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**Canadian  
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**Fondation des infirmières  
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BUILDING A HEALTHIER TOMORROW...  
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ENSEMBLE.



# SCHOLARSHIP MERIT REVIEW PANEL PROCESS

Last Review 2008

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# **SCHOLARSHIPS REVIEW PROCESS: INFORMATION FOR REVIEWERS**

## **CNF BACKGROUND**

Founded in 1962 by a grant from the Kellogg Foundation, CNF is a national non-profit charitable organization committed to promoting quality health care for Canadians by fostering excellence in nursing. This is accomplished by providing funds for:

- Educational scholarships,
- Awards to nurses seeking certification in specialty areas, and
- Operating grants for research projects on nursing care issues.

CNF is governed under its Letters Patent and Bylaws, and directed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

CNF is financed through individual donations and application fees, corporate contributions, and grants from foundations and other organizations, including the Canadian Nurses Association. CNF also levies a ten percent administration fee to support its programs.

Study and certification awards are supported by the Scholarship Fund and interest earned in the Trust Accounts as designated by CNF donors. CNF awards nurses across Canada approximately \$140,000 annually in scholarships at baccalaureate, master and doctoral levels.

## **REVIEW PRINCIPLES**

CNF is committed to working collaboratively with health care stakeholders, including the Canadian Nurses Association, other nursing organizations, and the health research and educational communities to ensure that CNF's resources are used to foster excellence in nursing and to benefit Canadians.

To this end, our review process for scholarship award applications is based on the following values:

- CNF will be accountable to our donors to use the funds entrusted to us responsibly and effectively.
- CNF will be fair and transparent.
- CNF will continually improve and streamline our review process, being respectful of the time investments of reviewers and applicants.

While CNF would like to be able to provide every non-successful applicant with feedback on his or her application, this is not possible given limited resources.

## **REVIEW PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **Panel Composition**

The volunteer review panel consists of one Chair and six members, at least three of whom are **bilingual** in French and English. Panel members are chosen for their expertise in the field of nursing education.

CNF ... to ensure that the Diversity of the Canadian population is represented in all its committees, including geographic, ethnic and gender diversity.

### **Chair**

The Chair is responsible to CNF for ensuring that the panel functions smoothly, effectively and objectively, according to CNF policies. The Chair will strive to establish a positive, constructive, fair-minded environment for evaluating applications.

### **Panel Members**

Panel members, unless in a conflict situation, review and rank all applications assigned to them, according to CNF Procedures. All panellists are required to forward their scores to CNF at least 2 weeks before the scheduled review meeting.

Reviewers should be prepared to describe applicants and explain the rationale behind their scoring and ranking.

### **CNF Staff**

CNF staff will:

- Locate and request qualified volunteers to sit on the Scholarship Awards Review Panel.
- Propose dates for the review.
- Determine whether conflicts exist.
- Forward materials for panel members approximately 4 weeks in advance of the review meeting:
  - List of Scholarship, criteria and value
  - Hardbook
  - Applications
  - Review score sheets
- Each application is randomly assigned to 2 review panel members taking into account ...
- Applicants will not be assigned to reviewers from the same institution.
- Prepare spreadsheets for the Chair based on the scores and comments provided by Panel members 2 weeks ahead of the meeting.
- Reimburse for travel, accommodation, meals and other expenses.
- Attend the review meeting as recording secretary.
- Prepare a formal report for the Board of Directors approval.
- Administer distribution of awards according to CNF policies.

- Make program changes based on Panel, Board, staff, and applicant recommendations.
- The recording secretary will:
  - Keep notes on procedural aspects of the Panel's functions.
  - Record the rating made by the Panel for each application.
  - Record concerns raised by the Panel on issues requiring attention by the Panel or staff (e.g., eligibility or ethics).

## **Meetings**

The Scholarship Merit Review Panel meets in Ottawa once a year for 2-3 days in mid-May.

## **CNF Policy**

The Scholarship Merit Review Panel is asked by the CNF Board to review applications and assign a rating according to established procedures. Awards will be assigned based on the highest ranking score within specific award categories. The CNF Board of Directors has final authority over the assignment of awards.

## **Confidentiality**

All information contained in applications, reviews by referees, and Panel discussions are strictly confidential. Panel members must not discuss with applicants or referees any information relating to the review of a specific application, or offer opinions on the chances of success or failure.

All requests for information on an application or a referee report should be referred to CNF. Access to review information on specific applications is governed by the relevant current legislation of the Province of Ontario.

The Merit Review Panel members may ship material to Ottawa prior the meeting or may undertake to shred at local institution. If shredding, a letter of Statement that shredding was done appropriately must be signed and mailed to CNF offices.

## **Conflict of Interest<sup>1</sup>**

CNF must make every effort to ensure not only that its decisions are fair and objective, but also that they are seen to be so. No panel member with a conflict of interest may participate in the review of an application. As a result:

1. Panel members who:
  - are from the same immediate institution or organization as the applicant.
  - have collaborated, published or been a co-applicant with the applicant, within the last ten years,
  - have been a supervisor of the applicant within the last ten years,

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Peer Review Process 2003

- are a close personal friend or relative of the applicant,
- have had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the applicant,
- 
- for any other reason feel that they cannot provide an objective review of the application

must declare a conflict of interest when such a proposal is up for review. The Chair is responsible for resolving areas of uncertainty.

The Chair is subject to the same conflict of interest guidelines as regular panel members.

