



Parkinson Canada

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Issued By
Parkinson Canada

GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD PROGRAM (2024 - 2026 Cycle)

Release Date:	September 15, 2023
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Funding Start Date:	August 1, 2024
Duration of Award:	2 years

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Important Changes to the 2024-2026 Competition

1. Change to the Award Value
 - Starting this year, the award value will be \$20,000 for all award recipients.
2. Research Priority Area: Canadian Open Parkinson Network (C-OPN)
 - For this research cycle only, Parkinson Canada has earmarked up to \$200,000 of the Annual Research Competition budget for projects submitted to the competition that use data from the C-OPN Database, Registry and/or Biobank. More details are provided below.

3. Addition of a New Impact Statement
 - All applications will now include an Impact Statement. This is a description of how this project will move the field forward and contribute to new scientific knowledge in Parkinson's, how it aligns with the Research Themes of Parkinson Canada, how findings from the project will impact the lives of people with Parkinson's.
4. Addition of a Patient Involvement Statement
 - Applications will also include a description of how people affected by Parkinson's will be involved in the project, if applicable. This can include recruitment for clinical, population health or qualitative studies, and/or how individuals may be involved in study design and knowledge translation or dissemination considerations.
5. Introduction of Weighted Scoring Criteria
 - To ensure fairness and consistency in the review process, weighted scoring will be applied such that all Pilot Project Grant applications will be evaluated on the bases of the following: Candidate (40%), Project (40%), and Research & Training Environment (20%).
6. Lived Experience Reviews
 - Lived experience expert reviewers will review the following sections from submitted applications: 1) the non-scientific summary, 2) the impact statement and 3) the patient involvement statement.

BACKGROUND

Parkinson Canada is pleased to offer its graduate student 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. Parkinson Canada 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. Parkinson Canada intends to provide awards in the amount of up to \$20,000 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 Council (the "Advisory Council"). As incentive and recognition for the award, it is encouraged that supervisors will also contribute to the award. Funds awarded under the Program are to be used to cover salaries for research training in Parkinson's-related areas.

Through this initiative, Parkinson Canada 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. Parkinson Canada encourages applications from the fields of biomedicine, health services and systems research, population studies, and clinical research. This initiative is consistent with, and reflects, Parkinson Canada'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 PhD level.

Note: The Graduate Student Award for the master's level is not available.

RESEARCH THEMES OF PARKINSON CANADA

Parkinson Canada provides funding to support research projects within the following research themes, and which have the potential to advance new discoveries in the field and impact the health and well-

being of people with Parkinson's. Applications are encouraged to focus on novel and innovative research in the following areas:

- 1) **Symptomatic Treatments:** treatments that ease outward symptoms of Parkinson's (e.g., medications for tremors).
- 2) **Disease Modifying Therapies & Treatments:** treatments that target the underlying mechanisms of Parkinson's to interfere with disease progression.
- 3) **Prevention:** interventions aimed at reducing the risk or severity of Parkinson's Disease.
- 4) **Diagnosis & Progression:** understanding predictors of Parkinson's for earlier diagnosis and intervention (e.g. biomarkers).
- 5) **Causes of Parkinson's (and related symptoms):** understanding the physiological processes that lead to Parkinson's and its symptoms (ex. alpha-synuclein aggregation).
- 6) **Living Well with Parkinson's:** improving the quality of life (QoL) of people living with Parkinson's and understanding the barriers to positive QoL.

FUNDS AVAILABLE

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

RESEARCH PRIORITY AREA: CANADIAN OPEN PARKINSON NETWORK (C-OPN)

For this year's competition, Parkinson Canada has earmarked up to \$200,000 from the overall competition budget for meritorious projects (open to all active competitions) that make strong use of the datasets and resources from the **Canadian Open Parkinson Network (C-OPN)**. To date, C-OPN has enrolled over >1500 Parkinson's patients from participating sites across Canada. From these participants, rich datasets (demographic, epidemiological and clinical information) and biological samples (DNA, PBMC and Serum) have been collected for further testing (additional information can be found online <http://copn-rpco.ca/research> or by email: national.manager@copn-rpco.ca). Applications will be submitted to the general research competition and will follow the same timeline, evaluation procedure, and general policy guidelines.

