

TIPS: CANADA RESEARCH CHAIRS PROGRAM

NEW NOMINATIONS – TIER 1 AND TIER 2

OVERVIEW

The Canada Research Chairs Program (CRCP) is part of a federal strategy to make Canada one of the world's top countries in research and development. The Chairs are intended to attract and retain a diverse cadre of world-class researchers, to reinforce academic research and training excellence in Canadian postsecondary institutions. The CRCP is a tri-agency initiative of the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), administered by the Tri-agency Institutional Programs Secretariat, which is housed within SSHRC.

GENERAL TIPS

SELECTION CRITERIA

CRC nominations are evaluated using the following, paraphrased selection criteria:

- 1. Quality of the nominee and the proposed research program**
 - A world-class researcher who has demonstrated particular research creativity
 - International recognition (Tier 1) or the potential for international recognition (Tier 2)
 - Demonstrated (Tier 1) or potential (Tier 2) track record in attracting and training HQP
 - Original and innovative research program with significant potential impact
- 2. Quality of the institutional environment, institutional commitment, and fit of the proposed chair with the institution's strategic research plan (ISRP)**
 - The strength of the existing or planned environment; opportunities for collaboration
 - Appropriate institutional resources to support the Chair and ensure the success of the research program
 - Research program is important to the attainment of institution's ISRP objectives

The best way to meet these criteria is to **carefully read and follow** [the instructions](#) and then structure the documents to address all the requested points. The following tips are offered to help you write a strong proposal, but they are not a substitute for a close and careful reading of the CRC instructions.

REVIEWERS

The nomination will be peer-reviewed by a minimum of three expert reviewers in the field of the proposed research program. It may also be reviewed by an interdisciplinary adjudication committee composed of researchers with expertise in various disciplines within the health sciences, natural sciences, engineering, social sciences, and humanities. Due to the possibility of interdisciplinary adjudication, the proposed research program must be clearly described to allow informed assessment by researchers who may not have direct expertise in the area. Avoid jargon, acronyms, and highly technical terms, where possible. Try to strike a balance between specialized terminology and plain language. The proposal must be accessible to readers with little background in your field but must also be credible to specialists.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are strategic priorities for the Canada Research Chair Program. In order to maintain program standards of rigor, fairness, and equity, CRC reviewers are instructed to consider how various disciplinary and individual factors have shaped nominees' career paths, scholarship, and productivity (see [Guidelines for Assessing the Productivity of Nominees](#)). Reviewers are to carefully consider career interruptions

and personal circumstances (which include interruptions, slow downs, publication delays, conducting interdisciplinary research, or being in a position of intellectual leadership) as legitimate explanations for delays in research productivity. They are further to consider the effects of systemic bias in assessing quality, particularly in interdisciplinary or emerging fields. Nominees are encouraged to address their disciplinary or personal circumstances in the “Quality of Nominee” section or in “Interruptions and Personal Circumstances” in the CV Detail section on the Convergence Portal, as appropriate.

FORMATTING & STYLE

Not all reviewers will give your application an in-depth review. Good formatting will allow the reviewers to locate the information they need and will create a favourable first impression for your proposal.

- In the nomination documents, observe the page limits specified in the application, and do not try to squeeze in too much information by reducing white space or using a smaller font size.
 - Put your name, application ID (e.g., CRC-XXXX-XXXXX) and the page number in the header of each page.
 - All pages in the nomination package must be numbered consecutively.
 - Use 11-point font or larger, and margins of at least 3/4" (2 cm) all around.
 - Ensure text is single-spaced, with a maximum of six lines per inch.
 - Subdivide the document according to the sections below (e.g., Quality of Nominee, Description of Proposed Research Program, etc.). If you need to save space, place the subheadings at the beginning of the first line of the relevant paragraph, distinguishing them through font size and style.
- Since CRC recommendations are nominations, your application should be written in the third person (“The nominee” or “Professor X” instead of “I”). Ensure that there is consistency in style and voice across the supporting documents.
- Application details entered directly into the Convergence Portal cannot be formatted and cannot exceed the prescribed character limits. When printed, the text will be in Segoe IU 10-point font. Use white space and other simple formatting devices, such as UPPER CASE for EMPHASIS, to make the application form look attractive and easy to read.
- Avoid lengthy paragraphs and use bulleted lists whenever appropriate.
- Use optimistic and persuasive language. E.g., instead of “Professor X hopes to discover Y,” assert that “Professor X’s research **will** discover new insights into Y.”
- Emphasize innovative aspects. Do not say that the research will “progress smoothly”—say that it will “break new ground.”
- Write new material whenever possible and customize existing material to fully address the CRC criteria. Reviewers can easily tell when material has been cut and pasted from another grant application.

