

Applying for SSHRC Funding: Science, Art, Alchemy Or Self- Abuse?

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Abbreviations and Definitions

- SSHRC – Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
- SRG – Standard Research Grants
- CURA– Community University Research Alliance
- MCRI – Major Collaborative Research Initiative
- SGJI – Strategic Grants and Joint Initiatives
- New Scholars –applicants who have not received a previous SRG award, and who have completed their PhDs within the past five years, or who have held a tenure track position for less than five years.
- RTS – Research Time Stipend



The Ten Commandments



1. Standard Research Grants are not for Everyone

Researchers need to think about other forms of research support, within SSHRC and beyond.

Strategic and Targeted research supported through other programs and which are particularly geared towards specific topics and which are often inclined towards applied research.

Research Programs that are still in their Conceptual Stage might benefit from RDI.

Community linked research through CURA.

Other granting agencies: e.g. IDRC, CIDA, Heritage Canada, Donner Foundation, Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute.



2. When to Apply is as Important as How to Apply

Given the importance of track record to the overall score, applicants ought to think about when is the optimum time to apply.

- This is particularly true for the humanities and for monographic disciplines.
- Generally speaking, the best time to apply is within a year or so of the publication of a major work.



3. Applications need to be written for Two Audiences

The ideal application is a schizophrenic one

- Enough specificity for the experts.
- Enough generality for the rest.
- Use the Application Summary to pitch your case for importance and originality.
- Avoid jargon.
- Use a clear but compelling title.



4. Budgets Must Not be an Afterthought

Crucial to remember four things about the Culture of Poverty in the Social Sciences and the Humanities:

1. Everyone is an Accountant.
2. Nobody gets to drive a Lexus when Kias are available.
3. Committees will fund what they are convinced is necessary, and nothing more (nor nothing less – a key difference to NSERC).
4. Budgets need to be carefully and convincingly costed.



5. We are all Interdisciplinary Now

- Interdisciplinarity is as much a political stance as it is a particular way of framing research questions
 - Key difference between interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary outcomes and interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary research design
 - Applicants need to ask themselves whether Committee 15 is the appropriate place to submit their application.
- Committee 15 should not be viewed as a dumping ground.



6. Exceptional Circumstances cannot be Unexceptional

- Use this part of the form carefully and thoughtfully.
- Committees can identify with and understand career interruptions owing to individual or family medical emergency or maternity leaves and the demands made on caregivers.
- They tend not to be impressed with claims of heavy teaching loads, administrative responsibilities (deans are not always that popular), or outside activities.
- They especially dislike whining or a sense of entitlement.



7. Let's all be Individuals Together

Team Grants where necessary, but not necessarily team grants.

- Percentage of team grants is increasing.
- Yet the applicant has to demonstrate the value of team grants.
- Team grants are particularly useful in multi-sited or multi-disciplinary projects.
- Team grants are also valuable for new scholars who wish to gain experience in grantsmanship and research culture.
- But do not cobble together a team simply to mask any shortcomings in the principal investigator's c.v.



8. Given that Slavery has been Abolished, what can I do with my Graduate Students?

- SSHRC says one thing; applicants and universities hear another thing, and Committees are most concerned about the program of research.
 - SSHRC has indicated that training graduate students through a research grant is an objective.
 - Universities and applicants then sometimes view Research Grants as a pipeline for increased graduate funding.
- Consequently, students appear in applications in strangely disconnected ways – their relationship to the research is not clear, nor is the value added for them from the experience obvious to the committee.



9. Rejection builds Character (?): the Purgatory of Recommended but Not Funded

- The problem of recommended but not funded is fundamentally a budget dilemma – SSHRC simply does not have the money to fund all deserving applications.
 - Most applicants are not successful on the first application.
 - Committees are aware of this, and reapplications are viewed empathetically.
- Critical when reapplying to identify where the fault lay: track record or program.
 - if the former, need to get more publications out.
 - if the latter, look at what the assessors had to say, and rework the program as necessary.



