

Effective Scholarship Writing

Canada Graduate Research Scholarship (CGRS) –
Master's Program

October 31, 2025

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Agenda

1. Common Questions About Scholarship Applications
2. Canada Graduate Scholarship – Master’s Program
3. General Advice for Preparing Applications
4. Questions/Discussion

1. Common Questions About Scholarship Applications

- How are scholarship applications evaluated?
- What makes a research proposal competitive?
- Is there a style of writing for scholarship applications?
- What goes into the research proposal?
- What about for performers and composers?
- Are there other important parts to scholarship applications?

How are scholarship applications evaluated?

- Past academic results (Transcripts)
- Relevant professional, extracurricular activities & academic experience (CCV)
- The quality of references (Referee Assessments)
- The strength and/or potential of the research proposal

What makes a research proposal competitive?

- **Significance:** Addresses an important question or problem in the field.
- **Novelty:** Demonstrates creativity and independent thinking.
- **Potential for Impact:** Has a reasonable likelihood of success and the potential to make a meaningful contribution to the discipline.
- **Capability:** Shows that you have sufficient knowledge, skills, and experience to carry out the proposed research.
- **Clarity:** Presents a clear, logical, and focused project plan.
- **Feasibility:** Outlines a realistic scope of work appropriate for a Master's-level project.
- **Comprehensiveness:** Provides sufficient detail to demonstrate how the research will be conducted and evaluated.

Is there a style of writing for scholarships?

- Academic Writing

Past oriented:
Work you have done

Expository:
Explaining to reader

Impersonal:
Objective, dispassionate

Verbosity rewarded:
Few length constraints

Specialized Terminology:
“Insider jargon”

- Scholarship Writing

Future Oriented:
Work you wish to do/active language

Persuasive:
“sell” the reader

Personal:
passionate, authentic

Embraces brevity:
strict length constraints

Accessible language:
broad audience

What goes into a Research Proposal?

General Structure:

- **Background and Context:** Summarize current knowledge with key citations. Identify research gap, problem, or opportunity and explain significance.
- **Objectives and Hypothesis / Research Question:** State main objectives and, if applicable, present a testable hypothesis or central research question.
- **Approach and Methodology:** Describe experimental, theoretical, creative approach; outline methods and procedures, citing relevant literature.
- **Feasibility:** Explain how the project is achievable within the award period. If space allows, describe your capability to execute the project.
- **Significance and Contribution:** Describe the expected impact and highlight the potential contribution to the field.

In Other Words...

- There is a problem in the world (in music, in...)
- It is important for these reasons
- Some research has been done
- But there are gaps; My research will fill the gaps
- Here's what I will do the research/fill the gap
- I am capable of doing it in one year because...
- The potential impact of having done it will be...

EXAMPLE: CGRS – M Outline of proposed research

The single attachment with two separate sections:

Outline of proposed research (one page maximum)

- Provide a detailed description of your proposed research project for the period of the award. Be specific and include **background information** to situate your project within the current knowledge in the field. Clearly state your **objectives** and **hypothesis**, and outline your **experimental or theoretical approach**, citing relevant literature. Describe the **methods and procedures** to be used. Explain the **significance** of your research to the relevant field(s) in the health sciences, natural sciences, engineering, social sciences, or humanities, as appropriate.
- If your degree program produces an artistic creation rather than a thesis, clearly describe the research component of your work. If your program does not involve a thesis, major research paper, or major research project, clearly outline the research component of your degree. If your specific project is not yet decided, provide a detailed description of a proposed research project. You may adjust your research direction or activities during the award
- The outline must be written independently. Ideas or text belonging to others must be properly cited. Include all relevant information in the outline; do not direct reviewers to external URLs or publications.

Bibliography and citations (one page maximum)

Provide a bibliography that includes citations for all works referenced in the research proposal. These citations should be in a format used by the primary discipline of the proposed research. You must ensure that all citations are clear and complete to allow reviewers to easily locate the sources.

What about for Performers and Composers?

The same instructions apply, but also:

- If your project uses a **research-creation** approach, clearly indicate its research component. Outline the objectives of your research and the context, methodology and expected contribution to the advancement of knowledge.
- Research-Creation approaches integrate artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation
- The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms)

Are there other components of the application that are important?

