

Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

Reviewer perspective on Graduate Funding Applications

<https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/funding>

Tibor Schuster, PhD

Assistant Professor

Graduate Program Director PhD & Postdoctoral Fellows

Department of Family Medicine



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Outline

- Basics for a successful application
- Selection Criteria
- Evaluation process (reviewer perspective)
- Important Resources

Basics for a successful application

- **Get your supervisor(s) involved!** Inform them and inquire on advice.
- **Careful reading and following** of instructions of the competition.
- Create (or use available) **checklist** to **ensure completeness** of application package.
- Identify package components that require **external input** (signatures, letters of reference, transcripts) → **initiate these steps early as they may take time!**
- **Choose wisely:** you need strong letters of support!
- Note down **important deadlines of the competition** (internal & external): plan accordingly!

Selection Criteria

- **Selection Criteria vary** across competitions but **typically draw on three categories:**
 1. **Academic Excellence**
 2. **Research Potential**
 3. **Personal characteristics and interpersonal skills**
(incl. leadership potential / abilities)
- Each category entails **indicators** that are used by reviewers for assessment
→ help reviewers to identify these indicators in your application
- Different competitions place **different weight** for each category, make sure to match the emphasis of your proposal accordingly

Selection Criteria – some important indicators (I)

Academic Excellence

Academic Record, such as:

- Transcripts
- Duration of previous studies
- Program requirements and courses pursued
- Course load
- Relative standing in program (if available)
- Institutions comments
- Scholarships/awards (competitiveness, amount, duration and prestige)

Research Potential

- Academic training and relevant work experience
- Quality of (future) contributions and extent to which they (will) advance the field of research
- Research Proposal (feasibility of research, merit, significance and expected contributions to research)
- Demonstration of sound judgment and ability to think critically
- Demonstration of responsible and ethical research conduct (incl. thoughtful inquiry, rigorous analysis, commitment to safety and to the dissemination of research results adherence to professional standards)
- Enthusiasm for research, originality, initiative, autonomy, relevant community involvement and outreach
- Research environment (supervisor(s), lab, facilities, networks)

Selection Criteria – some important indicators (II)

Personal characteristics, interpersonal skills and leadership

- Personal achievement (excellence in professional association such as sports, arts, science, business)
- Entrepreneurial Foreign study
- Foreign studies / exchange programs
- Ability to overcome personal obstacles and commit to research excellence despite numerous challenges
- Involvement in academic life (mentoring / teaching, supervisory experience, student government / societies, committees, boards)
- Organization of conferences, meetings, courses, etc.
- Volunteerism/community outreach (involvement in charity or not-for-profit organizations)
- Goal achievement
- Self-management
- Integrity
- Social skills
- Creativity
- Courageousness

Evaluation process (reviewer perspective)

- Typically three categories:

1. fundable, 2. potentially fundable, 3. not fundable

challenge: typically binning required, i.e. minimum % in each category!

- Reviewer 'gets to know' candidate through dossier!
(multiple rounds of reading and 'ranking' of dossiers)
- Presence of indicators in the three assessment categories help for 'rough' placement of a candidate (score sheets) – however:
Personal statement and **reference letters** can have strong weight!
- Personal statement opportunity to explain your (lack of) achievements and to provide context
- Adequate English spelling, grammar and expression is critical! (consider the help of editing services)
- **Be genuine** and help reviewers to see your vision, a vision that (ideally) builds on your personal / academic profile & past.
- **Provide concrete (memorable!) examples** for the claims you make about your skills & abilities



Resources

- **Workshops and Webinars**

- Offer support in all aspects of the external funding application process and help maximize your chances
- <https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/funding/maximize-my-chances>

- **SKILLSETS**

- Suite of workshops designed for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to complement research training
- <https://www.mcgill.ca/skillsets>

- **Tips for writing a research proposal**

- <https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/students/research-tracking/proposals>

Graduate Funding Team



External team:

Ester Di Cori, Fellowships Officer

Jan Walker, Fellowships Administrator

Phoebe Zamanuel, Student Affairs Coordinator

Internal funding team:

Lilia Eskildsen Torres, Fellowships Officer

Hannah(Shuhua) Hu, Adm. & Student Affairs Coord.

Quinter Faith, Student Affairs Coordinator

graduatefunding.gps@mcgill.ca

Remember: Include your McGill ID NUMBER