10. Snatching Defeat from the Jaws of Victory

- See 41 ways to piss off a committee at the end of this presentation.



The Standard Research Grants Competition

The Standard Research Grants Competition is one of the largest programs administered by SSHRC. It provides funding for up to \$250,000 over three years (with an automatic extension for a fourth year) that is intended to allow the individual researcher or teams of researchers to undertake a program of research which they themselves have identified as worthy of analysis. These grants have been labeled as curiosity-driven, and while that is not the most elegant phrase, it does capture the essence of these awards: they are available for scholars to pursue their own research agendas rather than work within specifically targeted fields of study.



- Applications for a SRG are adjudicated by a number of disciplinary, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary committees who normally meet in early March.
- The purpose of these committees is to rank order all applications. Unlike NSERC, success is not conditional on a particular score. Instead, SSHRC assumes that in any given competition, roughly the same percentage of applicants merit funding in each committee. Hence, committees provide a rank ordering of all the applications, and depending on the budget that year, a percentage of applications will be funded. In general, the success rates across all the committees are very similar. For the past several years, the success rate has ranged between 38% and 42%.



- The size of each committee is determined by the number of applications it has previously received.
- Committee membership is determined by the following criteria: Adequate representation of the various subfields and specialties within the discipline(s), and regional, linguistic, gender, and generational representation, as well as members from small, medium and large size universities, and ability to function in both official languages.
- The process of peer review and committee selection is intended, and succeeds, in ensuring very high levels of internal consistency within individual committees.
- But given the wide variety of disciplines applying to SSHRC, it is not surprising that there are important differences between the committees and hence it is important to appreciate that while we can identify some general principles and guidelines, it is also necessary to acknowledge the differences between committee/disciplinary cultures.



- Some committees, for example, are better disposed to conference attendance and presentations than others.
- Some committees are used to seeing large numbers of graduate students in the applications that come before them; other committees often deal with applications that request support for only a few graduate students, in some cases only one a year.
- Also, some committees operate with many of their members participating in the discussions about the files before them. There are others in which most of the discussion is done by the two readers; the rest of the committee intervening only when one or more might have some additional information or where the file is particularly controversial.
- However, it is safe to assume that committee members will almost always have opinions on your budget and they are quite willing to share them.
- In any case, the end decision is still that of the committee as a whole. Hence, it is important to realize that it is very difficult, if not impossible, for one committee member to impose her/his views on the committee as a whole.



Committee Members

- Normally serve a maximum of three years.
- Normally have held a SSHRC SRG in the past.
- Possess written and oral comprehension of both official languages.
- Agree to be governed by strict conflict of interest guidelines.
- Take their tasks very seriously.
- Are often happy to share their insights with their colleagues.



Which Committee should you apply to?

- In many cases, there is a natural fit between your proposed program of research and an existing committee.
- With the rise of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, however, it can be tempting to apply to the Interdisciplinary Committee.
- Think this through – the interdisciplinary committee takes a very rigorous view of what constitutes interdisciplinarity.
- Merely having a program that might interest scholars in a range of fields is not sufficient.
- Nor is simply attaching another perspective to your work – they must be integrated.
 - For further information, see [/www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/background/standard_committee15_e.asp](http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/background/standard_committee15_e.asp)
- Also, remember that a committee with scholars in the same or similar discipline as yourself will likely be better placed to evaluate your record of research achievement, e.g. they will know the leading journals/presses in your field.



Timeline

- October 15: applications must be postmarked on this date to be received by SSHRC.
 - Most universities have an internal deadline before October 15
- November: Program Officers receive applications, determine eligibility, identify two external assessors, and decide who is to be Reader A and Reader B on each file.
- The Committees will have already been struck.
- December: Committee Members receive their binders of applications.
- January-February: Committee Members read the files, and receive periodic mailings of external assessments as they are received in Ottawa.
- Late February: Reader A and Reader B send their preliminary scores to Ottawa in advance of the meeting.
- First Week in March: Committees meet in Ottawa for two to five days depending on the number of files to be assessed.
- Late March: Results are sent to Research Services and from there to the applicant.
- Late April: SSHRC informs applicants of their results.