YES

2. Canada Graduate Scholarship Master's Program (CGS-M)

- Overview
- Application Components
- Application portals
- Selection Criteria

★ Master's (CGRS M) → General Overview

Value, Duration, and Eligibility

- **Value & Duration:** \$27,000 for 12 months, non-renewable
- **Eligibility:** Canadian citizens, permanent residents or Protected Persons under IRPA 95(2)
- completed **≤ 12 months** of full-time graduate study by December 31; or (NEW) **4-12 months** and going on to a doctoral program the following year.

Important Dates and Deadlines

- **September 1:** Online Application is available in the RESEARCH PORTAL.
- **December 1:** Application deadline (before 8:00 p.m. EST).
- **December 2 - March 31:** Western adjudicates awards.
- **April 1:** SGPS posts results to the Research Portal

★ CGRS-M → Application Components

Application Component	Complete in Online Application / PDF Attachment	Effort required for completion (estimated approximations)
Application Overview	Online Application	Moderate
Activity Details	Online Application	Minimal-to-Moderate
Outline of Proposed Research	PDF Attachment (1 page max)	Substantial
Bibliography & Citations	PDF Attachment (1 page max)	Moderate
Transcripts	PDF Attachment	Moderate-to-Substantial
Canadian Common CV	Separate Online Portal	Moderate-to-Substantial
Reference Assessments (2)	Online Application	Moderate

Applications open in Research Portal on September 1, 2025

Recommendation: Start your Canadian Common CV now, while you wait!

★ CGRS-M → Research Portal



Applications are submitted through the CGS [Research Portal](#)



New User? [Create a Research Portal Account](#)

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Research Portal

Welcome to the Research Portal

Account

The Research Portal is intended for use only by individuals participating in the preparation of applications for funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), in the administration of awards, and in the merit review of applications.

Before using the Research Portal, you must read the [Terms and conditions](#) and [Transparency](#) (see below). When you login and use this system, it means that you understand these policies and conditions and you consent to the use of your personal information for administrative purposes.

Notice: Maintenance Window

This system will normally be unavailable to users Saturdays from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. (eastern), as well as on the second Wednesday of each month from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. (eastern).

Sign In

Email:

Password:

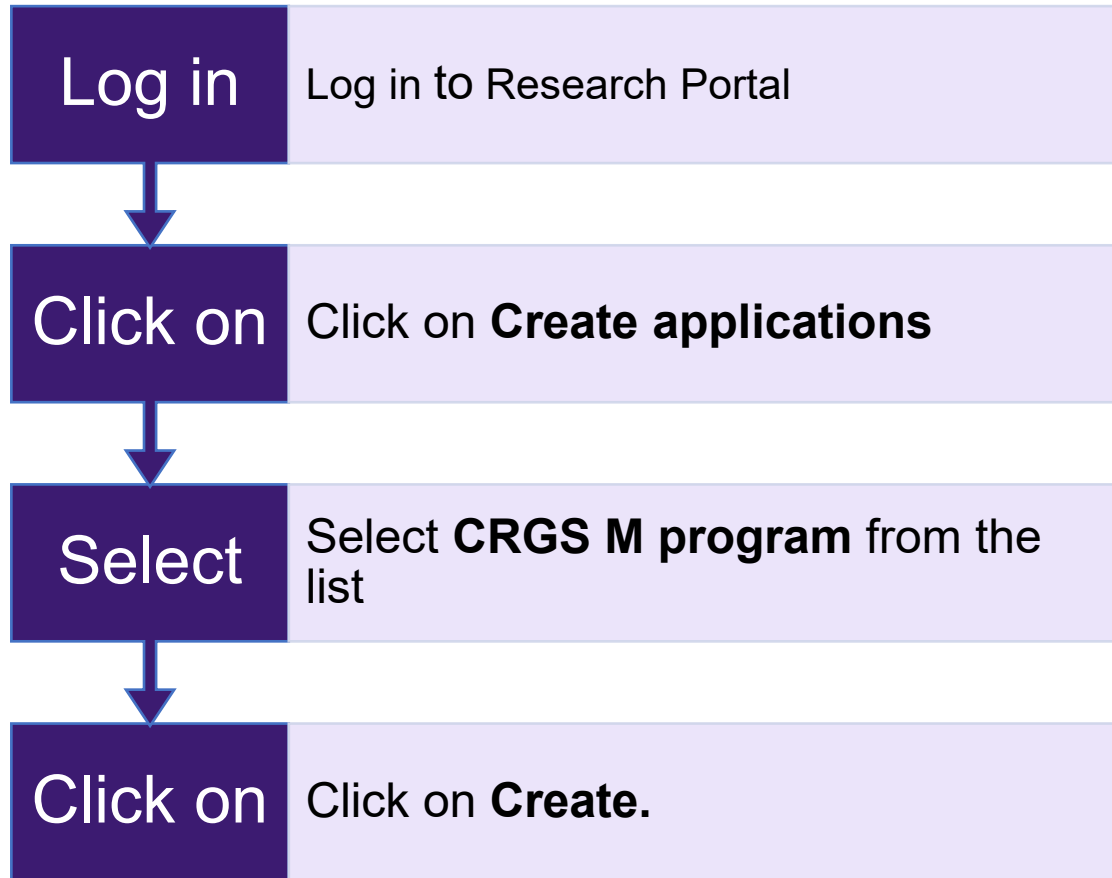
[Sign In](#)

