

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Issued By
Parkinson Society Canada / La Soci t  Parkinson Canada

GRADUATE AWARD PROGRAM (July 2012 – June 2014 Cycle)

September 1, 2011	Release Date
November 1, 2011	Application Deadline (online receipt)
February 2012	Application Notice of Decision
March 2012	Anticipated Announcement of Award
July 1, 2012	Funding Start Date
Duration of Award:	2 years

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BACKGROUND

Parkinson Society Canada (“PSC”) is pleased to offer its graduate award program (the “Program”) as a strategic initiative to encourage promising young scientists to enter the field of Parkinson’s research and to invest in research training that offers promise for future work in the area of Parkinson’s disease. PSC wishes to encourage continued growth and revitalization in the fields of Parkinson’s research in Canada by supporting talented young scientists and providing students with an opportunity to enter into the area of Parkinson’s research during the early stages of their training. PSC intends to provide awards in the amount of up to \$15,000 per year over a two-year term, to outstanding applicants who meet the eligibility criteria of the Program and who have been approved by its Scientific Advisory Board (the “Advisory Board”). As incentive and recognition for the award, it is expected that supervisors will contribute \$5,000 to make up the difference of a total funding amount of \$20,000. Funds awarded under the Program are to be used to cover salaries for research training in Parkinson’s-related areas. Through this initiative, PSC invites studentship applications (“Applications”) from applicants committed to conducting research in areas relevant to the cure, cause, prevention, improved treatment and/or understanding of Parkinson’s disease, related disorders including: Multiple System Atrophy (MSA), Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP) and other Parkinson’s conditions. PSC encourages Applications from the

fields of biomedicine, health services and systems research, population studies, and clinical research. This initiative is consistent with, and reflects, PSC's commitment to support innovation and renewal in the national Parkinson's research field and to foster international leadership potential in this area.

The Program is available to only those students engaged in full-time research training in a graduate school. At the time of application, all candidates must be enrolled in graduate study program at the Master's or PhD level.

FUNDS AVAILABLE

The Program offers awards for the support of projects with budgets of up to \$15,000 per year over a two year term to exceptional applicants who have been approved for funding by the Advisory Board. Funds cannot be used to cover tuition costs. As incentive and recognition for the award, it is expected that supervisors will contribute \$5,000 per year to make up the difference for a total funding amount of \$20,000.

PARKINSON SOCIETY CANADA (PSC)/FONDS DE RECHERCHE DU QUÉBEC – SANTÉ (FRQS) PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

For candidates submitting applications to be considered for the PSC/FRQS Partnership Program, funding amounts are \$20,000 per annum for Master level and \$25,000 per annum for Doctoral level candidates. Additionally, Doctoral candidates who are funded under this agreement are eligible for funding in their third year as per regular FRQS competitions. The amount of funding available for the third year is restricted to FRQS regular funding amounts (\$20,000 per year for 2012-2013 competitions). The \$5,000 per annum contribution requirement for supervisor's of graduate award candidates is not applicable to partnership awards.

ELIGIBILITY

PSC wishes to support training excellence and development of the wide scope of Parkinson's research in Canada. Applications will be accepted from applicants who meet the eligibility criteria established by PSC (as summarized in this Request for Applications) and who propose to continue their training or conduct research with the following organizations (an "Approved Institution"):

- Canadian post-secondary institutions and their affiliated institutions, including hospitals and research institutes; or
- Other organizations, as determined by the Research Policy Committee of the National Board of PSC in consultation with the Advisory Board, provided that the applicant's research or research-related activities fall within the mandate of PSC.

Only those students engaged in full-time research training in a graduate school are eligible for support. At the time of application, all candidates must be enrolled in a graduate study program at the Master's or PhD level.

Candidates for the PSC/FRSQ funding opportunity must submit applications to both FRSQ and to PSC and must indicate that this has been done. Research supported under this Program must be carried out at a University or affiliated institutions including hospitals and research institutes, within the Province of Quebec.

In the evaluation of the Application, PSC's Advisory Board will typically consider Academic record, Aptitudes and experience, Research Project and Training environment. Applicants will be given an opportunity to describe any career interruptions.