TIPS FOR SPECIFIC SECTIONS

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

(MAXIMUM 2,500 CHARACTERS, INCLUDING SPACES)

This summary should be written in lay language and concentrate on the following points:

- Key objectives of the research program (what you will do)
- The unique or innovative aspects of the research (why this is new)
- Potential impact (why this is important)

First impressions count, and this is the first opportunity to engage the reader. Try to capture for a broad audience what is interesting and promising about the proposed research.

SUGGESTED REVIEWERS AND REFEREES

- When suggesting reviewers and referees, try to include one reviewer and one referee of international repute from outside of Canada. The inclusion of international scholars bolsters the argument that you are internationally known and are supported by other international leaders.
- Please review the [CRC's definition of conflict of interest](#) carefully. Be sure to suggest only reviewers who are not in a conflict of interest. **Do not include reviewers who hold appointments at U of T or its affiliated hospitals and institutes.**
- Ask referees to clearly state in their letters that they are not in conflict of interest.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS FOR NOMINATIONS

1. QUALITY OF NOMINEE

(MAXIMUM 1 PAGE)

- On this single page, demonstrate that you are an outstanding and innovative world-class researcher: briefly summarize your expertise, and explain why your research is original and significant.
- Highlight your scholarly accomplishments to emphasize the quality and impact of your research:
 - Include a summary of your publication record with prestigious presses or high-impact journals, including citation index (if applicable or relevant to your field).
 - Summarize your research presentations or invited lectures at major conferences or national/international meetings.
 - Provide a concise overview of your major research grants and fellowships.
 - Highlight major awards and honours.
 - Briefly describe your experience training highly qualified personnel.
 - List any other achievements that demonstrate your scholarly excellence or impact (invitations to join international bodies, roles on editorial boards, media appearances, etc.).
- Especially for Tier 1 Chairs, emphasize the world-class nature of your contributions and reputation. For example, refer to invitations to international conferences, keynote addresses delivered, work as a conference organizer, and publications with international scholars in international outlets.
- Excellence remains the key review criterion, but an excellent track record may include scholarship or research metrics that are non-traditional. If your research area or methodology is non-traditional, interdisciplinary, or represents an emerging sub-field (this may include, for example, research that incorporates Indigenous ways of knowing or community-engaged methods), put your contributions into context and explain their impact and significance. Reviewers are instructed to avoid undervaluing these types of scholarship and to consider circumstances particular to such fields.

2. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED RESEARCH PROGRAM

(MAXIMUM 6 PAGES, EXCLUDING EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND LIST OF REFERENCES)

In this section, you will present your research plans for the upcoming CRC period. Reviewers will be assessing this section for the innovative and original aspects of the proposed research, its potential impact, and the development of future researchers through the attraction of excellent trainees/students.

Ensure that you have taken steps to minimize bias in your proposed research program. Adhere to the following equity, diversity, and inclusion guides, as applicable: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) [How to Integrate Sex and Gender into Research](#); the Tri-Council Policy Statement on [Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada](#); the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's [Indigenous Research Statement of Principles](#); and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Council's [Guide for Applicants: Considering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Your Application](#). When appropriate, mention how bias has been or will be minimized.

Make sure the overall outlook of this section is forward looking. Background discussion is only relevant if it clearly relates to your future plans.

Engagement of Indigenous Communities: If you are describing research that takes place with or within Indigenous communities, take special care to specify which communities and organizations are involved, and provide concrete details about the process to engage and build a relationship with them, including community input into the research topics and questions. Demonstrate that you have carefully considered diversity among Indigenous communities and that the research will respect and integrate local languages, cultures, protocols, interests, worldviews, and ways of knowing.

- Describe the engagement protocols you will follow and ensure that you have allocated a reasonable timeline to engage with the community in an appropriate manner.
- Provide details of the co-creation process and the specific ways in which the community will be involved in the research, including data analysis and knowledge translation.
- Describe how the Indigenous community will benefit from participating in the research and how those benefits will be measured and reported.
- Consider and describe how you will address data governance in the research and how the Indigenous community will have access to the data. Describe in detail how your research process uses the [First Nations principles of OCAP®](#) (ownership, control, access, and possession); the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami [National Inuit Strategy on Research](#) priorities and objectives; the [CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance](#); and/or other community frameworks for data governance.
- Ensure your budget includes sufficient funding to support these research activities (e.g., honoraria for Elders and Knowledge Keepers, hiring Indigenous research assistants).