New here? [Create account](#)

I forgot my [password](#).

[**https://portal-portail.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/**](https://portal-portail.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/)

★ CGS-M → Creating an Application



Profile Feedback

Home

Welcome Chantal Lemire [Sign out](#)

Applicant

Applicant

Create Application

Funding Opportunity	Start Date	End Date	Action
Stage: Application			
Discovery Grants Program	2024-08-12 08:00:00	2024-11-01 20:00:00	
Research Tools and Instruments	2024-08-12 08:00:00	2024-10-25 20:00:00	Create
Subatomic Physics Envelope - Individual	2024-08-12 08:00:00	2024-11-01 20:00:00	
Subatomic Physics Envelope - Major Resources Support Program	2024-08-12 08:00:00	2024-10-01 20:00:00	
Subatomic Physics Envelope - Project	2024-08-12 08:00:00	2024-11-01 20:00:00	
Subatomic Physics Envelope - Research Tools and Instruments Cat. 1	2024-08-12 08:00:00	2024-10-25 20:00:00	Create
Subatomic Physics Envelope - Research Tools and Instruments Cat. 2 & 3	2024-08-12 08:00:00	2025-10-01 20:00:00	

Applications

Application Title	Funding Opportunity	Stage	Status	Role	Last Updated	Action
No records to display.						

Records displayed per page: 10 0 items in 1 pages

★ CGS-M → Canadian Common CV Portal



CGS-M applications require a CV created through the [Canadian Common CV Portal](#)



New User? Register in the [Canadian Common CV Portal](#)



[Instructions for completing and attaching a Canadian Common CV](#)

Canadian Common CV
www.ccv-cvc.ca

Français Home Contact Us Help Login

Common CV Login 2024-08-06 15:40 EST

*Username ? [Forgot Username](#)

*Password ? [Forgot Password](#)

Are you a new user? ←

Modified: 2024-05-07 13:10 [Top of Page](#) [Important Notices](#)

<https://ccv-cvc.ca/>

★ CGRS M → Selection Criteria

SELECTION CRITERIA	WEIGHT
<p>Academic Excellence: Demonstrated by past academic results, transcripts, awards and distinctions; academic record; scholarships and awards held; duration of previous studies; type of program and courses pursued; course load; relative standing (if available).</p> <p>Application Components: Transcripts + CCV + References</p>	<p>50%</p>
<p>Research Potential: Demonstrated through research background, interest in discovery, proposed research, potential contribution to knowledge, and expected outcomes; quality and originality of research contributions; relevance of experience and training to the proposed research; significance, feasibility, and merit of the project; critical thinking and judgment; ability to apply skills and knowledge; initiative and independence; and research achievements relative to academic level. Application Components: Proposed Research + CCV + References</p>	<p>30%</p>
<p>Personal Characteristics and Interpersonal Skills: Demonstrated through professional and relevant extracurricular interactions and collaborations; work experience; leadership roles; project management and organizing experience; ability or potential to clearly and logically communicate theoretical, technical, or scientific concepts in written and oral formats; involvement in academic life; and volunteer or community outreach activities.</p> <p>Application Components: CCV + References</p>	<p>20%</p>

3. General Advice for Preparing Applications

General Advice:

- **Start early**
- Follow the instructions or guidelines provided by the granting agency to which you are applying. **Follow application instructions exactly!**
- Keep the application instructions printed or easily accessible while you work.
- Use the **correct formatting** (font, margins, number of pages, spacing, etc.)
- Correct all grammatical and spelling errors
- Ask your **supervisor** and **colleagues** to read drafts and provide suggestions
- At least one reviewer should be qualified to critique proposal content (supervisor/other)
- Allow ample time for rewrites!

