



## RESOURCES AND BEST PRACTICES: RESEARCH HONOUR AND AWARD NOMINATIONS AND CELEBRATION

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The recognition and promotion of faculty excellence in research and innovation is important for our faculty members, for our academic units and for the University as a whole. This document outlines the role of **academic units** in fostering a strong culture of recognition and supporting the nomination of faculty members for research honours and awards (H&A). It presents best practices for identifying excellence and opportunities within units and working with divisional and University resources to support H&A nomination development and celebration.

### *Significance of Research Honours and Awards*

For faculty members, H&A provide important recognition and visibility of their research achievements and leadership and can lead to success in other valuable opportunities, including securing research funding and collaborations. Our support of nominations and celebration of our researchers' successes demonstrates that the University values them.

For academic units and for the University, H&A received by our faculty are a critical measure of the quality of our scholarship, as well as a key factor in shaping our reputation and rankings. H&A recognition and rankings in turn create a culture of excellence that attracts top academics and students and further increases our impact and visibility on the world stage.

### *Structure of Honours and Awards Support at U of T*

Research H&A strategy, resources, tracking, and celebration are centrally supported from the **Office of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation (OVPRI)**, which also manages internal competitions and development for nominations that require University endorsement.

OVPRI works closely with [H&A coordinators and directors](#) in each **academic division**, who oversee strategic goals and nomination processes at the divisional level and are the primary contacts for academic units seeking to discuss H&A nominations.

**Academic units** play a vital role in identifying appropriate candidates for H&A nominations and helping to build researchers' trajectories from disciplinary to national and international awards. Units have the closest knowledge of their faculty members' research achievements and relative excellence and are best positioned to ensure that eligible faculty are considered for opportunities equitably. Unit heads are encouraged to involve their divisional H&A coordinator in long term nomination planning and strategy. This document outlines best practices for building a systematic and sustainable approach to H&A nominations and celebration.

## *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Research Honours & Awards*

The values of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are an institutional priority for the University of Toronto. We recognize that diversity is essential to research excellence and the creation of an inclusive intellectual community that allows our researchers to maximize their creativity, contributions and impact. As such, we want to ensure that diversity is valued in the ways we support our faculty and that faculty are equitably considered for recognition opportunities.

EDI best practices are important in the H&A context for several reasons:

- H&A nominations are optional and can easily become an afterthought, with nominations submitted ad hoc based on occasional nomination calls or requests. This approach can result in missed opportunities, and tends to favour:
  - Candidates who are top-of-mind due to recency and familiarity bias.
  - Candidates who self-advocate, which not all deserving faculty will do equally.
- Candidate selection processes are also vulnerable to unconscious biases against underrepresented groups, which can become barriers to recognition of their value and accomplishments.
- Processes to identify prospective awards and nominees necessarily apply standards of achievement and excellence that should be carefully considered, as they can shape award strategies and affect which faculty receive support.

Units can take steps to ensure that they are considering EDI in their H&A practices, such as:

- Implementing a systematic approach to ensure that all meritorious faculty are considered regularly for H&A opportunities. The next section provides examples of practices and new resources that may help to manage this efficiently.
- Encouraging all faculty to self-advocate when they identify opportunities of interest.
- Including information about H&A processes and support in new faculty orientations.
- Examining unit processes for identifying priority awards and candidates to ensure they:
  - Consider opportunities that recognize achievement at all career stages, as well as different types of contributions and impacts.
  - Include regular unconscious bias education for leadership and decision-makers involved in selecting candidates, such as the [modules provided here](#).
  - Follow best practices for peer review and evaluation of candidate excellence, as outlined in the VPRI guide [Promising Practices for Peer Review Committees](#).

Units' commitment to strong EDI practices for H&A contributes to robust, consistent, and fair nomination practices for the University as a whole, as units' nominations and candidate recommendations in turn inform divisional and University award strategies.

Centrally, OVPRI ensures that EDI best practices inform internal reviews for institutional H&A nominations; aligns University processes with awarding organizations' EDI requirements; and builds resources and capacity for consistent supports across university divisions.

### *Approaching H&A Nominations Systematically*

The following practices and resources may help units to implement manageable annual systems to consider the breadth of their faculty for H&A opportunities.

