

Program Guidelines: CONP Scholar Awards



Competition: Student Scholar and Research Scholar Awards, Winter 2019
Date: December 9, 2019

The Canadian Open Neuroscience Platform (CONP) has a mission to create and implement a national platform for open sharing of neuroscience research data. This platform brings together many of the Canada's leading basic and clinical neuroscientists, informaticians and science policy experts in an interactive network of collaborations in brain research, interdisciplinary student training, international partnership, clinical translation and open publishing.

OVERVIEW

CONP Scholar Program Rationale

The CONP is pleased to announce a scholarship program in order to support highly-qualified personnel (HQP) who either hold or are currently pursuing an advanced degree, such as a PhD, MS, PharmD, or JD) obtained within five (5) years of the start date of the CONP Scholar award, in order to undertake - for a period of up to one year- a specific collaborative project that is directly related to building platforms, resources, datasets, analytics or disseminating neuroscience results that will contribute to the advancement of open neuroscience. Examples of potential projects include:

- a database linking key results across organisms or two or more data modalities;
- building an open science publishing or communication tool for the global dissemination of high dimensional sequencing or gene expression data;
- novel approaches to standardizing large-scale data;
- engaging multiple CONP stakeholders in an open data framework to foster the identification and timely advancement of early-stage clinical targets with therapeutic potential in neurological disorders.

Scholars supported by CONP will be encouraged to publish their work in traditional journals, as well as disseminate their work via non-traditional open science platforms that are relevant for their specific project, whether this be a programming workspace, arXiv, bioRxiv, a blog, or another format.

Funding Level, Term Length and Benefits

Scholarships are to be held at institutions across Canada by applicants of all nationalities currently based at a Canadian institution; which includes international applicants within Canada and permanent residents of Canada. CONP will contribute either \$12,500 (graduate) or \$25,000 (for post-graduate) towards the stipend of each scholar for a period of one year which will be matched by either a CONP partner institution or a similar provider of non-federal/non-provincial matching funds for a total of \$25,000/year (graduate) or \$50,000/year (post-graduate). Applicants must provide a signed letter as proof of availability of matching funds from the supporting organization. Awardees may reapply as described below in the section entitled "Post-award Processes". Statutory benefits will be paid by the host institution. All awards are eligible for a top-up from their supervisor or graduate unit in order to satisfy minimum stipend requirements or the respective research centre's suggested stipend.

Applicant Eligibility

The competition is open to individuals performing their research in – or collaborating with - a CONP-affiliated facility. Eligible Scholars are defined as follows: (1) the individual has received their advanced degree no more than 5 years prior to the start date of this scholarship. (2) the appointment involves full-time research and scholarship; (3) individuals are enrolled in a either a graduate or post-graduate training program (proof of trainee status is required; university staff may not apply); (4) although all Scholars will have a home

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institution and home facility under the supervision of one or two designated faculty mentors, CONP Scholars are expected to engage in substantial knowledge exchange across the CONP network. Such activities may include contributions to the open neuroscience platform (data, code, analytical tools), open communications platform, and the development of novel CONP policies and training resources.

Externally funded postdoctoral fellows

The Applicant cannot concurrently hold a fellowship or scholarship from another Canadian federal or provincial funding agency and a CONP award with the exception of a Mitacs Elevate fellowship.

HOW TO APPLY

Important Dates

Program Launch	December 6, 2019
Application Deadline	January 15, 2020
Results Announcement	Week of February 3, 2020
Award Start	As early as week of February 3, 2020; no later than April 3, 2020

Research Proposal Eligibility

A 2-page research proposal must be provided with the application, proposing a specific project that enhances or facilitates open neuroscience. The proposal should clearly describe the following:

- The goal(s) of the project
- Availability and accessibility of relevant data or resources
- The quality of the advisor's and/or collaborator's training environment
- Relevant external interactions with the CONP community
- How the deliverables of the project will assist the CONP community
- How the proposed outcomes may be realized in the future.
- How your results will be disseminated in a way that supports Open Neuroscience

The Application will need to be formatted using 12-point Arial or Georgia font, single-spaced, on a letter-size page with 1" minimum margins. Use of a condensed font and spacing is not permitted. It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure the submission is acceptable and received before the deadline. Those received in another format, exceeding the page limitation, incomplete, or late, will be ineligible.

The Research Proposal (maximum two pages, including references).

Summarize the research to be undertaken during the award. Emphasize its novel aspects and feasibility, and its potential impact on open neuroscience in one or more areas: the concepts, paradigms, or theories advancing open science. Describe how the project builds on your former training, and how it will provide you with the skills required to achieve your career ambitions. Explain the relative contribution that you and your supervisors, or others, made to the development of the project.