The guidelines for engagement of Indigenous communities in research were adapted from material previously prepared by Professor Suzanne Stewart and Dr. Cathy Fournier for the adjudication of research funding applications to University of Toronto Connaught Fund programs.

a) Executive Summary (maximum 100 words)

- This summary should be on a separate page and does not count towards the six-page maximum of the Description of Proposed Research Program.
- Using clear and straightforward language, state the explicit objectives of your proposed research program and indicate their significance (within and/or beyond the field).

b) Context

- This section and the following one (2.c. Methodology) are the core of the description of the proposed research program. Open this section with an introduction to your research program: what research gap you will address and why is it important. Clearly state your research goal and objectives; then address the information requested in the CRC instructions.
- When describing your contribution to current literature, be explicit. Provide a concise overview of the existing body of knowledge, and then state how your research will build on recent scholarship, fill gaps in the literature, take the field in new directions, etc. You can use phrasing such as, “Although recent publications have demonstrated [X], researchers have yet to fully understand [Y],” or “While recent research has focused on [X], very little is known about [Y].” Emphasize again how this proposed program of research is innovative, original, and significant.
- For some programs, it might be difficult to separate the discussion of the theoretical approach/framework (2.b) from the methodology (2.c). If necessary, these two sections can be

merged, and signified in the heading “b) Context and c) Methodology.” This should not affect your assessment, as the reviewers use the selection criteria as a rubric, not the CRC instructions.

- Don’t forget to address the ISRP in this section (addressing the final bullet). This discussion will be a condensed version of that which appears in the institutional section (3.c), but it must be included here.

c) Methodology

- Describe the research activities and methods that will accomplish the goals and objectives described in the previous section. Balance the specificity needed to satisfy expert reviewers with explicit statements of the significance and innovativeness of your chosen methodology for the multidisciplinary review committee.
- Be sure to justify the choice of methodology – offer some discussion of why it is innovative, necessary, appropriate, etc.

d) Engagement with Research Users and Communication of Results

- Outline plans for engaging research users, including how they will be engaged during the various stages of research (if applicable).
- When describing how you will disseminate the results of your research, be as specific as possible; provide examples of high-impact journals or international conferences, identify possible end users, outline plans for technology transfer, etc.

e) Description of Proposed Training Strategies

- Focus on how your program of research will benefit the students/trainees, rather than how the students will benefit your research program.
- Be sure to describe the specific roles and responsibilities of the students and trainees and indicate the skills that they will learn. Avoid vague phrases about the broader importance of mentorship and graduate training, and instead discuss specific skills and activities.
- If possible, estimate how many trainees are expected and indicate their levels of study (undergraduate, graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, etc.).

f) List of References (maximum 3 pages)

- Attach a list of all references cited in your proposed research program (this list is in addition to the six pages of the Description). Start this list on a separate page.

3. QUALITY OF THE INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT, INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT, AND FIT OF PROPOSED CHAIR WITH INSTITUTION’S STRATEGIC RESEARCH PLAN (MAXIMUM 6 PAGES)

Reviewers assess the institutional environment, the institutional commitment, and the fit with the University’s ISRP, and are asked to give a global assessment based on these factors. These sections must collectively demonstrate that holding a CRC will enhance your ability to do research and will also be the basis for strategic investment by the university. Although it can sometimes be difficult to fill the six pages, we recommend using as much of the allotted space as possible.

a) Institutional Environment

- Illustrate that U of T and your department represent the ideal institutional home for you to carry out the proposed program of research.
- Describe the quality of the institutional environment, including the institution’s/department’s overall strengths as well as its strengths in the proposed area of study (e.g., world/Canadian

rankings, high-profile awards won by faculty members). Discuss the opportunities or resources available at the institution or in the department (e.g., unique infrastructure, specialized centres or institutes, the strength of the graduate program, etc.).

