

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion:  
A Guide to Fair and Transparent  
Processes in the Selection of  
Canada Research Chairs at  
Brandon University

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# Canada Research Chairs Program

## Commitment Statement

The Government of Canada and the Canada Research Chairs Program (CRCP) are committed to excellence in research and research training for the benefit of Canadians. Achieving a more equitable, diverse and inclusive Canadian research enterprise is also essential to creating the excellent, innovative and impactful research necessary to seize opportunities and for responding to global challenges. As such, the program is committed to the federal government's policies on non-discrimination and [employment equity](#).

Participating institutions administer federal funds in partnership with the agencies (CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC) and the Tri-agency Institutional Programs Secretariat (TIPS). Therefore, all institutions that accept Agency funding must make concerted efforts to meet their equity and diversity targets, and provide a supportive and inclusive workplace. This supports the goals of equity, diversity and inclusion within the CRCP and the broader Canadian research enterprise.

The program's Steering Committee sent open letters to the university presidents who participate in the program, reminding them of these commitments and expectations. The letters are available to read online:

[Open letter sent in September 2018](#)

[Open letter sent in May 2017](#)

[Open letter sent in April 2016](#)



# Employment Equity at Brandon University

Brandon University is committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace and we regard individual merit as the prime criterion for the treatment of current faculty and staff and for the employment of new faculty and staff. Equity is deeply embedded in our hiring practices and diversity is welcomed. We are committed to the values of openness, fairness, and tolerance.

We are committed to ensuring that candidates are not advantaged or disadvantaged, whether they are from a dominant or marginalized group, or based on protected characteristics, as outlined in the Human Rights Code. By extension, this commitment encompasses the Canada Research Chairs Program and the management of our institutional allocation.

## **Employment equity programs aim to:**

- ◇ Identify systematic barriers and biases that may affect hiring decisions and decisions about accessing opportunities such as the CRCP.
- ◇ Recognize that some approaches to assessing qualifications and defining excellence may disadvantage certain groups.
- ◇ Raise awareness about the unconscious bias that we are all susceptible to in order that we may control it.
- ◇ Ensure that decision makers focus solely on the qualifications of each individual, not on assumptions and stereotypes.

## **Employment equity programs DO NOT:**

- ◇ Promote the selection of members of designated groups over better qualified candidates.
- ◇ Support narrowly defining excellence or qualifications in such a way that disadvantages designated groups.

## **Did You Know?**

The four Federally Designated Groups (FDGs) identified in the Employment Equity Act of Canada are:

- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) Women                         | 2) Aboriginal Peoples        |
| 3) Members of Visible Minorities | 4) Persons with Disabilities |

# Considerations for the Committee

## Before beginning a review of applications:

- ◇ Committee members must complete CRCP [Unconscious bias online training module](#) and reflect on their own biases.
- ◇ Discuss duty of confidentiality for the committee, need to document the process, and that notes and other documents may be accessed under FIPPA.
- ◇ CRCP requires that institutions set goals to ensure their CRCs are representative of the larger Canadian population when it comes to 4FDGs. The committee should consider any gaps in this representation.
- ◇ Committee members must declare any real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest.
- ◇ The committee must include representation from one of the FDGs at a minimum, but ideally is made up of individuals with a wide range of backgrounds, characteristics and experience.
- ◇ Clearly define criteria and process for selecting candidates in advance, consider the *bona fide* requirements of a CRC, and ensure that selection criteria do not create unnecessary barriers to certain applicants.
- ◇ Ensure all committee members know how to address any concerns they may have about the fairness, transparency or equity of the committee's actions.

## Conflicts of Interest

The term "Conflict of Interest" refers to situations where individuals' responsibility on the committee may conflict with their private, professional, business or public interests. For example, in this process, there may be a conflict of interest where a committee member:

- ◇ is a relative or close personal friend of a nominee.
- ◇ is in a position to gain or lose financially/ materially from a nomination.
- ◇ has long standing differences (professional or personal) with a nominee.
- ◇ is closely affiliated professionally with a nominee.