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

Partnership funding programs are available for this trainee award program. For more information on the available partnership programs, including funding amounts, award durations, and additional application procedures, please visit <http://www.parkinson.ca/apply-for-funding/>.

ELIGIBILITY

Parkinson Canada 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 Parkinson Canada (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 Parkinson Canada in consultation with the Advisory Council, provided that the applicant's research or research-related activities fall within the mandate of Parkinson Canada.

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 PhD level.

In the evaluation of the Application, Parkinson Canada's Advisory Council 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.

Those currently funded by Parkinson Canada or with pending final reports from a Parkinson Canada grant or award are not eligible to apply.

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 Council, provided that the facility is an Approved Institution and the research or research-related activities conducted at such location falls within the mandate of Parkinson Canada.

REVIEW PROCESS

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

The Advisory Council is responsible for the evaluation of all Applications submitted to Parkinson Canada in response to this Request for Applications, to rate each of the Applications so that they may be ranked in order of priority for funding by Parkinson Canada.

External reviewers will be solicited for additional expertise as needed.

The Advisory Council 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 Council in the evaluation process. Parkinson Canada 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. Each of the criteria listed below will be considered in assigning the overall ranking of the Application, weighting them as indicated for each Application:

- **CANDIDATE - 40%**
 - Academic Record
 - Honours & Awards
 - Research Experience
 - Letters of Reference/Support
 - Publications

- **PROJECT - 40%**
 - Project Novelty (10%)
 - Project Feasibility (10%)
 - Opportunity to Learn (10%)
 - Impact of Project and Relevance to Parkinson's Disease (10%)

- **SUPERVISOR/ENVIRONMENT - 20%**
 - Supervisor's Research Track Record
 - Training environment

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 Council 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.

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.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

This Request for Applications made by Parkinson Canada is subject to the terms and conditions (the "Terms and Conditions") contained in Parkinson Canada's Research Program Application Guidelines (the "Guidelines"), which the applicant shall be deemed to have accepted upon submission to Parkinson Canada of an Application to participate in the Program. Failure to comply with the Terms and Conditions may result, in addition to any other remedies Parkinson Canada 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 Council (please see Guidelines).

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND TERMS OF FUNDING

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

Parkinson Canada 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 Parkinson Canada in substance and form satisfactory to the Advisory Council at the end the first year of the term of the Program.

The **Progress report** shall be submitted to research@parkinson.ca no later than **one year after the start of the award**. Progress report guidelines and instructions will be provided by Parkinson Canada in advance of the report deadline.

A **Final Report** detailing the results of the successful applicant's progress, in substance and form satisfactory to the Advisory Council, shall be submitted to research@parkinson.ca no later than **three months after** the termination of the two-year term of the Program.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Applications are submitted online through the Parkinson Canada online application system called SMapply. It can be accessed through the following link which is also available on the Parkinson Canada website at <https://parkinsoncan.smapply.io/>. **The deadline to submit applications is December 5, 2023 (11:59 pm EST). Applications received after this time will not be considered and will be disqualified from the competition. There will be no exceptions.**

Applications for Graduate Student Awards include the following:

Important note on document formatting: When preparing your application, all application documents to be uploaded must have page margins of **1 inch minimum (2.54 cm)** and use **12-point font** (Times New Roman, Arial or Calibri). Failing to follow these instructions may negatively impact the evaluation of your application and could lead to it being withdrawn.

