

Guidelines for PhD Students Applying for Research Grants

PhD students at Unity Health Toronto can apply for and hold select research grants provided that **all** of the following criteria are met:

- a. PhD students whose stipend is funded through their supervisor's Tri-Agency¹ **grant** are **ineligible** to concurrently apply for or hold a Tri-Agency research grant. They may, however, be eligible to apply for and hold research grants from other funding agencies.
- b. PhD students who hold **trainee scholarship(s)** from Tri-Agency or other funding organizations are **eligible** to apply for and hold a research grant, provided they meet the eligibility criteria of the granting agency.
- c. The grant program guidelines explicitly indicate PhD students as **eligible Principal Investigators (PI)**.
- d. The PhD student's supervisor must approve and agree to serve as **Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) and account holder**.
- e. The term of the grant must **not exceed** the duration of the PhD student's academic program.
- f. The PhD student is required to obtain **Institutional Approval** and participate in the **Mandatory Peer Review Program**, as outlined in items 3 and 4 of the *How to Apply* section.

Important Notes

- PhD students must discuss their intention to apply for any grant applications with their supervisor, agreeing on the time commitment and use of any of the supervisor's or department's resources to carry out the proposed research activities.
- The PhD student's supervisor must agree to be the Co-PI and account holder of the grant.
- According to the [Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration](#), a PhD student serving as PI on a Tri-Agency grant cannot use the grant to cover their own stipend.
- If a PhD student, as the grant holder, transfers to another eligible institution, their grant may be transferred to their new institution (if allowed by the granting agency).
- If a PhD student, as the grant holder, withdraws from their study program, their grant will be transferred to the supervising PI (pending obtaining the granting agency's approval).

Tri-Agency Grant Programs

Under Tri-Agency guidelines, PhD students are generally not considered independent researchers and are therefore ineligible to apply for most grant programs. However, there are specific grant programs where their guidelines explicitly name PhD students as eligible applicants. Examples of these programs are listed below:

Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)

Planning and Dissemination Grants: The [Institute of Health Services and Policy Research \(IHSPR\)](#) provides support for dissemination activities that will contribute to the advancement of research consistent with the mandate of CIHR. The Planning and Dissemination Grants program is administered through ResearchNet and is launched twice per year: July and January. PhD students are eligible to apply as [Trainees](#).

¹ The **Tri-Agency** refers to the three major Canadian federal research funding agencies: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

For further details on application deadlines, eligibility requirements and how to apply, please visit the [CIHR Funding Opportunities Database](#) at the above-mentioned times to view the funding opportunity.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)

[Insight Development Grants](#) are expected to respond to the objectives of the Insight program and support research in its initial stages. These grants are valued at \$7,000 to \$75,000 over **one to two years**. PhD candidates are eligible to apply if they a) will have met all requirements for the PhD before the grant is awarded, including all course work and successful defence of their dissertation; and, b) establish a formal affiliation with an [eligible Canadian postsecondary institution](#) within three months of the grant start date and maintain such an affiliation for the duration of the grant period.

[Insight Grants](#) are expected to respond to the objectives of the [Insight Research program](#) and support research excellence in the social sciences and humanities. These grants are valued at \$7,000 to \$100,000 (Stream A) and \$100,001 to \$400,000 (Stream B) for **two to five years**. PhD candidates are eligible to apply if they a) will have met all requirements for the PhD before the grant is awarded, including all course work and successful defence of their dissertation; and, b) establish a formal affiliation with an [eligible Canadian postsecondary institution](#) within five months of the grant start date and maintain such an affiliation for the duration of the grant period.

For further details on application deadlines, eligibility requirements and how to apply, please visit the [SSHRC Funding Search Tool](#).

How to Apply

Eligible applicants must follow the application instructions as outlined below:

1. Find Funding and Confirm Eligibility

Search for research grant funding opportunities while ensuring that the “Eligibility” sections state that PhD students can apply as Principal Investigators.

2. Obtain Supervisor’s Approval

Complete the [Supervisor Agreement Form for PhD Students Applying for Research Grants](#). PhD student must obtain the approval and signature of their supervisor on this form.

3. Obtain Institutional Approval

Send completed [Supervisor Agreement Form for PhD Students Applying for Research Grants](#) to PeerReview@unityhealth.to a *minimum* of 10 business days before the grant deadline to obtain institutional approval and signature.

4. Document Tracking Form and Internal Peer Review

Complete the mandatory [peer review process](#), as required for all grant submissions at Unity Health Toronto. This includes submission of the [Document Tracking Form \(DTF\)](#) and peer reviewer reports to PeerReview@unityhealth.to.

5. Final Submission

Unless otherwise noted, applicants are responsible for making the final submission to the granting agency.

Questions? Please contact Peer Review (PeerReview@unityhealth.to).