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Applicant's Statement (maximum 500 words, may be used to create a web profile)

- What do you think Open Science is? Please provide a short answer of your favourite example of this.
- What are you planning to do? (**now and future**) Provide the best possible evidence of the research creativity, productivity and quality to include major scholarly achievements, and other distinctions.
- Elaborate on the results and impact of past work on this proposal as well as in the field of research.
- Include any other information that could persuade the reviewers of your exceptional potential.
- If the applicant is continuing postdoctoral training in the same department or under the direction of the same supervisor as for their doctoral studies, they should provide explanation of how the training is substantially different and is of significant benefit to their career development.

Applicant's CV

A CV must be linked to the online application. A Canadian Common CV (CCV) is an example of an acceptable format. Use of the CCV format is not an application requirement.

Advisor(s) Guidelines

Working with multiple advisors and/or collaborators from non-partner institutions, industry partners, or a foundation is a core component of CONP training. Applicants must be supervised by a minimum of two advisors, where 1) the primary advisor must hold an eligible appointment (full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty at the Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor level) and 2) the majority of the research activities will take place at the primary institution. Advisors may sponsor multiple applications but their unit or laboratory may normally receive only one (1) award per annual competition. Each advisor must provide a *Biosketch in the NIH format* <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>. A (single) letter of support should be submitted by the primary advisor whereas secondary advisor(s) may submit a letter of reference indicating their specific role in the project. The letter of support should justify the novelty and innovative nature of the project, as well as include a statement of commitment to the professional development of the applicant and detail the space, facilities and personnel support available to them. Please note that CONP funds may NOT be transferred to non-partner institutions, industrial partners, or foundations.

Advisor's Statement (to be completed by the primary supervisor; maximum 2 pages)

- Past contributions to HQP training. List the number of trainees that have trained with the supervisor, and at what level (summer/undergraduate, MSc, PhD, PDF, JD, MD, etc.) during the last five years.
- Training Plan. Explain how the supervisor will acquire sufficient operating funding to sustain the candidate's project through to the end of the awarded funding term.
- Outline the opportunities that the candidate will have during the training for enrichment through interdisciplinary or inter-sectoral collaboration.
- Outline how the supervisor mentorship method and research environment will ensure the success of the trainee and the proposed project.
- Most significant contributions to research. List five of the supervisor publications that are considered the most significant (3 must have been published in the last 5 years). Each item should be annotated with a brief reason for the selection. Include a DOI, URL or PMID where applicable so that reviewers can more easily access them.
- Additional Information on Contributions. Include other activities or information to help the Review Committee evaluate your contributions to and impact on open science, open neuroscience and data science, including interdisciplinary work.
- The supervisor must click "I Agree" for the following statement "I agree to supervise [name of candidate] for the duration of the award if the application is successful, and I will advise the CONP

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immediately if (s) he terminates training or otherwise experiences a significant interruption. I permit CONP to share the information about me contained in this application with actual or potential funding partners, under a confidentiality agreement”.

References and Reference Letters

The names, phone numbers, institutional and email addresses of one (in the case of graduate applicants) or two individuals, **excluding the primary supervisor(s)**, who have agreed to provide reference letters must be provided to complete the application package. These two individuals must be familiar with the applicant achievements as a scholar and researcher and the qualities that underlie their potential in the field of open science, must provide one-page reference letters on the applicant's behalf. At least one letter should be from a previous research supervisor, unless an explanation is provided as to why not. The most relevant letters explain the nature of the interaction between the candidate and the referee, and provide specific examples of situations where the applicant demonstrated creativity, initiative, collaboration, and other qualities predictive of a successful scholar. They may also mention areas of knowledge, skill, or attitude where the applicant would benefit from further training.

Certification Requirements

CONP applicants and award holders must comply with Canadian research ethics requirements and legislation for the conduct of research.

If your research involves humans, you must provide your institution's administration with the appropriate certification indicating that research involving humans has been reviewed and has received the required approval. All projects involving human subjects or biological materials (body parts, products, tissues, cells or genetic material from a human body, of a living or dead person) or administrative, scientific or descriptive data from human subjects, require the approval of the research ethics board of the principal applicant's institution or a research ethics board recognized by this institution. The recruitment of human participants is strictly subject to approval from a research ethics board.

If your research involves the use of animals, animal products, or tissues, you must provide your institution's administration with the certification from the animal care committee at the institution that the experimental procedures proposed have been approved and that the care and treatment of animals is in accordance with the principles outlined in the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) guide.

Limiting Unconscious Bias

Biases may manifest themselves in several ways and could be based on a school of thought, fundamental versus applied or translational research, areas of research or approaches (including emerging ones), size or reputation of a participating institution, age, language, personal factors or gender of the applicant.

Referees are cautioned against any judgment of an application based on such factors, and asked to constantly guard against the possibility of implicit bias influencing their assessment or the review of the application by the selection committee.

