Canadian Nurses Foundation | Fondation des infirmières et infirmiers du Canada

Merit Review Panel Process Guide

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SCHOLARSHIPS REVIEW PROCESS

CNF BACKGROUND

Founded in 1962 by a grant from the Kellogg Foundation, CNF is a national non-profit charitable organization committed to promoting quality health care for Canadians by fostering excellence in nursing. This is accomplished by providing funds for:

- Educational scholarships,
- Awards to nurses seeking certification in specialty areas, and
- Operating grants for research projects on nursing care issues.

CNF is governed under its Letters Patent and Bylaws, and directed by a volunteer Board of Directors.

CNF is financed through individual donations and application fees, corporate contributions, and grants from foundations and other organizations, including the Canadian Nurses Association. CNF also levies a 10% administration fee to support its programs.
Study and certification awards are supported by the Scholarship Fund and interest earned in the Trust Accounts as designated by CNF donors.

REVIEW PRINCIPLES

CNF is committed to working collaboratively with health care stakeholders, including the Canadian Nurses Association, other nursing organizations, and the health research and educational communities to ensure that CNF's resources are used to foster excellence in nursing and benefit Canadians.
To this end, our review process for scholarship award applications is based on the following values:

- CNF will be accountable to our donors to use the funds entrusted to us responsibly and effectively.
- CNF will be fair and transparent.
- CNF will continually improve and streamline our review process, being respectful of the time investments of reviewers and applicants.

REVIEW PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

Panel Composition

The volunteer review panel consists of one Chair and various members, with sufficient members who are bilingual in French and English to address the number of francophone applicants. Panel members are chosen for their expertise in the field of nursing education.

Chair

The Chair is responsible for ensuring that the panel functions smoothly, effectively and objectively, according to CNF policies. The Chair will strive to establish a positive, constructive, fair-minded environment for evaluating applications. Together with CNF staff, the chair will provisionally assign the awards, to be presented to the other members during the meeting, for discussion and approval.

Panel Members

Panel members, including the Chair, unless in a conflict situation, review all applications assigned to them, according to CNF Procedures. All panelists are expected to forward scores to CNF two weeks prior to the review meeting.

CNF Staff

CNF staff will:

- Locate and request qualified volunteers to sit on the Scholarship Awards Review Panel.
- Propose dates for the review.
- Assist panel members with the online review procedures as necessary
- Attend the review meeting as recording secretary.
- Prepare a formal report for the Board of Directors approval.
- Administer distribution of awards according to CNF policies.
- Make program changes based on Panel, Board, staff, and applicant recommendations.

The recording secretary will:

- Keep notes on procedural aspects of the Panel's functions.
- Record the rating made by the Panel for each application.
- Record concerns raised by the Panel on issues requiring attention by the Panel or staff (e.g., eligibility or ethics).

Meetings

The Scholarship Awards Review Panel meets on an ad hoc basis via video conference. New members are invited to attend an orientation session prior to reviewing applications.

CNF Policy

The Scholarship Awards Review Panel is asked by the CNF Board to review applications and assign a rating according to established procedures. Scholarships will be assigned based on the highest-ranking score within specific award categories, bursaries will be assigned based on discussions of the reviews. CNF Board of Directors has final authority over the assignment of awards.

Confidentiality

All information contained in applications, reviews by referees, and panel discussions is strictly confidential. Panel members must not discuss with applicants or referees any information relating to the review of a specific application, or offer opinions on the chances of success or failure.

All requests for information on an application or a referee report should be referred to CNF. Access to review information on specific applications is governed by the relevant current legislation.

Conflict of Interest

CNF must make every effort to ensure not only that its decisions are fair and objective, but also that they are seen to be so. No panel member with a conflict of interest may participate in the review of an application. As a result:

1. Panel members who have an application before the panel shall absent themselves from that meeting of the panel.

2. Panel members must declare a conflict of interest and remove themselves from any discussion if any of the following apply:
    - are from the same immediate institution or organization as the applicant, and who interact with the applicant in the course of their duties at the institution or organization
    - have collaborated, published or been a co-applicant with the applicant, within the last five years,
    - have been a student or supervisor of the applicant within the last ten years,
    - are a close personal friend or relative of the applicant,
    - have had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the applicant, or
    - for any other reason feel that they cannot provide an objective review of the application

The Chair is responsible for resolving areas of uncertainty and is subject to the same conflict of interest guidelines as regular panel members.