Under the terms of the Program, Applications will be accepted from Canadian citizens who propose to train at an Approved Institution located in Canada, and from international applicants proposing to train at an Approved Institution located in Canada who fulfill the criteria for a student visa.

LOCATION OF TRAINING & SUPERVISION

Awards granted under the Program shall be held in trust by the Approved Institution at which the proposed supervisor of the successful applicant (an “Approved Supervisor”) holds a faculty appointment.

An Approved Supervisor should be an investigator actively directing research either in the field of Parkinson’s disease or working in a highly relevant discipline and must be able to provide the successful applicant with a strong training environment. Other training locations may be considered by the Advisory Board, provided that the facility is an Approved Institution and the research or research-related activities conducted at such location falls within the mandate of PSC.

REVIEW PROCESS

The evaluation of Applications submitted to PSC will be completed by the Advisory Board through a peer review process. The Advisory Board is composed of prominent neurologists, neurosurgeons, neuropathologists and neuroscientists from across Canada. The peer review process is a cornerstone of PSC’s research program and provides for the highest quality of objective adjudication.

The Advisory Board is responsible for the evaluation of all Applications submitted to PSC in response to this Request for Applications, to rate each of the Applications so that they may be ranked in order of priority and to recommend to PSC the size of the award needed to support the research should the Application be approved.

External reviewers will be solicited for additional expertise as needed.

The Advisory Board anticipates that it will provide each applicant whose Application to participate in the Program has been declined with written notice of such decision and where possible, a brief written critique of the substance of their Application.

REVIEW CRITERIA

The principal consideration used to evaluate Applications is research excellence potential. A variety of additional criteria will also be considered by the Advisory Board in the evaluation process. PSC is employing a review system based on an alpha-numerical rating scale. The specific criteria to be used in determining this rating scale are attached to these instructions. PSC has designed the application form around these criteria and gives the applicant and supervisor space to provide the appropriate information relating to each of the criteria listed. A specific set of performance levels established for each criteria to enable an appropriate discrimination between “outstanding”, “excellent”, “very good” and “good” candidates will be used by the reviewers for consistency and equality in the review process. Each of the criteria listed below will be considered in assigning the overall ranking of the Application, weighting them as appropriate for each Application:

- **CANDIDATE:**
 - Academic Record
 - Research Experience
 - Letters of Reference/Support

- **SUPERVISOR/ENVIRONMENT:**
 - Supervisor’s Research Track Record

- Training Environment
- PROJECT:
 - Relevance to Parkinson's Disease
 - Overall impression of project

In addition to the above criteria, all applications will also be reviewed with respect to the following:

- The adequacy of the proposed protection of humans, animals, or of the environment, to the extent that they may be adversely affected by the project proposed in the application. The Advisory Board will also examine the provisions for the protection of human subjects (if any) and the safety of the research environment.

Applications are reviewed on an individual basis and as such, candidates will be evaluated on the stage of their research experience.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

This Request for Applications made by PSC is subject to the terms and conditions (the "Terms and Conditions") contained in PSC's National Research Program Application Guidelines (the "Guidelines"), which the applicant shall be deemed to have accepted upon submission to PSC of an Application to participate in the Program. Failure to comply with the Terms and Conditions may result, in addition to any other remedies PSC may have at law, in termination of the Program and exclusion of the applicant from future grant and fellowship award competitions.

A successful applicant who has received an award under the Program may not transfer the award to another institution unless exceptionally approved by the chairs of the Research Policy Committee and Scientific Advisory Board (please see Guidelines).

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND TERMS OF FUNDING

All successful applicants shall comply with the reporting obligations outlined in the Guidelines.

PSC requires studentship recipients to submit Annual and Final Progress Reports. The advance of the portion of the award to be made in the second year of the term of the Program is conditional upon submission of an Annual Progress Report to PSC in substance and form satisfactory to the Advisory Board at the end the first year of the term of the Program. The report shall be submitted to the attention of the Director, National Research & Clinical Programs at PSC's National Office no later than **1 June 2013**. Progress report guidelines and instructions will be provided by PSC in advance of the report deadline.

