



10. Activities for March and April

10.1 Communication With Applicants

Requests from applicants for an explanation of the results of the competition must be routed through NSERC. If approached by researchers, GSC members should tell them that NSERC **requires** that all enquiries about individual cases be sent to NSERC and that members are not permitted to discuss the deliberations specific to any case. Members may wish to point out that NSERC regulations require them to leave the room during discussion of a colleague's application. This policy has been developed as a result of such experiences as:

- Serious complaints from GSC members being bombarded by telephone calls;
- Applicants playing off one committee member against another;
- Oral comments being taken out of context or misinterpreted and then fed back to NSERC as a complaint against the GSC;
- Disagreement between the written GSC comments and the “grapevine”;
- Appeals launched on the basis of the oral comments of a GSC member;
- Requests from a number of senior university administrators to present a single, coherent message to grantees/applicants, and reduce the time wasted in what is often misinterpreted rumours.

10.2 Finalization of Messages to Applicants

The Program Officer reviews all Messages to Applicants. This step ensures that any feedback to applicants is consistent with NSERC policies and guidelines and is clear and detailed enough to be useful to the applicant in preparing future submissions.

Occasionally, the Program Officer may identify problems with the comments and will discuss the case with the Chair. In some cases, the problem will be solved by clarifying the comments with the author. In other cases, it may be necessary to review the basis for the recommendation and/or the recommendation itself. While these cases are rare, you may be consulted on such cases.

The Chair reviews and approves all Messages to Applicants before these are sent to researchers to ensure that the comments reflect the consensus of the GSC.

Researchers who do not automatically receive comments on a Discovery Grant application automatically receive reports from external referees (if they are available on file). Researchers must not correspond with GSC members or referees.

10.3 Annual Report

The GSC annual report represents the formal record of your feedback on the competition and is distributed to members of NSERC staff and of the Committee on Grants and



Scholarships (COGS) for information and follow-up. It is a key source document for policy discussions of COGS.

Occasionally, the GSC annual report is distributed publicly to such groups as department chairs in a given discipline, professional associations, etc.

The GSC annual report is prepared by the GSC Chair with assistance from the Program Officer and should be submitted by April 1. It should be short (four to five pages) and highlight:

- the GSC's general impression of the competition (i.e., quality of proposals, pressures on the budget, issues of concerns, etc.);
- the evolution of research covered by the GSC, the emerging areas and other factors that influence the research directions in areas covered by the GSC;
- the main trends and issues faced by the GSC's constituency;
- comments and recommendations on policies and procedures. These could include, but are not limited to: feedback on program philosophy and objectives and their link to the optimal use of resources for the support of sciences and engineering, trends and issues within the discipline, comments on program delivery mechanisms, program literature and forms, identification of research suitable for public relations efforts; and
- suggestions for new GSC members.

Some of these issues may be covered in the minutes of policy meetings and need not be repeated, but may be referenced.

The Program Officer will prepare the minutes of the policy meeting and complement these with statistics prepared by staff, e.g., number of applications and awards, success rates, mean and median grant, frequency distribution of awards, change in grant levels, etc. The Program Officer will also maintain and update any document on GSC procedures.

10.4 Membership

Following the February meetings, Program Officers will formulate recommendations to the Corporate Secretary for new appointments to GSCs. These recommendations include comments on the background, stature and experience of nominees as well as references on their suitability to participate in the peer review process and work in a committee setting. Factors such as the nominee's involvement in cross-disciplinary and collaborative research may also be considered. You may be approached by your Program Officer to provide such comments and references.



10.5 Appeals

An appeal of a decision on an NSERC application must be based on a compelling demonstration of error or procedural unfairness in the review process. The appeal procedure is designed to ensure that the applicant has been treated fairly and consistently in the context of a program that has limited funds. NSERC strives to provide equitable treatment of applications and fair assessments in accordance with the selection criteria, and existing budgetary constraints. GSC members are not usually involved in the analysis of appeals of decision. NSERC normally reviews appeals in consultation with senior advisors with previous experience in the NSERC system who were not involved in the original review of the application.

For details on the appeal process, consult the [Web site](#).