#### *Leadership*

Consider appointing a leader or champion within the unit, such as an Associate Chair, Research, who can oversee the unit's H&A strategy and communicate with the divisional H&A coordinator regarding opportunities, resources and planned nominations.

#### *Systematic identification of candidates*

Units are encouraged to develop a mechanism to identify candidates for priority H&A at least once per year, well in advance of award deadlines.

Approaches may vary depending on divisional strategy. Options include:

- Assembly of an H&A committee within the unit that can review relevant opportunities a few times per year.
- Integration of H&A discussions into or after the annual Progress Through The Ranks (PTR) process: an ideal opportunity to consider all faculty against a list of priority H&A to determine eligible and competitive candidates.
- Participation in a tri-campus, field-specific H&A committee, if relevant; tri-campus committees should ensure candidates' home units are informed of possible nominations and opportunities.
- Participation in a divisional H&A committee, if relevant.

#### *Strategy*

VPRI recommends that units focus strategic efforts on a *short list of priority H&A* for which faculty are likely to be eligible from year to year, while continuing to address one-off opportunities on an ad-hoc basis.

- Priority H&A may include key discipline-specific awards, recognitions from national or international academies and agencies, and divisional and University awards. The unit's guidance is especially important for early and mid-career H&A in relevant disciplines that can build faculty members' CVs and position them for further opportunities.
- A pilot **data-driven planning resource** to help units select priority awards and scan eligible candidates is available from OVPRI. The report should be requested from and discussed with the appropriate divisional [H&A coordinator or director](#).

#### *Nomination support*

In conversation with divisional coordinators, consider whether divisional support is offered for nominations and what support may feasibly be offered by the unit, such as coordinating peer nominators, providing cover letters, and contacting referees. **Units should expect to advise on and support some nominations**, especially for discipline-specific awards.

- Faculty can be encouraged to proactively assemble awards dossiers (Appendix 1) to streamline nomination processes for nominators and coordinators.

### *Cultivating a Nomination and Celebration Culture*

H&A nominations are strongest when led and supported by peers. Units can cultivate an active nomination culture by including faculty members in the processes above, and by:

- Seeking faculty expertise on award competitions and encouraging participation in review committees for external awards.
- Encouraging faculty members to nominate peers within their research group, unit, and wider research community for appropriate opportunities.
- Developing a mentorship model in which established faculty advise earlier-career faculty on award opportunities, strategic timing and referee selection.
- Recognizing the work of faculty who take the time to mentor or nominate others.

Faculty may also take a greater interest in awards when they see successes celebrated. Highlight received awards by issuing congratulatory messages in faculty meetings and/or on social media, publishing them in newsletters and on unit webpages, and notifying others in the university to amplify recognition. A [Faculty Award Reporting Form](#) is available to efficiently convey award news to your academic division, VPRI, and U of T Communications.

Reported awards may be:

- Featured in divisional communications and on the [U of T Celebrates](#) webpage.
- Recognized with congratulatory letters; OVPRI arranges congratulatory letters from the President and Vice-President, Research and Innovation, and Strategic Initiatives (VPRI SI) for all reported awards meeting specific criteria (Appendix 3).
- Included in the [VPRI Dashboards](#) for Honours & Awards, which track faculty awards, distinctions, prestigious fellowships, and prizes recognizing research, creative professional activity, teaching, and leadership, and provide valuable data for units' quality assurance self-studies and nomination strategies (Appendix 4).

### *Resources for Identifying Award Opportunities*

Award opportunities can be explored through several avenues, depending on award types.

- *Disciplinary awards* important to specific fields may be advised on by senior faculty, identified by reviewing unit award records, explored via the award programs of relevant scholarly associations, and searched using the [Pivot Funding Opportunities Database](#).
- *National and international awards and academies* can be explored in the UTORid-protected [VPRI Honours & Awards Opportunities database](#), which includes all University of Toronto H&A performance indicators (see Appendix 3), major international awards, and awards influencing international subject rankings. Award profiles outline institutional processes and provide lists of University of Toronto winners.
- *Teaching awards* can be explored via the [Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation](#).
- [Divisional Honours & Awards Coordinators](#) can be consulted for guidance on award selection, strategy and timing and for access to unit-specific H&A Planning Resources.