Death by Binder

- Service on a SRG adjudication committee has been termed death by binder. Each Committee member receives copies of all the applications (which on some committees can reach 150), and each member is expected to be familiar with all the files in addition to having a detailed knowledge of the files to which she or he is assigned to be either Reader A or Reader B. Very few committee members receive any course release for this service, and it is not unusual for them to spend twenty hours or more a week for seven weeks in preparation for the meetings. Please bear this in mind.
- Committee members without exception describe the work as fascinating, and the experience as rewarding, but it nevertheless comes at considerable sacrifice to their own teaching and research, and a shoddily-prepared application is not very well received by them.
- See forty-one ways to annoy a committee later in this presentation.



The Components of an SRG Application

SSHRC applications can be broken down, broadly speaking, into three components.

- The Record of Research Achievement
- The Research Proposal
- The Budget



Calculation of Scores

- The purpose of the face to face meeting in Ottawa is to rank order all the applications.
- Applications are assessed on the basis of two criteria: the applicant's record of research achievement and the program of research.
- For regular scholars, the combined score is weighted 60% in favour of the record of research achievement and 40% for the program of research.
- For new scholars, 60% is weighted in favour of whichever of the two scores is higher.
- An initial ranking is produced by having the two readers submit their scores, but the final score is the result of the committee's deliberations and reflects the consensus of the committee.



Competition Week

- Committees normally handle about 30 files a day which means an average of about 12 or 13 minutes per file. Clarity and succinctness is therefore essential as you do not want committee members, and more particularly the two readers, to have to fumble around to explain the importance/originality of your work.
- In all cases, the applications are first discussed by Reader A and then by Reader B who will introduce the applicant's record of research achievement and research proposal and then provide an explanation for the scores that they have given.
- If there is little disagreement between Reader A and B, and if the rest of the committee is satisfied with the score, the committee then looks at the budget and makes a recommendation on it.
- But when Reader A and B disagree, or if there is a major discrepancy between them and the externals, other committee members will often join in and the file will be discussed until a consensus is reached. This is why you want to make certain that your proposal is understandable and exciting to the non-specialists.
- Sometimes controversial files will be set aside until the end for discussion just before the committee reviews the final rankings of all the files. Generally speaking, you do not want your file to be one of these, and therefore it is in your best interests to provide your two readers with all they need to act as your advocate.



Record of Research Achievement

- This evaluation is based on the applicant's contributions to the discipline to date, according to their stage of career, and determined primarily with reference to peer-reviewed publications and graduate supervision (where applicable).
- Committees are looking for scholars who have had and will likely continue to have an impact on their field, both in terms of what they discover as well as how they make their discoveries. Knowledge, originality, and experience are looked for in addition to potential.



Evaluation Criteria

- The chief criteria by which the record of research achievement is evaluated is peer-reviewed publications.
- But depending on the committee – here is where disciplinary cultures come into play – different weights are assigned to different types of publication.
- For the humanities, the emphasis tends to be on peer-reviewed monographs with scholarly articles coming a close second.
- For the social sciences, there tends to be more emphasis on publication in scholarly journals.
- Some committees have a rank-ordered list of publications and applicants are scored according to the venues where they have published.



- Non peer-reviewed publications including book reviews and op-ed articles, while acknowledged, do not weight heavily in committee discussions.
- Nor do conference presentations in most cases.
- But both can provide the committee with an indication of your scholarly activity as well as its 'reach'.
- Where appropriate, for example in the professional disciplines, other forms of dissemination are considered including conference presentations, professional consultancies, etc.
- Committees are increasingly looking at graduate supervision as a measure of research achievement and impact.



