC to confirm the eligibility of your project well in advance of the application deadline. Please contact the Faculty of Graduate Studies at fgsaward2@uvic.ca for more information.

# Transcripts

It is very important that your transcripts meet both the NSERC requirements, and UVic requirements or you risk having your application disqualified.

* Your transcripts must be complete. You must have transcripts for all post-secondary studies including transfer credit, study abroad, and programs not completed. If you participated in international exchange and those courses are listed in your home institution’s transcript, it must include a letter grade or score, not just a complete or incomplete designation. If a score isn’t included you will need an official transcript from the host institution.
* Your transcripts must be up-to-date including fall 2024 registration. This is important for proof of registration and the months of study eligibility requirement.
* Transcripts from other institutions: must be official.
* Transcripts from UVic: official is preferred but unofficial is accepted. You can access an unofficial transcript through your Online Tools.
* Include one copy of the legend for each transcript.
* Your transcript must be in English, French, or accompanied by a certified translation.
* When ordering transcripts, request that they be sent to you, not FGS.

See complete instructions on the [FGS CGSD](https://www.uvic.ca/graduatestudies/finances/search-funding/award-pages/canada-graduate-scholarships-doctoral.php) website under the Application Procedures section.

# The Core of Your Application

Your Outline of Proposed Research, Contributions and Statements, and Reference Letters represent the core of your application. This important information is addressed by the NSERC Coach during the in-person workshop so I will just provide a few technical comments here. If you did not attend the in-person workshop, please contact the NSERC Coach for support. Contact information will be provided later in this presentation.

Outline of proposed research: use a citation style that saves space (such as numerical references in superscript) and enhance readability with way-finding headings.

Contributions and statements: use the headings, sub-headings, and format provided in the Form 201 instructions.

Reference letters (previously referred to as reports on the applicant): these are two letters of reference, one of which should be from your academic supervisor. If your academic supervisor cannot provide you with a letter of reference, you should provide a rationale in the Special Circumstances section of the application.

Provide your referees with a copy of your draft application, your CV, and the [NSERC instructions for completing a reference letter – form](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/onlineservices-servicesenligne/instructions/201/ReportAppl_eng.asp) [201](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/onlineservices-servicesenligne/instructions/201/ReportAppl_eng.asp).

Enter their contact information into the online form: this will generate an email with a link they can use to upload their letter. I recommend that you set an earlier deadline with your referees, as you will not be able to submit your application until they have submitted their letters.

Your referees may choose to share their reference letters with you, but you cannot view them in the application portal. There is an “Unlock” feature, but this does not give you access: it returns the letter of reference to the referee for edits. This means the letter must be re-submitted before you can submit your application.

# These are Part of Your Narrative

When I said earlier to think of your application not as a series of discrete components, but as a single cohesive document, here are some examples of what I mean. Use the following sections of your application to reinforce the narrative in your three core areas.

Bibliography: Your bibliography is an opportunity to demonstrate awareness of foundational and relevant works in your research area. However, don’t list unnecessary references just to fill up the available space. You can use any citation style appropriate to your discipline.

Theses Complete/In Progress: Your thesis summary is an opportunity to connect your previous work with your Outline of proposed research: to demonstrate continuity or to comment on a change of course.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Considerations in Research: The EDI section is an opportunity to demonstrate that you have applied a critical EDI lens at different stages of the research process. It is also an extra space (beyond the 2-page maximum for your Outline of Proposed Research) to expand on these aspects of your project.

Special Circumstances: This is an optional section you can use to identify challenges or delays, or provide necessary context or clarification. Be clear and concise and avoid identifying other individuals (for example, do not describe a particular relative’s health details). This section of the application can be viewed by FGS, your referees, and by UVic and NSERC reviewers.

# What Support is Available?

The Faculty of Graduate Studies provides support throughout the application process. My contact information is provided here: Lisa Pender, Scholarship Officer, email fgsaward2@uvic.ca.

Your NSERC Coach, Dr. George Tzanetakis email gtzan@cs.uvic.ca can provide advice and feedback on your application, particularly your outline of proposed research and your application strategy.

Additional writing support is available through UVic’s [Centre for Academic Communication](https://www.uvic.ca/learningandteaching/cac/undergraduate/tutoring/online/index.php) (CAC) located in the Library. You can book individual appointments or you can upload your writing to their online portal to receive feedback and polish your writing into a compelling argument.

Finally, please keep in mind that your [technical support](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServices-ServicesEnLigne/SupportRequest-DemandeDeSoutien_eng.asp) is through NSERC, not UVic, so allow extra time for any technical issues that may arise (for example, difficulty uploading your transcripts or a forgotten password). NSERC also has a series of [application tutorial videos](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6ox0GB7vXYlhaAY7mEqwmMqYK9TGCp1E) on YouTube.

# What Are My Next Steps?

1. If you haven’t already done so, contact your referees.
2. Order your official transcripts.
3. Set yourself a schedule to meet the deadline that allows time for feedback, particularly on the Outline of Proposed Research and the Contributions and Statements sections of your application. Ask for feedback from your NSERC Coach, academic supervisor, your committee, the graduate advisor in your program, the CAC, and your peers.
4. Submit your application in the portal by the UVic internal deadline: Thursday, October 3rd, noon Pacific time.
5. In the weeks following the internal deadline, FGS will conduct a technical review of your application. We will contact you with feedback and provide a time period during which you may make revisions, then re-submit your application in the portal. You’ll see in the online application there is a section called University Comments. We don’t use this section to provide feedback: instead, we will send our feedback to the preferred email address you have provided in your UVic Online Tools.

Campus review and selection for the national competition will take place throughout October and November. Departments will review applications and withdraw any they do not consider to be competitive. Next, a committee of faculty members in the natural sciences and engineering will review and score your applications. The top ranked applications will be forwarded to the national competition, up to a maximum number set by NSERC (known as the quota). This year UVic’s NSERC quota is 53. You will be advised of the outcome – whether or not you have been selected for the national competition – in late November. The review process for the national competition takes place in the new year, and NSERC will announce the results in April.

This concludes the presentation. Thank you.