All panel members are asked to sign a form agreeing to abide by the Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest policies when they join the panel.

### **Biases**

Discrimination or bias in the review based on age, ethnic status, gender or other irrelevant factors is unacceptable. All reviewers must evaluate the applications fairly and without prejudice.

### **Types of Applications**

Applicants apply for scholarships at baccalaureate, master and doctoral levels.

Applications may be submitted in French or English.

All reviewers are asked to assess all applications, within language capacity boundaries, at all 3 levels of study.

## **SCHOLARSHIP MERIT REVIEW PANEL ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES**

### **Before the Review Meeting**

CNF staff distributes applications, including transcripts and assessments, to the Panel members well in advance (approximately 6 weeks) of the meeting date.

Each member of the Panel is randomly assigned (within the boundaries of language capacity), a number of applications to review. Two committee members independently review and score each application and send ...may be their scores, on the sheet provided, to CNF two weeks ahead of the review meeting.

Materials may be completed electronically or in hard copy.

## Evaluation Criteria

The weightings attached to the various criteria differ depending on the level of the application (baccalaureate, master or doctoral). As shown on the *Application Rating Forms* (attached), the competencies used to evaluate the criteria differ according to the student's level of study. All relevant criteria are to be taken into account. Reviewers should assign the weighting to each criterion as indicated, and form a final impression of the application to aid in the rank ordering. The sole criteria for the evaluation of applications are as follows:

### Baccalaureate

- Academic aptitude—as evidenced in the applicant's completed form, by past academic results; transcripts; awards and distinctions; letters of reference; research and teaching potential—weighting **40%**.
- Strength of the application—as evidenced in the applicant's completed form, the written evaluations from the references, and the curriculum vitae—weighting **30%**.
- Leadership—as evidenced in the applicant's completed form, the written evaluations from the references, and the curriculum vitae—weighting **30%**.

### Master

- Academic aptitude—as evidenced in the applicant's completed form, by past academic results; transcripts; awards and distinctions; letters of reference—weighting **50%**.
- Strength of application—as evidenced in the applicant's completed form, the written evaluations from the references, and the curriculum vitae—weighting **25%**.
- Leadership—as evidenced in the applicant's completed form, the written evaluations from the references, and the curriculum vitae—weighting **25%**.

### Doctoral

- Academic aptitude—as evidenced in the applicant's completed form, by past academic results; transcripts; awards and distinctions; letters of reference—weighting **60%**.
- Strength of application—as evidenced in the applicant's completed form, the written evaluations from the references, and the curriculum vitae—weighting **20%**.
- Leadership—as evidenced in the applicant's completed form, the written evaluations from the references, and the curriculum vitae—weighting **20%**.

The *Application Rating Form* is a tool designed to aid the reviewer in:

- Evaluating all assigned applications according to a uniform set of principles,
- Giving an oral presentation of the application during the review meeting, and
- Simplifying the reviewer's "homework" with respect to preparing a written evaluation.

## Ranking and Scoring

To ensure consistency, CNF expects reviewers to adhere to a common scale. It is important that reviewers use the full scale and apply a consistent convention in assigning ratings.

To facilitate this, the following process has been established:

- Reviewers are asked to rank their assigned applications into rank deciles.<sup>2</sup> That is, within each level of study (baccalaureate, master, PhD), you must divide your assigned applications into ten equal groups.

For example, if you are asked to review 20 master level applications, you would have 10 groupings of 2 applications.

If your assigned number of applications is not equally divisible by 10, the lowest ranked group should have the largest number of applications (the top nine ranked groups should have equal numbers). For example, 56 applications would be divided into 10 groups: 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 5 + 11. Similarly, 158 applications would be divided into 10 groups: 15 + 15 + 15 + 15 + 15 + 15 + 15 + 15 + 15 + 23.

- Once you have sorted your applications into their ranked groups, you will assign values to the applications:
  - Those in the top decile (1% to 10%), your highest ranked group, are each given a score of 100.
  - Those in the second ranked group (11% to 20%) are given a score of 90.
  - The third, fourth and fifth groups are assigned 80, 70, and 60, respectively, and so forth:

Group	Decile	Score
1 (highest ranking)	1% - 10%	100
2	11% - 20%	90
3	21% - 30%	80
4	31% - 40%	70
5	41% - 50%	60
6	51% - 60%	50
7	61% - 70%	40
8	71% - 80%	30
9	81% - 90%	20
10 (lowest ranking)	91% - 100%	10

- Remember that the same number of applications must be given scores of 100, 90, 80, and so forth. It may be a larger number of applications assigned a score of 10 if the total number is not evenly divisible by ten.
- Once you have created your 10 groups (deciles), it would be most helpful if you could rank order the applicants that received the highest ranking (100 and 90 points only). That is, of the top 10%, you should be able to say which is the very strongest, the second strongest and so forth. Similarly, you should rank order the applicants that fall into the second highest group (those to whom you gave 90 points).

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<sup>2</sup> A decile is a division or grouping of one-tenth of a population ordered by some characteristic (in this case, merit).

## **Review Meeting**

- The Chair will determine whether conflicts of interest exist and the preferred order of review.
- All applications for each level of study will be evaluated before the applications for other levels will be considered (i.e., all baccalaureate student applications, all master student applications, and so forth).
- The Chair will report the average of the scores submitted by the reviewers assigned to each application.
- The Chair will report where reviewers have been discordant. The committee will determine the score.
- The average scores will be rank ordered.