Team Applications

- For team applications, the track record score is for the group as a whole, determined according to the contribution each of the participants makes to the total.
- Applicants are advised not to put forward as principal investigator a new scholar simply on the basis that they might gain from the different weighting used for new scholars.
- The principal investigator should be the person with the largest role to play, and they will accordingly count the most in calculating the team's track record.
- Committees look favourably at teams in which responsibilities are clearly delineated, articulated and complementary, and where the respective contributions are weighted.
- But a team does not necessarily in itself guarantee a better score, and there is no prejudice against an individually-based program of research.



New Scholar vs Regular Scholar

- For regular scholars, 60% of the final score is based on their track record. Hence, for many applicants, success is often a matter of them having a number of recent peer-reviewed publications on their record, and for them to have been publishing regularly.
- For New Scholars, 60% of the final score is given to whichever of the two scores is higher (track or program).
- In addition, there are different descriptors used when scoring new scholars so as to take into account their stage of career.



Career Interruptions and Extenuating Circumstances

- Use this part of the form carefully.
- Committees can identify with and understand career interruptions owing to individual or family medical emergency or situation as well as those arising from maternity leaves and the demands made on caregivers.
- They are less receptive to claims made for heavy administrative or teaching loads, in part because these cannot be so easily measured and compared, and in part because most of the committee members are themselves very busy people.
- State your circumstances as clearly and objectively as possible – avoid a whining tone. Spell out the facts and let them speak for themselves.



Previously Funded Research

- Adjudication committees pay close attention to previous research awards, especially earlier SRGs, and their outcomes.
- Carefully and clearly indicate the status of previously funded programs of research.
- Be sure to specify whether the program is now complete.
- If you have not finished writing up that research, and the committee concludes that it could take a year or more to do so, they very likely might conclude that your application is premature.
- While committees are often impressed by one's success in securing grants, they can also become alarmed at the thought of an applicant taking on too many projects. To forestall such fears, make it clear to the committee that you will be able to undertake this work in addition to any other programs or projects to which you are committed.
- You need to convince the Committee that you have in the past and will continue to produce from research grants.



Helpful Hints

- **Read the instructions carefully.**
- Do not include publications that lie outside the six year window on the form.
 - **Leave those for the section on career highlights**
- If you have not had the opportunity to supervise graduate students, indicate so, and provide an explanation as to why this has been the case.
- List your publications according to the format commonly used in your discipline **AND MAKE SURE YOU GIVE PAGE NUMBERS.**
- Specify clearly the status of forthcoming publications: e.g. in press, under review, etc.



- Do not pad your bibliography.
- If you have had a monograph published, you should consider indicating the journals in which it has been reviewed.
- Check your citations for errors.
- If there could be any question about the relative weight or importance of your publications, provide some guidance.



- Separate peer-reviewed publications from non peer-reviewed publications, and DO NOT claim the latter as the former.
- Come across as quietly confident, not brashly arrogant.
- If you are moving into a new area of research – or in some cases a new discipline – you will need to convince the committee that you have mastered the necessary background and/or methodology. Some indication of publications or conference presentations in the new area helps to inspire confidence.



Research Proposal

- The research proposal is often the part of the application that is most hotly debated, and it is here where, should there not be an expert on the committee, feedback from external assessors can be very important.
- It is crucial that you clearly identify a research question which is important, original and in some cases timely, and that you then convince the committee that you (and if relevant your team) not only possess the skills needed to pull it off, but also that you have worked out an appropriate methodology such that there is a very good likelihood of success, and that you are actively engaging with other related research.



Characteristics of a Successful Application

- Originality
- Clarity of Objectives and Methodology
- Feasibility
- Necessity or at least Desirability of your work
- Impact within and perhaps outside the Field
- Potential for Graduate Student Training
- Innovation in Methodology
- Significance (though not in a narrow utilitarian sense)



- A successful application will clearly state the purpose of the research program, the methodology (s) to be used and the reasons for them, the theoretical perspective employed, a thorough literature review, the importance of the research in terms of the discipline and perhaps outside the discipline, the role and/or potential for graduate student training, and an appropriate strategy for disseminating the results.
- It must be both exciting and feasible – the committee has to be able to see how you will go about accomplishing what you set out to do.
- In some cases, it may consist of a number of interconnected projects which perhaps began before and will continue after the intended grant period.