As we are a small institution, we recognize that many committee members will have personal relationships with some of the nominees. These relationships must be disclosed to the committee so that steps can be taken to minimize and manage any real, perceived or potential conflicts. The test should be whether the committee member is able to be impartial in their decisions, and whether they will be perceived to be impartial.

# Setting Criteria

- ◇ Criteria for selecting candidates MUST be set prior to reviewing applications.
- ◇ The criteria set must be *bona fide* requirements of the role of a CRC at this University.
- ◇ The committee should discuss how each criterion will be assessed and the weight or rank assigned to each.
- ◇ Criteria used should be clear yet flexible to ensure that they are adaptable to non-traditional research topics and methods.
- ◇ The committee should examine each criterion set to determine whether/how they might disadvantage any particular group.
- ◇ Criteria used should not disadvantage scholars who have had non-traditional career paths.
- ◇ Committee members who have knowledge of any candidate's application must declare this, and be mindful not to skew the criteria in favour of/against that candidate.

# CRCP Criteria

## According to the CRCP, Tier 2 Canada Research Chair Candidates MUST:

- be excellent emerging world-class researchers who have demonstrated particular research creativity;
- have demonstrated the potential to achieve international recognition in their fields in the next 5-10 years;
- as chairholders, have the potential to attract, develop and retain excellent trainees, students and future researchers; **and**
- be proposing an original, innovative research program of high quality.

# Reviewing Applications

Selecting which candidate(s) to recommend for Canada Research Chair appointment is a challenging task. Committees are asked to focus on the excellence of the candidate and of the proposed research program. But excellence can be difficult to quantify, and the people and programs being compared are frequently very different. The key is not to exclude candidates from consideration based on irrelevant or discriminatory information.

In your review of applications, following these dos and don'ts will help maintain a fair, transparent process that is accessible to all candidates.

## **DO**

- ◇ Keep the criteria set by the CRCP front of mind.
- ◇ Remain alert to your own and others' potential biases.
- ◇ Remain open-minded to non-traditional fields of research/research methods.
- ◇ Fairly assess the impact of leaves, gaps in employment /research or career slowdowns.
- ◇ Be alert to biased or stereotypical language in letters of reference.
- ◇ Review the candidate pool to determine if members of designated groups are represented.

## **DON'T**

- ◇ Place less value on degrees, publications, or work experience from countries outside North America or Europe.
- ◇ Place less value on publications in languages other than English or French.
- ◇ Dismiss work outside academia. Transferrable skills/knowledge are often gained in those areas.
- ◇ Undervalue non-traditional fields of study, (e.g. research focused on issues of gender, race, minority status or indigenous ways of knowing.)
- ◇ Allow the prestige of the candidate's educational institutions, supervisors or mentors to weigh heavily in your decision.

# Judging Research and Publications

When assessing publication history and productivity, be mindful that the focus should be on the quality of a publication's content. Focusing mainly on the number of publications, the perceived quality of the journals, or the perceived impact of the journals can lead to many pitfalls. Keep the following in mind:

- ◇ Publication conventions can vary greatly across disciplines, and can look very different than the traditional peer-reviewed journal.
- ◇ Fast paced research fields may use different avenues to reach their target audience quickly (e.g. quick-print reports, electronic distribution of pre-prints). Reviewers should not view these as "second class" or "grey literature".
- ◇ There is a trend toward increased interdisciplinary research which requires collaboration and coordination. Reviewers should be careful to give proper consideration to achievements in collaborative and interdisciplinary research.
- ◇ Proposals that relate to interdisciplinary endeavours may appear somewhat less focused, so reviewers are asked to keep this in mind.
- ◇ Non-traditional/non-mainstream research may not make it into journals/conferences as often.
- ◇ Non-traditional/non-mainstream research may receive fewer or smaller grants.
- ◇ What are thought of as established, respected journals tend to be mainstream. Care should be taken in judging the quality of the forum where work is published.