Please refer to these [tips](#) to reinforce standards of fairness, respect and equity. For additional information, please consult the [NSERC Guide for Applicants: Considering equity, diversity and inclusion in your application](#).

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The completed application package, including all (2) letters from external referees, must be received by CONP by 11:59 pm (Eastern Standard Time) on the day of the application deadline. The application deadline for 2020 is January 15. Applications submitted after this deadline will not be accepted. Applicants will be notified by Email of the successful submission of their fellowship proposal.

CONP SCHOLAR PROGRAMS

CONP-Partners

Matching contributions towards CONP Scholars are available from the organizations indicated below. Note that CONP Scholar awards must be held at supporting CONP institutions and/or within designated provinces. CONP partner organizations include:

The University of Calgary Hotchkiss Brain Institute
University of British Columbia-Djavad Mowahfigian Centre for Brain Health
Western University
McGill University
Laval University

Non-CONP Partners

Applicants who are able to secure a matching contribution from **non-federal and non-provincial** sources may also apply. Applicants must provide a signed letter as proof of availability of matching funds from the supporting organization.

APPLICATION REVIEW

Applications will be reviewed by a Review Panel including Canadian and international experts. The CONP and the Chair of the Review Panel will work to ensure conflicts of interest are resolved; and past, present, and proposed supervisors will not review applications in the competition in which their trainees are participating. The Review Panel will provide a merit score for each full application, and recommend to CONP those applications that have received a sufficiently high merit score to deserve funding.

Assessment Criteria

- Achievements and activities of candidate (30%). The track record of the candidate will be assessed based on previous awards and scholarships, publications and presentations.
- The originality and feasibility of the deliverable(s) and their contribution to the CONP community (30%). In contrast to federal or provincial fellowship competitions, more emphasis will be placed on contributions to open science, whether these be through blogs, release of open software, open publications that may not be reviewed contexts, public teaching and outreach activities, etc.
- Referees' assessment of the potential impact of the proposed activities (25%) on one or more areas related to open neurosciences such as: concepts, paradigms, or theories advancing the field of Open Neuroscience. Referees will also specifically address the capabilities of the candidate to succeed in a project that will give back to the CONP community and enhancement of HQP training.
- Can the proposed project be successfully undertaken in the proposed environment? The quality of the training environment (15%) including the supervisor's previous record of trainee supervision and

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research productivity, and opportunities for interdisciplinary or cross-sectoral enrichment (such as working in collaboration with industry, health professionals, community organizations, or governmental agencies).

AWARD PROCESSES

Awards will be conditionally approved by CONP in descending order of merit until the available Scholar funds are exhausted or all recommended candidates have received an award, whichever occurs first. CONP will notify all candidates of the outcome of the competition by Email. Should a successful applicant withdraw for any reason, the conditional award will revert to the next most meritorious applicant recommended for an award.

Post-award Processes

- The Notice of Award must be accepted within 15 working days of the date of offer or the award will be cancelled and potentially offered to the next fundable applicant.
- Successful applicants must begin their award within 2 months of the date of offer. For HQP who do not yet hold an advanced degree, awards will only begin after proof is provided that the recipient has completed all the requirements of the graduate-level program, including oral thesis examination.
- Awards may not be transferred to other scholars at the same institution but may be transferred to another institution, depending upon availability of matched funds, in order for the awardee to complete the work proposed.
- Successful CONP Scholars may apply again. If so, they need to explicitly state why the existing project requires an extension and/or a significant change in project objective(s). Normally, substantial new elements should be introduced into the proposal for an extension to be awarded.
- All CONP Scholars should acknowledge the support of CONP in all presentations and publications. Successful applicants will be required to return a concrete solution, tool or resource that is likely to be of benefit to other researchers in neuroscience. They will also be asked to contribute to local training activities, and complete a short progress report at the end of the year describing their contribution to CONP.
- An applicant can submit a single application per program call (competition). Provided the applicant meets the eligibility requirements, there is no limit to number of competitions to which an applicant can submit an application.

Other Details

It is the responsibility of the awarded trainee to notify CONP of any change in status or change in Institution. Trainees may apply for a leave of absence (e.g. maternity leave), or temporary conversion to a part-time award, for personal reasons. If approved, the award will be temporarily suspended or prorated during this period, and the duration extended accordingly. For example, an individual who requests conversion of an award to half-time for six months will have the stipend reduced by 50% for six months and extended for three months at 100%.

For Further Information

- For any other information or questions about this competition and application process, please contact: scholarships@CONP.ca
- CONP will acknowledge receipt of the full application within two working days. Please contact scholarships@conp.ca if you do not receive acknowledgement.

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- About CONP: <http://www.conp.ca>.