- In other cases, the research program may center on one particular project (such as the study of a particular historical phenomenon or an author which will result in a book).
- There must be a clear link between what you asked for in your budget and the tasks you have identified in the proposal – the two must be complementary.



Research Tools

- The mandate of the SRG Program also covers research tools, including major editorial projects.
- They are, however, in direct competition with applications submitted to the same committee.
- Hence, you need to make a clear and compelling argument that the proposed research tool will promote exciting and original research, and not simply lie dormant on library shelves.
- You must also convince the committee that such a tool will have a wide impact.
- Finally, when proposing a research tool, you should think about the medium and/or format that you intend to use, and then explicitly justify that choice in your application.
- New Scholars should think carefully about applying to produce a research tool – committees want to see new scholars establish their own research careers, and a research tool at that stage might not strike them as appropriate unless it is clear that the tool will help the researcher undertake an active and original research program.



External Assessors

- SSHRC Program Officers will seek reports from two external assessors.
- Often they will use one identified by the applicant and one taken from their database.
- While external assessors are a vital part of the process, and help to guide discussions in important ways, Committees are by no means bound by their comments for they have to consider your application in light of the others before them.
- A successful application will manage to appeal to the specialist as well as the generalist.
- Some external assessments prove not to be that useful which forces the committee to rely upon its own expertise. This is why it is important to write with the informed generalist in mind.
- Committees are sensitive to instances where the external assessor(s), for personal or ideological reasons, engage in polemical attacks, and will note that they have taken that into account.
- External assessors are also governed by SSHRC's conflict of interest policies which are posted on the SSHRC website.



Common Flaws in the Program of Research

- Proposal is deemed to be premature.
- Proposal appears to be a fishing expedition.
- Proposal is thought to be too ambitious for the resources and or time allotted.
- Conceptualization is lacking in originality.
- The methodology and/or theoretical perspective is under-developed or insufficiently explained.
- Literature review is inadequate.
- Proposal is seen as too derivative of previous work: these are sometimes known as a rolling thunder applications.
- The program of research is so narrowly conceived that major advances are unlikely.
- The proposal is a 'trust me' application – one in which the committee is expected to accept the program of research simply on the basis of the applicant's previous record. This is more common in applications from senior scholars.



Employment of Graduate Students

- If you are employing graduate students in the research program, make certain that both they and the program will benefit.
- Graduate students should not be employed as gophers or as scanner slaves.
- Nor should they be doing all the critical research – an SRG is not primarily intended as a means of funding the work and training of graduate students. However, SSHRC does encourage the use of graduate students where appropriate.



Helpful Hints

- Write your application as clearly as possible, with an eye to persuading specialists and generalists alike. You cannot expect (given upwards of 150 files and perhaps 11 committee members), that all committee members will be conversant with your file or your specific field of research, and in some cases there will not be a specialist in your field on the committee.
- Engage with some of the bigger questions in your field/discipline so as to show the wider relevance of your proposal.
- Make sure the 1 page summary captures the excitement, originality and feasibility of your program – this is not only the first part of the application that committee members will read, it is also what many will turn to should your file come under prolonged discussion in the meeting.



- Demonstrate to the committee that you are familiar with the most recent work which pertains to your topic.
- Make sure your title accurately captures your program of research.
- Cut back on jargon – not only will your committee include some non-specialists, but it is also wearing on the specialists.
- Avoid excessive or inflated claims to originality and/or significance – you do not want to encourage one of the committee members to set about proving you wrong.
- Never announce that you are filling in a hole or a gap– if you have a hole, get a backhoe.
- Check out the programs that have been funded by your committee in the past so as to get a better idea of the range of activities.



- Avoid using a combative or overly aggressive tone when locating your work within the wider scholarly community – you never know who will be your external assessors and committee members.
- Ambition should be tempered by realism, especially for first time applicants.
- Avoid choosing a topic, or framing it in terms of what you think is trendy or sexy – committees are wary of applications which strive too hard to be fashionable.
- Presentation is important, but content is even more important.