A Final Progress Report detailing the results of the successful applicant's progress, in substance and form satisfactory to the Advisory Board, shall be submitted to the attention of the Director, National Research & Clinical Programs at PSC's National Office no later than **1 October 2014**, three months after the termination of the two year term of the Program.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

*Applications are submitted digitally through the Parkinson Society Canada online program located on the PSC website at <http://www.parkinsonresearch.ca/research/rhtml/IndexEN.php> where applicants can register and complete an application form. Confirmations of receipt will be provided automatically upon successful submission of the application.

Applications must be completed and submitted via the Parkinson Society Canada online research system no later than **November 1, 2011**.

Applications for Graduate Student Awards include the following:

- PSC Face Sheet;
- Minimum font size of 12 point, black ink. Six lines per inch. One inch margin with no condensed type or spacing. References can be printed in smaller font, however they must be legible;
- Project Summary, stating in 200 words or less, the scientific or clinical question being asked, how you will address it, the expected outcome and the likely impact for Parkinson's disease.
- Project Narrative (**1 page**) including:
 - The hypothesis to be tested, the specific aims of the research and the approach that will be used to test them.
 - Describe the candidate's role in the project.
 - Justify the relevance to Parkinson's disease.
- Academic Transcripts:
 - An up-to-date original or certified copy of transcript(s) of the applicant's academic record must be included. Copies may be certified by the proposed supervisor, department head, or notary public. Foreign transcripts **MUST** be accompanied by a certified English or French interpretation and a clear explanation of the grading system.
 - International candidates are encouraged to obtain official conversions of their grades to GPA by their institute.
 - PSC considers transcripts issued by the Registrar's Office to the student to be official transcripts. Opening the envelope to scan the transcript will not render it unofficial for PSC's purposes. Transcripts printed from the candidate's personal university account are not considered to be official.
 - The official transcripts must be provided by scanning both sides of each page and uploading them in order from least recent to most recent as a single .pdf document.
- Three letters of reference/support:
 - The supervisor's statement of support can be used as one letter.
 - Letters of reference should highlight the applicant's strengths as they relate to suitability/experience in research (e.g. originality, technical ability, demonstrated skills, judgment, critical skills etc.).
 - For International candidates, sponsors are encouraged to comment on the grades and/or class ranking of the candidate within the content of their letters.

Letters of reference/support are submitted directly to PSC by the sponsor through the online system. Applicants can request assessments from sponsors via the online application system which will forward a link to the online program. The candidate should emphasize to sponsors responsible for sending letters to the Society office the need for these to be received by the closing date.

In addition to the foregoing, the applicant should arrange for his or her proposed supervisor to prepare the following information. **Applicants can request this information from their supervisor via the online application system which will forward a link to the online program:**

- Letter of support from supervisor
- Summary submitted by proposed supervisor outlining the proposed training program, including details of time allocation, publications of supervisor and supervisory experience, as well as a statement from the prospective supervisor(s) describing the training environment and the collaborative milieu, including the responsibilities to be assumed, the teaching to be provided and the research project to be undertaken.
- **Please note that the prospective supervisor's CV should be submitted using the 4 page PSC biosketch form automatically generated by the online system**

Relevant support materials are limited to literature references. Any information submitted in addition to this will not be forwarded with the application to the Scientific Advisory Board for review.

Where a trainee and supervisor are submitting an application to the same competition, trainees submitting their own proposal (not identical to the proposal submitted by their supervisor) will be given priority ranking.

Note: Applications must be submitted with the required signatures by the due date. Prior to submission, applicants should determine what signatures are needed, print the applicant information sheet (face sheet) and obtain **all the required signatures** for their application. Once obtained, scan the signature page and upload the signed signature page to the PSC online system as part of your submission by the application deadline date. It does not need to be couriered to Parkinson Society Canada.

Incomplete applications or applications received later than **November 1, 2011** will not be considered under any circumstances.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE REFER TO:

The PSC National Research Program Application Guidelines Manual available from the PSC Web site at www.parkinson.ca.