General Advice

- **Write clearly and accessibly**, so reviewers from different fields can understand your proposal.
- Spell out all acronyms and avoid using *highly* specialized jargon.
- Use present or future tense and active voice whenever possible.
- Be **clear, direct, and concise**.
- Present a **concrete, realistic plan** that convinces reviewers you can successfully complete the proposed research.
- Highlight your skills, achievements, and contributions—**advocate confidently for yourself** and your project.
- Use headers and white space to organize your application and **make it easy to read**.

This Research Proposal Template has won hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant money for multiple graduate students and scholars in the social sciences and humanities over the past 15 years. Let's walk through this step by step. The first step is to identify what large general topic of wide interest that your specific project relates to. These are topics that anyone, including your grandmother or someone sitting next to you on a plane, would say, "oh, yes, that's an important topic." Obvious Examples include: immigration, sustainable energy, changes in the family, curing cancer, new social technologies, environmental degradation, global warming, etc. Until you can identify a really broadly interesting theme that your project relates to, you will never be successful in applying for grants. If you work on arcane topics or in a small field (ie, medieval French literature), don't despair. You don't have to relate to current events or go all presentist. You just need to find the way in to your topic that starts at its widest possible relevance or interest, as appropriate for your field. Don't start at your topical micro-niche, even when you know you're writing for others in or near that niche. You always must show a wider import/context to your topic. This is because your application must **excite** the readers, and the readers are likely from a range of different disciplines. They will not all be interested in your discipline's narrow debates. They want to know that your work and your intellectual and scholarly vision are wide, and broad, and encompassing. Once you have established your wide, much debated, topic, you then identify two bodies of literature relevant to your own training that dealt with this topic. If you are an anthropologist, and your research is on Haitian communities in New York City, for example, you will start by pointing to the wide debates on immigration in America. Then you will write, "scholars in many fields have addressed these important questions. Within cultural anthropology, scholars such as xxx, xxx, and xxx have all explored the role of cultural beliefs in shaping immigrant communities. Within Caribbean Studies, meanwhile, scholars such as xxx, xxx, and xxx have focused on the specific demographic and economic trends which have fueled outward migration."

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Research Questions: If you work on arcane topics or in a small field (ie, medieval French literature), don't despair. You don't have to relate to current events or go all presentist. You just need to find the way in to your topic that starts at its widest possible relevance or interest, as appropriate for your field. Don't start at your topical micro-niche, even when you know you're writing for others in or near that niche. You always must show a wider import/context to your topic.

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General Tips for Requesting References

- **Select Appropriate Referees:** Faculty members/persons who can assess your academic potential (especially including your supervisor if applicable).
- **Make Request EARLY:** Reach out to your prospective referees as early as possible, *ideally no later than two weeks* prior to submission deadline.
- **Make an Initial Request via email:** Attach your Outline of Proposed Research draft; the Referee Instructions; some form of “Academic Summary Sheet for Referees”
- **Choose a Requested Completion Date:** *Before* the Dec. 1 deadlines. Give enough time (e.g., 3-5 business days) to receive assessments and complete your application submission (you can only submit when both assessments are complete).
- **Follow up with Referees:** Check your application 3-5 business days before the Requested Completion date you selected and send an email reminder to any referee whose assessment does not appear to be complete on your application.

General Tips for Canadian Common CV

- Start **ASAP**
- Include everything you can think of that helps to give assessors a sense of who you are and what you bring to the table.
- Include any academic, research, or community awards. Even small prizes demonstrate merit and commitment.
- Include undergraduate research projects, theses, independent studies, or lab work. Describe your role, methods, and outcomes.
- Experiences like Tutoring, lab assisting, teaching assistantships, or mentoring roles totally count
- Relevant work experience, internships, or volunteer work demonstrating skills transferable to research or performance
- Extracurricular Activities that show initiative, teamwork, and communication skills

YOU MISS 100% OF THE
SHOTS YOU DON'T
TAKE. - WAYNE GRETZKY "

- MICHAEL SCOTT



4. Questions/Discussion?