- If there is a scholarly debate surrounding your topic, acknowledge all sides respectfully and carefully locate yourself within it.
- Make explicit any links between this proposed program of research and what you have done before.
- Your methodology or research plan should be laid out clearly such that each stage is visible to the reader.
- Even if the intended result is a book, don't talk about the book per se – committees fund research, not book production.
- Outlining chapters in a proposed book is not a replacement for a clear discussion of your methodology or approach.
- Avoid any appearance that the application is intended to tidy up some earlier work.



- Never start your research plan with a literature review – Committees expect that you will have already completed that in the course of writing your application.
- Make certain that the works cited in your bibliography are addressed in the detailed proposal – your bibliography should not resemble a PhD comprehensive reading list.
- If you have already conducted a pilot project, tell the committee about it and the results.
- If space is tight and you need to show your grasp of key methodological or conceptual issues, you can always cite previous work in which you have already demonstrated such familiarity.
- Ask your colleagues to look at your application in order to get some specialist feedback.



- The first paragraph should make it clear to the reader why this study is so important and why you are the person to do it.
- Make certain that you provide definitions for any unfamiliar terms/acronyms, and if possible use acronyms sparingly.
- Use headings/subheadings if you find them useful to organize your thoughts.
- There are no good grant writers – only good grant rewriters. Be prepared to go through many iterations.
- Make certain that there are no errors in syntax, spelling, or fact – if there are, committee members are inclined to mark such applications more harshly on the basis that they were too hastily put together.



- Try to choose assessors who are well regarded in the profession and who are also broadly speaking in tune with your approach.
- Generally speaking, assessors from Canada and the U.S. can be more helpful for the simple reason that they are more familiar with our kind of research grant culture and hence are more understanding of some of the budget requests we might make.
- On the other hand, listing scholars elsewhere in the world is suggestive of your wider impact and presence.
- If you think that SSHRC might choose an assessor who is prejudiced against you, you can ask that they do not approach him/her. Your request will remain confidential and will not be seen by committee members or external assessors.



The Budget

The budget is one area where you are almost guaranteed to find that every committee member has an opinion. Committees seem to attract individuals who were accountants in a previous life.



- Committees are required to recommend a budget for all applications deemed worthy of funding.
- While SSHRC actively tries to dissuade committees from micromanaging budgets, their own research experience has given committee members a good sense of what it takes to conduct research within their fields.
- Many committee members who are silent during the discussion of the track record and program suddenly find their voice when the budget comes up for consideration.
- Your budget must demonstrate that you have worked through the costs of your research program. If the committee feels that the budget is unwarranted or unjustified, that then may lead them to think that the research program itself has not been adequately thought through.



- A detailed and carefully costed budget also makes it more difficult for committee members to recommend a global cut.
- The range of average budgets varies widely between committees and therefore it is useful to do some research and find out what the typical budget is for the committee to which you will be applying. This is not to say that they will not fund any more than the median, but it at least gives you some sense of their comfort zone, and when more explanation/justification is called for.

- http://www.sshrc.ca/web/winning/comp_results_e.asp



Helpful Hints

- Make certain that whatever you request is not only carefully costed in the budget justification but is also accounted for in the detailed proposal.
- Avoid padding at all costs – committees are willing to recommend an appropriate amount but can easily become annoyed if they suspect the budget is inflated.
- Don't economize too much – not asking for adequate funding is also grounds to reject an application (though this rarely happens.)
- Remember that committee members can call on their own personal experience to know what is appropriate and what is not.



- Make sure you do not ask for things that are specifically prohibited under SSHRC guidelines, e.g. furniture, more than 125 days subsistence in a given year, etc.
- Make sure that requests for hardware (computer, printers, cameras, etc.) are justified by the tasks that they need to perform.
- If your Dean or VP or whoever, is willing to sign off on a request for a RTS, apply for one. But do not count on receiving it as the number of RTS requests greatly exceeds the pool of funds that have been set aside for RTS.
- Avoid global estimates whenever possible as these can imply that you are pulling figures from the air.



