



July 8, 2010

Dr. Suzanne Fortier
President
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada
350 Albert Street
Ottawa, ON, Canada
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Dear Dr. Fortier,

Thank you for your letter, received May 3, 2010.

The Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) would like to thank NSERC for revising its recent decision regarding Scholarship and Fellowship funding for students in clinically-oriented programs. As per your letter, it is now our understanding that students who are registered, or intend to register, in a clinically-oriented program will be eligible for NSERC funding if:

- 1) they propose a research project deemed eligible to be funded by NSERC; and
- 2) they are supervised by a researcher holding an active NSERC Discovery Grant.

The CPA appreciates that NSERC has had to establish guidelines around subject eligibility with respect to NSERC's mandate that it excludes health sciences research and thus does not support clinically-oriented research. As we noted in our position paper, 10-30% of clinical psychology Ph.D. graduates do not pursue a health-research or practitioner-based career but instead find employment in universities or institutes where they continue to work on basic science – NSERC-related projects – rather than health-related research.

One of our primary concerns with NSERC's initial decision was that it meant there were a proportion of psychology students who were excluded from federal funding. While your recent decision has lowered this proportion, there still remain a percentage of students without a federal funding option, despite working on basic science, NSERC-related research projects:

- o those whose supervisors do not hold an active NSERC Discovery Grant;
- o those whose supervisor loses (or completes) their NSERC Discovery Grant during the student's tenure with them; and
- o those applying in their final undergraduate year who will not know who they will be working with and hence, whether he/she holds an NSERC Discovery Grant.

We would respectfully ask that you remove the restriction that one's supervisor must hold an active NSERC Discovery Grant – doing so is more consistent with the Discovery Grant Application process itself in which research is judged on the merit of its intention and not the program in which a faculty member is registered. Doing so would be consistent with SSHRC eligibility criteria which no longer funds health-oriented research.

Research in the health sciences, natural sciences and engineering are intertwined – advances among researchers in the health sciences constantly stimulate progress and innovation in the natural sciences and engineering. There should be consistency across all three granting councils in terms of how eligibility criteria are set, including the nature of one's research rather than one's career path, as well as criteria for adviser qualification.

We ask that you consider our request in this letter and ensure that core funding is in place to advance knowledge and ensure that all graduate student research can take place.

Sincerely,

Lisa Votta-Bleeker
Associate Executive Director
Canadian Psychological Association

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psychologie
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collectivité*

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