



Natural Sciences and Engineering
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences
naturelles et en génie du Canada

Canadian Institutes of
Health Research

Instituts de recherche en
santé du Canada

Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Community Engagement Update: Tri-Agency Harmonization of the Canada Graduate Scholarships Program

In fall 2012, the federal granting agencies (the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) launched the harmonization of the Canada Graduate Scholarships (CGS) program. The initiative aimed to provide an opportunity to critically examine the ways in which the three granting agencies are delivering the CGS program and to rethink some of the fundamentals. Benefits to the community and the agencies include streamlined, simplified application and review processes that are fully aligned across the three agencies. These include:

- simpler application and adjudication procedures and processes for graduate students and post-secondary institutions;
- greater cross-agency alignment of key funding opportunity characteristics, such as eligibility and selection criteria, and key deadline dates;
- the opportunity for partnering Canadian post-secondary institutions to better use the scholarships as a tool for recruitment of top students;
- new opportunities for both the institutions and the agencies to achieve administrative streamlining and efficiencies in a context of limited operating funds;
- more effective use of peer review resources;
- cost savings, greater flexibility and removal of unnecessary barriers to work that spans the mandates of the agencies.

Using the feedback gathered from recent consultations with a wide array of stakeholders, the three agencies will now implement changes to the CGS program. The agencies' presidents have assessed community feedback, have approved the planned changes and have endorsed their implementation beginning in fall 2013.

The Community Engagement Process

In March 2013, the three federal granting agencies launched a consultation on the harmonization of the CGS program. Staff worked closely with an external advisory committee to define the design elements of the harmonized program.

A number of activities were undertaken to engage the research community and solicit feedback, including the following:

- **Online:** A discussion guide was made available for feedback on the harmonization Web page. This page had more than 2,000 visitors during the consultation period.
- **Survey:** A total of 69 student liaison officers and research office administrators representing 52 institutions across the country responded to the survey.
- **Email:** Administrators, student liaison officers and deans at post-secondary institutions were invited to submit their feedback.
- **Face-to-face meetings:** The harmonization team met with 26 representatives from associations that focus on graduate education.

We thank all those who participated and provided their feedback throughout the consultation period. Your feedback was instrumental in helping us frame our proposal for endorsement by the agencies' respective presidents.

We will continue to engage with stakeholders as needed and issue timely public announcements on any significant changes to the program.

A Look Ahead: Delivering a Harmonized Canada Graduate Scholarships Program

To meet the objectives of the Tri-Agency CGS Harmonization Project, the following changes are planned:

Application process

- A single application portal for all students is to be created and hosted on the NSERC/SSHRC Grants Management System.
- Application forms, program policies (such as eligibility policies) and post-award practices are being reviewed and harmonized.
- The Canadian Common CV is being adopted for CGS applications.
- The three agencies are adopting the co-management model of administration and review of CGS applications with universities.
- Research training objectives have been harmonized, and a single set of guidelines for the review process at the institutions and at the agencies is being implemented.

Selection process for CGS master's students

- Under this model, students will submit applications to the CGS program via the NSERC/SSHRC Research Portal. The agencies will make the proposals available to up

to five of the institution(s) to which the applicant intends to apply for admission for his or her master's studies (incoming model).

- The agencies are developing a harmonized application form for use by institutions/applicants.
- The selection process will move from a two-stage process to a one-stage process. The institution(s) receiving the CGS applications will manage the selection process and award the CGS scholarships (the agencies will no longer conduct centralized, national selection processes for the master's program).
- The universities will receive an allocation of CGS master's awards, by agency, based on the current average distribution of the number of awards held at each institution (location of tenure of awards) over the past three years. The allocation will be in effect for the next three years.

Harmonized doctoral program

Changes to the CGS doctoral program will include a harmonized policy framework, and application and review processes at the national level. Institutions will submit applications within a quota, and the final selection of award winners will be made by the agencies following a national competition. The process will include:

- the creation of a single application form and portal for all students, to be hosted on NSERC/SSHRC Research Portal;
- harmonized eligibility and selection criteria;
- the adoption of the Canadian Common CV as part of the application;
- the adoption of the co-management model of administration and review of CGS applications with universities for all applicants;
- a review the quota system currently in place for the doctoral program by 2014.

Administrative changes

- Provide institutional grants to universities for CGS master's awards distribution.
- Delegate the subject-matter eligibility screening to post-secondary institutions in the case of the master's component and remove all structural barriers currently in place at the agencies for the doctoral component.
- Create a national deadline for the submission of applications.
- Create a national deadline for the announcement of competition results.
- Streamline the post-award follow-up and transactions by working directly with institutions.
- Adopt a nimble tri-agency program governance structure that focuses on continuous harmonized improvements, while respecting the legislated autonomies of the agencies.

Implementation Timeline

Implementation of the proposed changes will be supported by a Student Liaison Officer (SLO) / Research Officer (RO) Working Group that will provide advice to the Project Team on how best to work with institutions to operationalize the changes.

Timing	Activities
2013	
June	Feedback to community
June	Establish SLO/RO Working Group
September 1	GO LIVE with the harmonized CGS master's application form for students to fill out
November 1	Open portal to institutions
December 1	Deadline date (close portal to students); institutional review process
2014	
April 1	Institutions announce results of selection process and offer CGS master's awards to students
May 15	Deadline for students to accept CGS master's awards
May 16	Institutions offer CGS master's awards to alternate applicants
September 1	GO LIVE with the harmonized CGS doctoral application form, and launch second CGS master's competition

Contact Us

For more information on the **Tri-Agency CGS Harmonization Project**, please contact us via email at harmonization@cgs-besc.gc.ca.