## APPENDIX 1: RECOMMENDED COMPONENTS OF A FACULTY AWARDS DOSSIER

The majority of research award competitions require some combination of the following components. To streamline the process of assembling nominations, faculty may consider proactively developing the items below, which can be adapted for various award opportunities.

- 1-sentence (~15 to 20-word) proposed citation
  - Structure: *“For [discovery/contribution] that has [impact].”*
  - Key words:  
*For discovering; defining; developing; introducing*  
*That has led to; enabled; defined; transformed*
- 250-word summary of achievement and impact
  - Be direct and describe achievements first; include metrics such as major publications or awards toward the end of the summary.
- 3-page detailed narrative of research achievements
  - Develop a compelling overview of your work and the main contributions for which you could be nominated; seek peer and/or professional input.
  - Start with a 1-to 2-paragraph introduction of the central questions or problems your work has addressed; structure the rest of the overview with headings to allow room for technical discussion.
  - Keep metrics and other indicators of recognition toward the end.
- Annotated list of top 15 publications or comparable scholarly outputs
  - Many nominations will request a list of top 5, 10, or 15 publications. Selecting these proactively saves time.
  - When permitted, annotations can complement your summary and detailed narrative by offering more detail on specific contributions and their influence or impact.
- Well-formatted CV
  - Review your entire CV for formatting inconsistencies.
  - Consider which sections you would remove to tailor your CV for specific opportunities (e.g., a research vs. a teaching award). Are the sections grouped logically?
  - Consider including your 250-word summary or a short bio near the beginning of your CV.

## APPENDIX 2: Year-at-a-Glance: Notable Research Award Deadlines 2025

■ Internal, Cross-Disciplinary   
 ■ External, Cross-Disciplinary   
 ■ Health Sciences   
 ■ Natural Sciences and Engineering   
 ■ Social Sciences and Humanities

JAN		<div>U of T McLean Award (Jan 7)</div> <div>CIHR-IPPH Trailblazer Awards (Jan 15)</div>
FEB	<div>U of T President's Impact Awards (Feb 19)</div>	<div>SSHRC Talent Award (internal deadline; Feb 7)</div>
MAR	<div>Royal Society of Canada Medals (Mar 15)</div> <div>U of T University Professors (Mar 24)</div> <div>Order of Ontario (Mar 31)</div>	<div>Canadian Academy of Health Sciences Fellows (Mar 10)</div>
APR		
MAY	<div>Dorothy Killam Fellowships (May 22)</div> <div>Killam Prizes (May 29)</div>	<div>NSERC Arthur B. McDonald Fellowships (internal deadline; May 15)</div> <div>New Royal Society of Canada Prizes (May 29)</div>
JUN		<div>SSHRC Impact Awards (internal deadline; Jun 6) Gold Medal; Insight Award; Connection Award; Partnership Award</div> <div>Canadian Medical Hall of Fame (June 9)</div>
JUL		<div>Gairdner Early Career Investigator Awards (Jul 11)</div> <div>Canada Gairdner Momentum Awards (Jul 15)</div>
AUG		<div>Steacie Prize for Natural Sciences (Aug 31)</div>
SEP	<div>Sloan Research Fellowships (Sep 15)</div> <div>Guggenheim Fellowships (Sep 17)</div>	<div>Frontiers Planet Prize (internal; Sep 30)</div>
OCT	<div>Governor General's Innovation Awards (internal deadline; Oct 1)</div>	<div>Molson Prize (Oct 5)</div> <div>Canadian Academy of Engineering Fellows (Oct 31)</div>
NOV		<div>NSERC Awards for Science Promotion (Nov 15)</div> <div>NSERC Prizes (Nov 28) Gerhard Herzberg Canada Gold Medal; Brockhouse Canada Prize; John C. Polanyi Award; Donna Strickland Prize for Societal Impact</div> <div>Bank of Canada Awards (Nov 30)</div>
DEC	<div>John Charles Polanyi Prize (internal; early Dec)</div> <div>Royal Society of Canada Fellows (Dec 15)</div> <div>Royal Society of Canada College (Dec 15)</div> <div>Royal Society of Canada Medals (Dec 15)</div>	<div>NSERC Synergy Awards for Innovation (Dec 6)</div>
ANY	<div>Order of Canada</div>	