1. **Project Summary:** Please state in **400 words or less** the scientific or clinical question being asked, the methods you will use to address it, and the expected outcome. *(To save space, you do not need to include basic information such as the description of Parkinson's disease)*
2. **Non-Scientific Summary:** Please state in **400 words or less** a plain language summary of the project to be reviewed by people affected by Parkinson's who will serve as Lived Experience Expert reviewers. The summary should include a description of the issue the research project is addressing, methods the researcher has chosen to address this problem, and expected finding.
3. **Impact Statement:** Please state in **400 words or less** a plain language description of how this project aligns with the Research Themes of Parkinson Canada (outlined above), how the findings from this project will impact the lives of people with Parkinson's, and how this project will push forward the Parkinson's Research field. This section will be reviewed by people affected by Parkinson's who will serve as Lived Experience Expert Reviewers.
4. **Patient Involvement Statement:** Please state in **150 words or less** how people affected by Parkinson's will be involved in the project, how they will be recruited if applicable, and how they may be involved in informing study design and knowledge translation or dissemination considerations.
5. **Project Narrative: (2 pages max)** including:
 - **Background** of proposed studies and **hypothesis** to be tested.
 - **Specific aims** of the research
 - **Methods** and experimental details (Describe the **candidate's role** in the project)
 - If the project will use **C-OPN**, and would like to be considered for the Research Priority Funding please provide adequate description
 - The 2-page maximum applies only to the project narrative and does not include supporting documentation described below.

6. **Supplemental Materials (Literature references):** A supplemental document may be uploaded to list literature references cited in the project narrative. Any information submitted in addition to this will not be forwarded with the application to the Scientific Advisory Council for review.
7. **Biographical information** of the applicant to be provided by completing the Parkinson Canada Biographical Sketch Form (for trainees), including a summary of:
 - **Education & Degrees** - (including date of enrollment and anticipated graduation date for your PhD program).
 - **Positions & Honours** – previous positions (including current), list of honours, awards, and positions on any committees.
 - **Publications** - where the applicant has participated as a co-author, first-author, etc. (describe the contribution of the applicant for each publication). Includes scientific papers, book chapters, etc.
 - **Other Contributions** – posters, oral presentations, commercialization activities and intellectual property.
 - **Funding** – list all current, pending, and completed funding support.
 - Maximum 4 pages
8. **Academic Transcripts:**
 - An up-to-date original or certified copy of transcript(s) of the applicant's academic record must be included. Transcripts must be issued by the Registrar's Office, scanned and uploaded. Transcripts printed from the candidate's personal university account are not considered to be official. 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.
9. **Three (3) letters of reference/support:**
 - Maximum 1 page (each)
 - 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.
10. **Signature of the supervisor** (agreeing to supplement award if possible, and of an authorized signing official of the applicant's host institution.

In addition to the foregoing, the applicant should arrange for his or her proposed supervisor to prepare the following information:

1. **Letter of support** from supervisor (max 1 page).
2. **Training environment form** completed and 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.
3. **Supervisor's biographical information:** using the Parkinson Canada biographical sketch form (for Principal Investigators). Maximum length is 4 pages.

Applications may be submitted in either English or French, and French-speaking reviewers will be made available for any applications that are submitted in French. French-speaking applicants may also ask to have any application guides and materials translated into French.. For more information please contact research@parkinson.ca.

All applications must be submitted via our online application system (SMAApply – <https://parkinsoncan.smapply.io/>). Please retain copies of all application documents in case there are any issues accessing application files.

Any applications in violation of these guidelines are subject to disqualification at the discretion of the Advisory Council.

Important note on document formatting: When preparing your application, all application documents to be uploaded must have page margins of **1 inch minimum (2.54 cm)** and use **12-point font** (Times New Roman, Arial or Calibri). Failing to follow these instructions may negatively impact the evaluation of your application and could lead to it being disqualified.

Incomplete applications or applications received later than **December 5, 2023 (11:59 pm EST)** will not be considered **under any circumstances**.

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE REFER TO:

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

OR CONTACT:

Ko Currie, Research Funding and Partnerships Manager
Email: ko.currie@parkinson.ca