

NSERC Session

The Story of a Successful Application

Tuesday June 2, 2026

CSBBCS – York

Today's plan

1. The Notification of Intent to Apply (NOI)
2. External reviewers
3. NSERC reviewers: what do they evaluate?
4. Mock review
5. Common mistakes
6. Q and A with Panel

1. The Notification of Intent to Apply (NOI)

- 10 Key words that describe the proposal
- Summary of the proposal
 - State the **objectives** of the proposed research program
 - **Describe the scientific approach**
 - Highlight novelty and significance to NSE
- What is it used for?
 - Comfort ratings
 - Finding the right reviewers
 - Selecting the appropriate Evaluation Group
 - Determine if a Joint Review is required

Panelist: What do you look for / what is helpful in the NOI?

2. External Reviewers

- Are not in conflict of interest (not an exhaustive list)
 - Relatives / close friends
 - Supervisor / trainee / colleagues (6 years)
 - Co-authors
 - Important to Remember – NSERC Staff and the committee ultimately decide what is a conflict
- Are not from your institution
 - Are from different institutions from each other
 - Canadian, North American, International
- Can provide an independent assessment of your application
- Can evaluate your application in its language

Panelist: Have you encountered a conflict not listed here?

3. NSERC Reviewers

- 1. Excellence of Researcher
- 2. Merit of Proposal
- 3. Training of Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP)

DISCOVERY GRANTS MERIT INDICATORS

The Merit Indicators should be used in conjunction with the Peer Review Manual, which outlines how reviewers arrive at a rating.

EXCEPTIONAL	OUTSTANDING	VERY STRONG	STRONG	MODERATE	INSUFFICIENT
-------------	-------------	-------------	--------	----------	--------------

https://nserc-crsng.canada.ca/sites/default/files/migrated/_doc/professors-professeurs/dg_merit_indicators_eng_2.pdf

- 4. Using external reviewers' reports

3.1 NSERC Reviewers

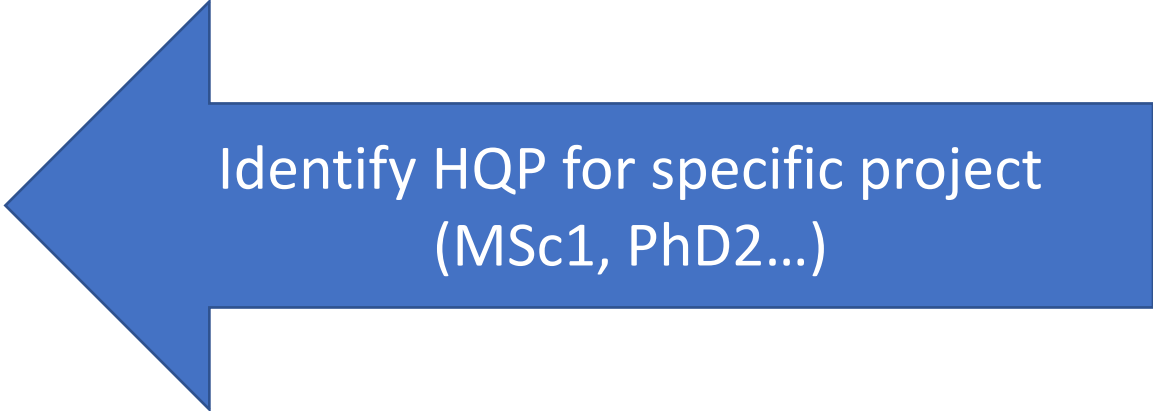
Excellence of Researcher

- Knowledge, expertise, experience
- Quality of contributions and impact on Natural Science and Engineering (NSE)
 - Explain why you choose specific journals
 - Point out which contributions are NSE (vs. health for example)
- Importance of contributions to (and use by) other researchers and end-users
 - Describe most significant contributions

Panelist: What do you find demonstrates impact?

3.2 NSERC Reviewers Merit of Proposal

- Clear objectives
 - Long-term goal
 - Short-term goals
- Clear and appropriate methodology
 - Describe in enough details
 - A program of research, not a project
- Feasibility
 - Timeline, HQP required, expertise
- Originality and innovation
- Significance of expected contributions



Identify HQP for specific project
(MSc1, PhD2...)

Panelist: What common mistakes have you seen in proposals?

3.3 NSERC Reviewers

Training of Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP)

- Past training of HQP
 - Updated information on current / past HQP (where are they now?)
 - Awards
 - Publications (Identify them in publication list*)
- Overall training philosophy
 - What makes a good training environment?
 - Describe the current training environment
- Training plan associated with current proposal
 - Skills to be gained by HQP
- EDI
 - **Specific barriers** specific to your field / geographical area / institution
 - **Solutions** to those barriers

Where?
CCCV
Training Plan
Training Philosophy

Panelist: What information do you find useful when evaluating HQP training?

3.4 NSERC Reviewers Using External Reviewers' Reports

External Reviewers focus on the proposal

- Evaluation of originality and innovation
- Evaluation of methodology
- Evaluation of feasibility

Panelist: How do you use the external's report?
Have you seen them get rejected?

5. Common Mistakes

Excellence of Researcher

- Quantify leave of absence
- Contributions: NSE vs. Non-NSE
- Demonstrating Impact

Merit of proposal

- Project / series of project vs. program
- Lack of methodological information
- Failure to provide appropriate information concerning CIHR or SSHRC grants

HQP Training

- EDI Sections
- Evidence of HQP success



6. Panel: your questions