\*New deadline going forward for all RSC medals and prizes



### APPENDIX 3: RESEARCH HONOURS AND AWARDS PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The University of Toronto uses several measures to assess and celebrate our national and global performance in research recognition through H&A. These include the following types of indicators (*links to UTORid-protected [VPRI Honours & Awards Opportunities Database](#)*):

- [University of Toronto H&A Performance Indicators](#), comprised of significant national and international academy fellowships and awards that are open to faculty from a range of disciplines and in which annual performance is a meaningful metric.
- [Major international awards](#) identified by [Universities Canada's Global Excellence Initiative](#) as important for global recognition of Canadian research talent.
- Other international and major national H&A specified in our **criteria for institutional recognition** through congratulatory letters from the President and VPRIS, which are as follows:
  - All international honours and awards for research achievement or creative professional activity, excepting article/paper awards, lecture awards, and honorary degrees.
  - Selected national honours and awards for research achievement or creative professional activity, as specified below:
    - Fellowships and awards from Canada's national academies (CAE, CAHS, RSC); the Tri-Councils (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC); the Medical and Science and Engineering Halls of Fame; the Bank of Canada, Canada Council for the Arts, and E.W.R. Steacie Foundation.
    - Honours granted by the Governor General or federal or provincial governments, including Orders of Canada and Ontario.
    - Lifetime achievement awards from Canadian scholarly associations.
    - Peer-nominated and/or elected fellowships in Canadian scholarly associations.
    - Awards from Canadian scholarly associations that represent the preeminent national recognition in a particular discipline, which are identified and proposed for inclusion by academic divisions.

We encourage divisions and academic units to identify any additional H&A that may be useful indicators of international or national research recognition in particular disciplinary areas; and to record and report received H&A to support institutional assessment and celebration processes.





## APPENDIX 4: FACULTY HONOURS AND AWARDS DASHBOARDS

The H&A Dashboards, hosted on the Division of the Vice-President, Research & Innovation's [VPRI Dashboards](#) self-serve data analytics platform, illustrate the volume and types of H&A received by faculty during their appointments at University of Toronto. They provide access to reliable records of faculty *research, creative professional activity, teaching, and leadership* awards, distinctions, prestigious fellowships, and prizes, for use in [quality assurance self-studies](#) and [nomination strategies](#).

The dashboards address the challenge of consistently tracking faculty achievements by:

- Providing a central, curated data platform, updated tri-annually, that integrates difficult-to-access information from awarding organizations, divisional/unit records and faculty CVs.
- Providing accurate, verified lists of University of Toronto recipients of major national and international awards and distinctions (e.g., national academy recognitions, tri-Agency awards).
- Enabling additions to be submitted directly for review and inclusion via a [Faculty H&A Reporting Form](#) received by VPRI and your [divisional H&A coordinator](#), or via [DiscoverResearch](#) profiles.

### Inclusions and Exclusions

Records include three primary award types as defined below:

- *Distinction*: An honour that distinguishes the recipient with a specific title (e.g., Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, Officer of the Order of Canada, or honorary doctorate)
- *Fellowship*: An honour that carries term-limited research funding or resources, recognizes both achievements and potential, and that is granted based on a competitive process (e.g. Guggenheim Fellowship)
- *Prize or Award*: An honour, which may or may not include an award of personal or research funds, recognizing achievements in a specific area defined by the awarding organization.

In general, recognition is a primary purpose of the H&A listed, rather than provision of funding or positions within other institutions or associations. The following types of honours and achievements are not in scope; some are tracked in other VPRI dashboards.

- Salary awards (e.g., Canada Research Chairs, Early Researcher Awards)
- Operating funds or grants
- Fellowships geared to inclusion of specific expertise in a program, not recognition per se
- Visiting professorships or other honorary roles in other institutions or associations
- Unelected fellowships or memberships in scholarly associations