- For those committees which do not rate conference presentations as highly as others, limit your requests to perhaps one a year.
- Try to combine research trips wherever possible.
- If you are asking for funds for conference travel, try and give the committee some idea of the conferences at which you intend to present.
- It is important that the committee concludes that these conferences are not only appropriate in terms of your program of research, but that they will also provide an opportunity for maximum impact.



- While SSHRC rules do allow for the incorporation of post-doctoral fellows, unless there is a clearly defined need for a post-doc, committees will often replace a post-doc with a doctoral student.
- Wherever possible, use students rather than non-students, and if non-students are needed, provide a clear rationale.
- If the training of graduate students is an important and integral part of your proposal, consider including students in your requests for conference travel, particularly if they will be presenting papers.



Funding Graduate Students

- The SRG program has basically two methods for funding graduate students.
- An hourly rate can be used – this is especially well-suited to instances where graduate students will be responsible for specific tasks. In some universities and departments, there is an established rate which SSHRC will acknowledge. Otherwise, you should talk to colleagues and to your research office to establish an appropriate amount.
- SSHRC has introduced master's and doctoral stipends. These are useful when you have or anticipate having graduate students who will have their own research agendas but whose work will contribute to your overall program of research.



Snatching Defeat from the Jaws of Victory: Irritating Committees

Need to remind applicants that committee members are human too.

- March is Death by Binder Month.
- Spring break in Ottawa is not the same thing as spring break in the Caribbean.



41 Ways to Piss Off a Committee

- Insist on flying business class.
- Tell the Committee that last year's committee members were complete idiots.
- Claim that nobody has ever done anything vaguely related to your topic before.
- Invent your own format for providing bibliographical information.
- Elicit the Committee's sympathy with tales of how badly treated you are by your home institution.
- Apply for money to work in an archive that burned down thirty years ago.
- Ask for an \$8000 notebook when all you need is a simple word processor.
- Use the section on extenuating circumstances to bemoan your heavy teaching load.
- Talk about how badly under-funded you have been.
- Tell the committee all kinds of things about yourself which were not requested and which are not relevant to the application.
- Do not include anything in your bibliography that has been published in the last ten years.



- Misspell the names of your referees.
- Ignore the rules on page length, margins and spacing.
- Rely exclusively on your spellchecker – there is considerable difference between public affairs and public affairs.
- Show up before the same committee on three different applications (as principal investigator on one and co-investigator on two others).
- Spread white-out liberally in the application.
- Ignore grammar rules
- Avoid punctuation
- Identify the leading figure in the field as an 'idiot'
- Double-count publications in your c.v.
- List publications more than six year's old in the c.v. section of the application.
- Include a big name on your team but do not define her/his role.
- Avoid paragraphs.
- Fail to explain the reasons for your trips to various places or what you are looking for.
- Handwrite part of the application.
- Under publications, type 'too many to list'
- Add up your budget incorrectly
- List Wikipedia as a publication
- Tell the committee that ethics reviews are a waste of time and irrelevant



- Use the application to carry on a polemical fight with your colleagues in other institutions.
- Ask for \$260,000 in total support.
- Insist that you are waiting for the science to catch up with you.
- Insist that there is a conspiracy (feminist, Marxist, right-wing, vegetarian, or all four) out there trying to get you – and then arrange for your external referees to back you up.
- Justify your application to interdisciplinary studies on the basis that your colleagues in your discipline are hopelessly out of date.
- Invent some new acronyms
- Keep submitting the same application without taking any notice of previous committee's comments.
- Employ a graduate student to help cart books back and forth from the library.
- Insist that you have nothing to learn from recent scholarship.
- Use as many acronyms as you can, but then change their spelling part way through the application.
- Dare the committee to reject you and thereby prove that they are a bunch of hide-bound bureaucrats doing Ottawa's dirty work.
- Put office furniture into your budget



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