Canadian Cancer Society | Société canadienne du cancer

CCS Research Training Awards – Master's – 2026 | Rating Scales

Overall Scoring:

Criteria	Weight
Scientific Merit	40%
Applicant Merit	60%

The expert review committee includes scientific **(SR)** and patient/survivor/caregiver **(PSC)** reviewers. There are 2 rating scales reviewers will use to score applications. **A Scientific Merit (SM) rating and an Applicant Merit (AM) rating should be provided separately, resulting in two scores.** Ratings should be given on a scale of 0-5, to 1 decimal point. Only applications with final scores of **3.5 or above for both ratings** (SM and AM) will be eligible for funding.

Notes:

- *The goal of varying types of reviewers is to bring multiple perspectives and balance to the review process, so this is why there are a few criteria you will see on one scale and not the other.*
- *Initial/preliminary scores given during the review process may not be the final scores, as some reviewers may need more information to evaluate certain aspects of an application.* ***Reviewers are free to assess based on their own personal/intersectional expertise/experience and are expected to take the panel discussion into consideration and evaluate the application holistically to determine their final scores.***
- *The RTA-M program includes a virtual interview as part of the award evaluation. This interview process has been incorporated to* ***positively benefit applicants*** *by providing the opportunity to clarify points of their application first-hand in response to reviewer questions. As such, applicant participation in the virtual interview will either* ***maintain or improve*** ***pre-interview scores****.*

Score Descriptions:

Descriptor	Score range	Definition	Outcome
Outstanding	4.5 - 5.0	All scoring criteria have been met and some exceeded. Each item has been appropriately and thoroughly addressed. Very minor improvements are recommended.	Priority for funding
Excellent	4.0 - 4.5	The majority (>80%) of scoring criteria have been met and some exceeded. The majority of items have been appropriately addressed. Some minor changes are recommended.	
Good	3.5 - 4.0	Many (60-80%) scoring criteria have been met. Most items have been appropriately addressed. There are several minor or one moderate areas for improvement, but no major weaknesses.	Fundable
Fair	3.0 - 3.5	Some (40-60%) scoring criteria have been met. Some items have been addressed but there are notable gaps. There is at least one major weakness **or** many moderate weaknesses.	Not fundable
Poor	2.0 - 3.0	Not enough (20-40%) scoring criteria have been met. Some items have been addressed but there are notable gaps. There is at least one major weakness **and** many moderate weaknesses.	
Incomplete	Below 2.0	Few (<20%) scoring criteria have been met. Multiple major weaknesses. The proposal needs significant development before being competitive in this program.	

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Scientific Merit (SM) Rating Scale (40%)

The Research Training Awards **Scientific Merit (SM)** rating scale is to be used by reviewers to assess the scientific merit of the application. This rating comprises two sections: **proposal merit** and **relevance and potential impact in cancer research**. The lists below show the criteria to be evaluated, and reviewers are asked to use these criteria to help them holistically assess each application. For example, weaknesses in some areas may be compensated for by strengths in other areas.

Reviewers are asked to use this scale to assess each application, assign a preliminary **SM** score (0-5), and **record this score in EGrAMS prior to the panel meeting**.

Scientific Merit (40%)	SR	PSC
Research Proposal		
Rationale and evidence for the proposed work are thorough and compelling.	x	
Aims (and/or research questions, when relevant) are clearly articulated.	x	
Scientific approach, including methodologies, theories, and frameworks, is well-described and feasible.	x	
There is a high likelihood that the project, as described, will result in new discoveries and/or knowledge.	x	
There is thoughtful consideration of barriers to project success, and alternatives are proposed.	x	x
The research project is feasible. All/most critical certificates/authorizations are in place to confirm this, such as Health Canada Approval, Human Embryonic Stem Cell involvement, etc.	x	x
Key activities and milestones for the project are described and feasible within the project timeline.	x	x
The public summary clearly identifies the need, goal, methods (including co-creation methods where applicable), and expected outcomes of the project and is written in non-technical language.	x	x
Sex, gender, and other dimensions of diversity and determinants of health (e.g., race, ethnicity, education, economic status) and their intersectionalities are appropriately addressed and incorporated in the design, methods, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination/implementation of findings/outcomes.	x	x
For projects directly involving First Nations, Inuit, Métis or Urban Indigenous communities – there is clear evidence that the design, data practices and decision-making processes align with Indigenous principles of self-determination and self-governance such as the First Nations Principles of OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access and Possession), the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance, or other relevant principles of Indigenous self-determination and self-governance defined by the participating community(ies).	x	x
Relevance & Potential Impact in Cancer		
The potential impact (short- or long-term) of the proposed research on people at risk/affected by cancer is clearly described and compelling.	x	x

The application describes and has a high potential to lead to improvements in the prevention, detection, treatment, and/or duration and quality of life for people affected by cancer, and/or equitable and timely access to cancer care.	x	x
The proposal indicates how knowledge will be shared with **and** beyond academia (with the affected community) in a relevant, accessible, feasible, and culturally appropriate way.	x	x
If applicable: Impact on patients/affected communities has been appropriately considered, and the project will not exacerbate or place undue hardship on these patients/communities (and/or mitigating strategies have been clearly described).		x

Applicant Merit (AM) Rating Scale (60%)

The Research Training Awards **Applicant Merit** (AM) rating scales are to be used by reviewers to assess the applicant's merit. The list below shows the criteria to be evaluated, and reviewers are asked to use these criteria to help them holistically assess each application. For example, weaknesses in some areas may be compensated for by strengths in other areas.

Reviewers are asked to use these scales to assess each application, assign a preliminary **AM** score (0-5), and **record this score in EGrAMS prior to the panel meeting**.

Applicant Merit (60%)	SR	PSC
General Criteria		
The application clearly demonstrates the candidate's enthusiasm for cancer research and suitability for this award. The experience statement effectively explains why the applicant is well positioned for the award their intended long-term contribution to cancer research. The assessment should also consider relevant lived experience, community engagement, work experience and other skills related to cancer, healthcare or community contexts, as well as any career interruptions or obstacles.	x	x
CV indicates a satisfactory academic record. The assessment should take into consideration the applicant's career interruptions/obstacles.	x	x
The applicant has demonstrated an understanding of the purpose of this training award and shown they will leverage the CCS IGNITE Program for personal and professional growth.	x	x
The supervisor reference letter describes a strong potential for impact in cancer research.	x	x
Training & Mentorship		
There is evidence that the research environment is inclusive and supportive for the trainee.	x	x
There is evidence of the supervisor's genuine commitment and inclusive support (i.e., equity, diversity, and inclusion actions are described).	x	x
There is evidence of the supervisor's openness to and commitment to supporting patient engagement and knowledge sharing initiatives, including fostering the trainee's learning and development in these areas.	x	x
The applicant demonstrates thoughtful consideration of patient engagement and knowledge sharing in the proposal and/or professional development plan.	x	x
The professional development plan is clear, appropriate, and feasible, and includes cross-disciplinary training and mentorship components	x	x
The professional development plan identifies meaningful skills, knowledge, and experiences that will support the applicant's development and future contributions to cancer research.	x	x

Potential challenges are considered, and the plan demonstrates a thoughtful and effective approach to addressing them.		
The associated training budget is: • Detailed • Commensurate to the amount distributed (maximum $5,000 over 2 years) • Appropriately used for training (not for ineligible lab/host institution expenses as described in CCS policy such as reagents, lab equipment, etc.)	x	x