OR CONTACT:

Ivy Lim-Carter, Director, National Research & Clinical Programs, 1-800-565-3000 or 416-227-3382, Email: ivy.lim-carter@parkinson.ca

REVIEW CRITERIA

A1 - ACADEMIC RECORD

- A. Candidate's academic record is sufficient for admission to most graduate schools.
- B. Candidate has attained average grades during his/her undergraduate/graduate training and/or candidate has demonstrated steady improvement in their grades in the latter stages of training. Candidate has received academic recognition (e.g. Dean's list) or a prize/award.
- C. Solid, consistently above average academic record throughout the undergraduate/graduate training period and/or candidate has demonstrated significant improvement in their academic record in the latter stages of training. Evidence of receipt of several prizes/awards.
- D. Outstanding academic record throughout candidate's university level training period. Evidence of receipt of several prizes and awards, some of which are highly competitive, premier prizes/awards.

A2 - RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

- A. Candidate's research experience is derived only from undergraduate laboratory courses.
- B. Candidate has some research experience (e.g. one summer research project) but has yet to participate in formal presentations, abstracts or publications.
- C. Candidate has developed a strong foundation of research skills through multiple summer research programs and/or graduate level enrolment. The candidate's research achievements are evidenced by publications and/or abstracts and presentations.
- D. Candidate has a high degree of research experience. There is evidence of a significant publication record for their stage of research career.

A3 - LETTERS OF REFERENCE/SUPPORT

- A. Letters provide limited support based on the candidate's personal characteristics, academic strengths, or research abilities.
- B. Letters provide moderate support about the candidate's personal characteristics (motivation, intellectual capacity, maturity, etc.), academic strengths, and research abilities. The information provided tends to be general rather than specific.
- C. Letters are predominantly positive and specific details are provided regarding the recognized or potential research expertise and competence of the candidate.
- D. Letters are unanimously strong in their support of the candidate and provide considerably detailed assessments of the candidate's research strengths, capabilities and intellectual capacity.

B1 - SUPERVISOR'S RESEARCH TRACK RECORD

- A. The supervisor has a good record of publication for their level of experience, mostly in low to mid-level journals that are appropriate for the area of research.
- B. The supervisor has a very good/strong and consistent track record, publishing mostly in mid to high-impact or specialty journals of solid quality.
- C. The supervisor's publication record is excellent and consists mostly of significant contributions to the top journals in their field of research.
- D. The supervisor's track record is outstanding and includes one or more publications that represent advances of breakthrough quality, and that have significantly changed the dynamics of research in their field.

B2 - TRAINING ENVIRONMENT

- A. The supervisor receives a basic level of funding for his/her level of experience and there are some opportunities for interactions with other trainees.
- B. The supervisor's projects are well funded by peer-review based agencies providing the candidate access to the appropriate resources within the immediate environment.

- C. The supervisor currently receives strong peer-reviewed funding from national or international agencies and the trainee will interact with independently funded trainees who appear to receive strong mentoring as evidenced by their contributions as authors on peer-reviewed publications.
- D. The supervisor has established first-class facilities and the level of training offered is exceptional in terms of potential interactions with other trainees. This provides for significant opportunities for contributions by the trainee as first author on quality peer-reviewed publications.

C1 - OVERALL IMPRESSION OF PROJECT

- A. The scope of the project is adequate for the experience level of the candidate. The description offers limited details.
- B. The project will offer a challenging training program for the candidate, and will add to the existing knowledge in this area of research. It is well written, providing sufficient rationalization and methodological detail.
- C. The project has the potential to contribute substantially to knowledge in this field. It is clearly defined, and is hypothesis-driven. The description provides enough methodological detail to evoke confidence that the goals of the project will, in all likelihood, be achieved.
- D. The research work that the applicant will be involved in is of excellent quality. The project demonstrates innovative concepts and the work will stretch the experience and professional knowledge of the applicant. The description of the hypothesis and methodology is of the calibre expected of established researchers who are at the forefront of the field.

C2 - RELEVANCY TO PARKINSON'S DISEASE

- A. The candidate's role has the potential to contribute to Parkinson's disease knowledge.
- B. The project is relevant to pursuing a greater understanding of Parkinson's for the applicant. The candidate will make an intellectual as well as a methodological contribution.
- C. The project has been tailored to develop the breadth of the candidate's training in terms of their intellectual development and will allow the candidate to develop a greater understanding of Parkinson's and will contribute substantially to our knowledge base.
- D. The project has been designed specifically to build on the capabilities and interest of the candidate. The applicant is well suited to enter into this work and shows promise to significantly advance research in the area of Parkinson's disease.