- Describe your position within the department or research group, and discuss the department's/group's members, research goals, and hiring priorities.
- Discuss potential collaborators in the department, at the institution, and/or at other institutions in Canada or around the world. Identify specific collaborators and their areas of expertise.
- Show how your proposed work will improve the standing of the group or department as a whole.

b) Institutional Commitment

- **Be sure to address all of the bullet points in the instructions for this section.**
- Include the total approximate amount of funding needed **per year** to implement the proposed research program over the term of the chair (seven years for Tier 1 and five years for Tier 2).
- State how much of the necessary research funding is already secured and how much is outstanding or will be applied for, and describe the strategy for securing any outstanding funding (if applicable). Make sure these numbers add up and match what is listed in your budget pages.
- This information will serve as a complement to the budget pages in the nomination form; refer directly to the figures cited in the budget under "Funding from the University" and explain specifically what this money will cover.
- Show that U of T will provide you with the support you will need (both financial and non-financial) to ensure the success of your research program. For example,
 - Start-up funding or other direct contributions to research
 - Coverage of indirect costs of research not recovered from external sources
 - Graduate student support
 - Release time from teaching or administrative duties
 - Access to unique facilities
 - Specialized research services support (e.g., partnership and innovations support)
 - Mentoring
 - Exposure to key research collaborators
 - Hiring priorities in your area of research
 - Relocation/housing assistance for newly recruited Chairs
- Indicate how these commitments differ from those offered to regular faculty members. If this support is available to all (non-CRC) faculty members in the department or institution, emphasize how the quality of the institutional environment (described above) provides you with exceptional resources.

c) Fit of the Proposed Chair with the Institution's Strategic Research Plan

- Demonstrate the importance of your proposed research for attaining the goals described in U of T's current Strategic Research Plan (ISRP), 2024–2029, and, as applicable, to the research strategies of affiliated hospitals, research institutes, etc.
- Explain how your proposed research aligns with specific research themes from the ISRP. Include direct quotes and/or paraphrase from the ISRP. The ISRP includes five key thematic research areas:
 - Expanding our fundamental knowledge of living organisms and the universe
 - Exploring cultures and communication
 - Advancing health and well-being
 - Innovating technology
 - Developing community, policy, pedagogies and governance

- Comment on how your research program will contribute to the five strategic objectives of the ISRP. It is not necessary to discuss all five objectives; choose those most applicable to your research program.
 - Lead nationally and globally in research and innovation
 - Provide institutional supports to empower scholars to do their best research
 - Enable, train and support the next generation of researchers and innovators
 - Promote all stages of research from idea to discovery, translation and impact
 - Cultivate an environment to leverage opportunities and foster collaboration and partnerships
- Describe (if applicable) how you have helped build relationships with other research initiatives in Canada and abroad. These relationships could include local, provincial, national, and international collaborations that will lead to important outcomes for the institution.

CV DOCUMENTS

The CV must illustrate that you are CRC material and will contribute to the overall evaluation of the renewal nomination (see Selection Criteria above).

The CV has the same formatting requirements as the nomination documents (see above, “Formatting & Style”). Use the section headings in the instructions. All sections are mandatory: include n/a under a section heading if it does not apply.

1. PUBLICATION CONVENTIONS IN THE DISCIPLINE

(1 PAGE MAXIMUM)

Each discipline may have different publishing conventions. For example, in some fields, it may be the norm to have single-authored publications only, while publications in other disciplines will always have multiple authors; in the latter case, there are often different conventions for the placement of the primary author’s name (e.g., first or last in the list). For some fields, conference proceedings are the main venue for publishing, while for others it may be journals or monographs.

The reviewers may not know what the standards are in your specific field and therefore will not be able to accurately assess your achievements without this additional information. They will, however, be instructed to give due consideration to the conventions of specific disciplines, and to focus on assessing the quality of a publication’s content, rather than focusing only on the number of publications, the prestige or reputation of particular journals, or the impact factor of particular journals.

- The publication conventions in the nominee’s discipline(s)
 - Use this space to describe general conventions that may not be addressed in the sections below or to summarize the overall conventions and elaborate on the rationale for them (e.g., your field always publishes in conference proceedings because of the fast pace of the research).
 - Address any publication delays due to circumstances that make it impossible or undesirable to publish important results (e.g., a delay in publication to protect intellectual property).
- The choice of venues for the dissemination of the nominee’s research results
 - “Venue” refers to where you publish (e.g., conference proceedings, specific journals, books, etc.).
- The citation conventions for the discipline(s) (e.g., senior author first in multi-authored publications)

- In other words, how do author names appear and what does this order mean? For example, is the first author always the primary writer/researcher, or does the most senior author always come first? This information will allow the reviewer to assess the significance of the role of the nominee.
- The publication conventions in the discipline(s) as they relate to students and trainees
 - Do students tend to publish with their supervisors in your discipline, or is this less common? How do you place students in the list of authors? Are students always listed first?
- The particularities and/or challenges involved in the publication of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary research results (if applicable).
 - Are there challenges to using traditional performance indicators for your field? Have they had an impact on the way in which the “quality” of your work can be assessed?

2. SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS

(FIVE; NO MAXIMUM PAGE LENGTH)

- List the five most significant research contributions achieved during your career. Explain their significance for a non-specialist audience.
- Note that these significant contributions can come from any point in your career.
- A contribution does not have to be a specific publication; it can be a research theme (e.g., your discoveries or contributions to knowledge in this area). Grouping contributions thematically can allow you to mention several publications within a single theme, if that is applicable to your area of research.
- You do not have to list contributions in chronological order; they can be ranked according to significance (with #1 being the most significant contribution).
- Explain the significance of non-traditional research contributions. Put them in context by explaining their impact and relevance to the field. For examples of the types of publications that the committee will consider, consult CRC’s Guidelines for Assessing the Productivity of Nominees.

3. RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

(OVER THE SAME PERIOD AS IN THE FUNDING HISTORY SECTION)

- For both Tier 1 and Tier 2 nominations, list all research contributions produced over the last five years, following the CRC subheadings.
- If you qualify for the CV length extension provision, indicate this at the beginning of this section and refer reviewers to the “Interruptions and Personal Circumstances” section of the CV Detail on the Convergence Portal. Please note: nominations that qualify for the CV length extension must include a formal, signed letter from the institution.
- For junior applicants, make sure you include a sufficient number of papers that you have published independently of your former supervisors.
- The Secretariat will accept supplemental information after the nomination deadline date for updates regarding publications, research support, and other contributions. The Secretariat will use this information according to its internal guidelines.

4. LEADERSHIP

(OVER THE COURSE OF YOUR WHOLE CAREER)

- Provide evidence of international leadership (Tier 1) or the potential to become an international leader in the next 5–10 years (Tier 2) in your area of research or discipline. For example, describe your role in leading a research institute or establishing a research network, your experience in organizing major conferences or symposia, or your service or leadership in international academic organizations.

- When describing your involvement in broader intellectual leadership, comment on the positive or negative impact (if any) these activities have had on your individual research productivity.
- Note that this section is slightly different from “Other Contributions”. Here, address leadership at the national and international level of initiatives that extend beyond the nominee’s institution. Membership on peer review committees, however, should be addressed in “Other Contributions.”

5. TRAINING AND SUPERVISORY EXPERIENCE

(OVER THE COURSE OF YOUR WHOLE CAREER)

- Address all of the bullets in the instructions for this section.
- Include a discussion of where your students are now (PhD programs, postdoctoral fellowships, academic appointments, etc.) and highlight the significance of their research.
- Consider including a table listing the trainees you have supervised. This table can include headings/columns for the level of the trainees (Master’s students, PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, etc.), the dates of supervision, the institution, and your role as a supervisor.
- If your discipline does not lend itself to the type of collaborative work that allows you to involve students in your research activities, explain these circumstances and describe the other aspects of your role as a mentor and supervisor.

6. OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

(OVER THE COURSE OF YOUR WHOLE CAREER)

- You can divide this part of your CV by relevant sub-headings (e.g., awards, membership on peer-review committees, contributions to public policy, public outreach, etc.). You can begin with a short paragraph providing an overview of these contributions (and how they show the impact of your work) and then provide more detail, including dates, under the particular sub-headings.

CONVERGENCE PORTAL

CV DETAILS: INTERRUPTIONS AND PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- Reviewers will be instructed to give due consideration to career interruptions caused by personal circumstances such as health, family, or other reasons, when you were completely taken away from your research work; and slow-downs for health, family, or other reasons, when you were not completely taken away from your work. Other circumstances might include publication delays, the challenges of conducting interdisciplinary research, or being in a role of intellectual leadership (such as leading a network or facility). Consult the CRC’s [Guidelines for Assessing the Productivity of Nominees](#) for details.
- Clearly explain the circumstances and provide estimates of the time taken away from your work, including start and end dates.
- The eligible period for interruptions is within the past ten years.
- The text for this section can be provided to the RSO for editorial review, in a separate Word document, if desired.

Last updated: 15 July 2021 (GS/LSS)