# Rating or Scoring Candidates

As you review the application materials and participate in the presentations and/or interviews you should be taking notes and scoring the candidate based on the predetermined criteria.

- Each committee member should rate each candidate independently.
- Apply the rating system fairly to each candidate.
- Keep in mind that the notes and rating sheets are covered under FIPPA, and so a candidate may request access to those that pertain to them.

# Presentations/Interviews

Any time you meet with candidates face to face, including during interviews and presentations, there are things to consider:

- ◇ Be careful to keep your body language, facial expression, words and tone respectful but relatively neutral. You don't want to send misleading messages to the candidate.
- ◇ You must be aware of the protected characteristics under the Manitoba Human Rights Code, and never ask questions about any of these characteristics.
- ◇ Be aware that a person's accent or speech patterns may lead to intentional or unintentional discriminatory behaviour.
- ◇ Different people have different norms around things like eye contact, body language, style or volume of speech and these may be based in their culture, religion, gender etc. Be careful not to draw negative conclusions solely on the basis of these.

## The Manitoba Human Rights Code

### Did You Know?

The Manitoba Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination based on the following Characteristics:

Ancestry, including race or colour	Sex, including pregnancy and gender identity	Source of income
Nationality	Gender-determined characteristics	Political belief
Ethnic origin	Sexual orientation	Physical or mental disability
Religion	Marital or family status	
Age		

NOTE: The Code prohibits other forms of discrimination based on other group stereotypes not enumerated here. For example criminal record or disadvantaged social condition may be considered grounds for discrimination.

# Recommending a Candidate

During discussions to select a candidate, all members of the committee must have the opportunity to be heard, and their input considered. Committee members may change their rating/scoring of candidates based on the discussions. The process for selecting candidates must be decided at the beginning, and must be both fair, and seen to be fair from the perspective of all parties. This means the candidate was selected based on their own skills and abilities, not because of assumptions, stereotypes or biases.

Guard against:

- ◇ Making assumptions about possible behaviour or characteristics not based in evidence.
- ◇ Unconscious, unintentional biases, stereotypes and assumptions that colour your expectations about what someone could or should do or be.
- ◇ Taking a narrow view, judging the candidates based on your own experience/knowledge.
- ◇ Comfortable clones—the tendency to see those who are similar to ourselves more favourably and to select these candidates over others - assessing “fit” should include recognizing the benefits of diversity.

# After the Recommendation

Committee members must keep in mind that their duty to maintain confidentiality extends even after the recommendation has been made and the committee is disbanded. While disagreements and debates are both necessary and desirable during the selection process, once the committee has decided who to recommend, through a fair and transparent process, this is the decision of the committee and all of its members.

Any candidates who are internal to the organization and are not selected should be afforded the opportunity for a face-to-face debrief with the committee chair. This debrief will focus on the candidate’s application and how they might improve their chances of success with this process in the future. No details will be shared with the candidate about other candidates or about the committee deliberations.

# Sources for more Information

## **Conflict of interest**

Brandon University Conflict of Interest By-law

<https://www.brandonu.ca/governors/files/ConflictInterestBylaw10.pdf>

Brandon University Conflict of Interest in Research Policy

<https://www.brandonu.ca/governors/files/ConflictInterestResearch.pdf>

Canada Research Chairs Program Conflict of Interest Statement

[http://www.chairs-chaire.gc.ca/program-programme/conflict\\_interest-conflict\\_interets-eng.aspx](http://www.chairs-chaire.gc.ca/program-programme/conflict_interest-conflict_interets-eng.aspx)

## **Recruitment and Selection Practices**

Brandon University Guide to Faculty Recruiting

<https://www.brandonu.ca/hr/files/A-Guide-to-Faculty-Recruiting-v2018.pdf>

Canada Research Chairs Program Requirements for Recruiting and Nominating Canada Research Chairs

<http://www.chairs-chaire.gc.ca/program-programme/equity-equite/recruitment-recrutement-eng.aspx>