All panel members must sign a Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest form agreeing to abide by the policies when they join the panel.

Biases

Discrimination or bias in the review based on age, ethnic status, gender or other irrelevant factors is unacceptable. All reviewers must evaluate the applications fairly and without prejudice.

Types of Applications

Applicants apply for scholarships and bursaries at baccalaureate, master and doctoral levels. Applications may be submitted in French or English.

PhD-prepared reviewers will evaluate applications at all three study levels, within the capacity of their language capabilities. Masters-prepared reviewers will assess applications at the baccalaureate level.

Panel Assessment Process Summary

Panel members will receive log-in instructions approximately six weeks in advance of the meeting. Each member of the panel is assigned a number of applications.

Each application is independently reviewed and scored by two committee members electronically, using common criteria and scales. Panel members are asked to have their score sheets two weeks before the meeting.

During the review meeting final scores and rankings are established according to the *Awards Review Panel Assessment Procedures* (see below).

Post-Panel Process

CNF Board has the final approval on all study award funding decisions. This criteria for the Board are based on merit, strategic directions of CNF, and financial/resources considerations.

Panel members are also requested to make recommendations for review process improvements. These recommendations will be recorded and forwarded to the CNF CEO for discussion.

SCHOLARSHIP REVIEW PANEL ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

Before the Review Meeting

CNF staff allocates applications to the Panel members well in advance (approximately six weeks) of the meeting date.

Each member of the Panel is randomly assigned (within the boundaries of language capacity), a number of applications to review. One or two committee members will independently review and score each application electronically two weeks ahead of the review meeting.

In the Program of Study section, each applicant will have noted if this is a bridging program for internationally educated nurses. If it is, the reviewer should click on the IEN tab at the top of the application to bring up the reviewing page relevant to IENs.

Evaluation Criteria

The weightings attached to the various criteria differ depending on the level of the application (baccalaureate, master or doctoral). As shown on the *Application Rating Forms*, the competencies used to evaluate the criteria differ according to the student's level of study.
All relevant criteria are to be taken into account. Reviewers should assign the weighting to each criterion as indicated and form a final impression of the application to aid in the rank ordering.
The sole criteria for the evaluation of applications are as follows:

Baccalaureate

- Academic indicators—weighting **30%**
- References – weighting **15%**
- Leadership potential—weighting **25%** (3 examples)
- Application strength —as evidenced in the applicant's completed form, the written evaluations from the references, and the curriculum vitae—weighting **30%**

Masters/Nurse Practitioners/Psychiatric Nurses

- Academic indicators—weighting **20%**
- References – weighting **20%**
- Leadership potential—weighting **20%** (3 examples)
- Publications/Teaching/Research – weighting **10%** (3 examples)
- Application strength —weighting **30%**

Doctoral

- Academic indicators—as evidenced in the applicant's completed form, by past academic results; transcripts; awards and distinctions; letters of reference—weighting **20%**.
- References – weighting **20%**
- Leadership – weighting **20%** (3 examples)
- Teaching, Research, Publications – weighting **20%** (4 examples)
- Application strength – weighting **20%**

IEN Applicants

- Academic indicators – weighting **15%**
- References – weighting **15%**
- Leadership – **40%** (3 examples)
- Application strength – **30%**

The *Application Ranking Form* is a tool designed to aid the reviewer in:

- Evaluating all assigned applications according to a uniform set of principles,
- Giving an oral presentation of the application during the review meeting, if necessary

Ranking and Scoring

To ensure consistency, CNF expects reviewers to adhere to a common scale. It is important that reviewers use the full scale and apply a consistent convention in assigning ratings. CNF encourages reviewers to exercise their judgment, and relies on their expertise to identify promising applications.

Review Meeting

- The Chair will determine whether conflicts of interest exist and the preferred order of review.
- All applications for each level of study will be evaluated before the applications for other levels will be considered.
- Using the scoring results, the reviewers assigned to the application will have an opportunity to speak to their scoring.
- If assigned reviewers cannot reach a consensus, a third committee member will be asked to rate the application. Original reviewers are not bound to their original scores.
- These scores will be entered into the electronic worksheet.