

**CANADA  
RESEARCH  
CHAIRS**

# **Peer Review Guidelines**

Interdisciplinary Adjudication Committee

# Peer Review Guidelines for the Interdisciplinary Adjudication Committee

On behalf of the Tri-Agency Institutional Programs Secretariat (*the Secretariat*), we would like to thank you for agreeing to serve as a peer review committee member. The success of the peer review process is made possible by dedicated people like yourself who generously give of their time and expertise, and your efforts are greatly appreciated by the Steering Committee and the scientific community.

It is essential that committee members read this document in its entirety before commencing the review of their assigned nominations. Clarification on any subject may be obtained from program staff before or during the meeting.

## 1. Principles of Peer Review

### 1.1 Fairness

Success of the Canada Research Chairs' (the 'program') peer review system is critically dependent upon the willingness and ability of all College of Reviewer members and the Interdisciplinary Adjudication Committee (IAC) members to be fair and reasonable; to exercise rigorous scientific judgment; and to understand, and take into account in a balanced way, the particular context of each nomination.

### 1.2 Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest

The Canada Research Chairs program complies with the [Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy of the Federal Research Funding Organizations](#) to ensure the effective management of conflict of interest of any participant in the review process and to ensure, during the review process, confidentiality of personal information and commercial information submitted to the program.

Committee members are responsible for evaluating the merits of nominations submitted to them for review, except for the ones that pose a conflict of interest.

#### Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is a conflict between a person's duties and responsibilities with regard to the review process, and that person's private, professional, business or public interests. There may be a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest when the review committee member, external reviewer, referee or observer:

- would receive professional or personal benefit resulting from the nomination being reviewed;
- have a professional or personal relationship with the nominee or the nominee's institution; or
- have a direct or indirect financial interest in the nomination being reviewed.

A conflict of interest may be deemed to exist or perceived as such when committee members, external reviewers, referees or observers:

- are a relative or close friend, or have a personal relationship with the nominee;
- are in a position to gain or lose financially/materially from the funding of the nomination;
- have had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the nominee;
- are currently affiliated with the nominee's institution, organization or company—including research hospitals and research institutes;
- are closely professionally affiliated with the nominee, as a result of having in the last six years:
  - frequent and regular interactions with the nominee in the course of their duties at their department, institution, organization or company;
  - been a supervisor or a trainee of the nominee;
  - collaborated, published or shared funding with the nominee, or have plans to do so in the immediate future; or,
  - been employed by the nominating institution; and/or
- feel for any reason unable to provide an impartial review of the nomination.

All committee members are subject to the same conflict of interest guidelines. If any of these situations apply, the committee member must declare a conflict of interest and leave the room when such a proposal is up for review. When the Chair leaves the room, they must designate a substitute from among the members of the committee to act as Chair. Secretariat staff and the Chair are responsible for resolving areas of uncertainty.

## 2. Overview of Peer Review Process

All nominations submitted to the program are reviewed by a minimum of three members of the College of Reviewers who are carefully selected by program staff. If the reviewers concur and their assessment is favourable, the Secretariat makes a recommendation to the Steering Committee to support the chair. If any of the three assessments are not favourable, the nomination is reviewed by IAC, which then recommends whether to support the nomination or not. In the case of nominations submitted off-cycle (e.g. researchers from abroad such as foreign nationals or Canadian citizens) where peer review is unanimously favourable, the Associate Vice President of the Secretariat has the delegated authority to approve the recommendations made by the College of Reviewers.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

### 3.1 Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is composed of the presidents of the three federal granting agencies (the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research), the president of the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI), the deputy ministers of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and Health Canada (or their delegates). The Steering Committee receives funding recommendations from the Interdisciplinary Adjudication Committee and the Secretariat and makes final funding decisions on the nominations submitted to the program.

### 3.2 College of Reviewers

The College of Reviewers is made up of experts (including current chairholders) from a wide range of fields of research. In selecting members, the prime considerations are excellence in research, appropriate expertise, experience, diversity, and sound judgment. A minimum of three members of the College of Reviewers are assigned to review all nominations. Based on these assessments, the Secretariat and IAC make recommendations to the Steering Committee.

The Secretariat is responsible for selecting the best reviewers for each nomination. This selection is based on the expertise of the reviewer, which should be as close as possible to the nominee's field(s) and on the reviewer's capacity to provide a detailed, unbiased and critical review. For interdisciplinary research, the Secretariat makes efforts to ensure that the reviewers selected have (individually or collectively) expertise in all the relevant disciplines and aspects of the proposal. When appropriate, referees from different research environments (e.g., academia, industry, and government) are selected to assess the quality and the potential impact of the proposed research.

### 3.3 Interdisciplinary Adjudication Committee (IAC)

#### UPHOLDING EXCELLENCE

The objective of the Canada Research Chairs Program (CRCP) is to attract and retain some of the world's most accomplished and promising minds to Canada. It is founded upon an **uncompromising commitment to excellence** in research and research training. IAC plays a key role in upholding this high level of excellence and the prestige of the program, and in doing so, ensures accountability, not only to the Government of Canada and the Canadian taxpayer – the source of the program's funding – but to the research community at large.

- ✓ **Tier 1 Chairs** are for **outstanding** researchers acknowledged by their peers as world leaders in their fields.
- ✓ **Tier 2 Chairs** are for **exceptional** emerging researchers, acknowledged by their peers as having the potential to lead in their field (note that this standard of excellence applies as much to new nominations as it does to renewals).

#### MEMBERSHIP

IAC is made up of 16 or more experts from the College of Reviewers who represent the various research disciplines of the three granting agencies (CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC). The committee also has a Chairperson who reports to the Steering Committee. The Secretariat selects members to ensure equal representation of the mandates of the three agencies; members serve for a term of up to three years.

Quality, experience, excellent judgment and proven ability to recognize excellence, using a broad and flexible definition, are the prime criteria for selecting IAC members. A balanced membership is achieved by taking into account factors such as language, diversity of experiences and identities, region, sector of the economy, discipline and type of institution. Members are selected to ensure that IAC has the capacity to review proposals in both of Canada's official languages as well as interdisciplinary, Indigenous and community-based research. In addition, IAC's membership includes internationally recognized researchers from outside Canada.

Below are examples of files that may be reviewed by IAC:

- **Unresolved files - recommendations to not support for new or renewal nominations**  
Unresolved files are those for which the members of the College of Reviewers have not reached a consensus or cases where the support for the nomination is tenuous. As a general rule, a nomination is submitted for review by IAC if it is rated by one or several college members as "support with reservations" or "do not support", or if concerns are raised within the review (despite the ratings being supportive).
- **Files with two reviews**

Chair nominations require at least three reviews from members of the College of Reviewers before a funding recommendation can be made. Program staff endeavours to ensure that all files have a minimum of three reviews. There may be exceptional cases where only two reviews have been received for a file. These cases are brought to IAC to review and make a recommendation. Should IAC not be in a position to make a recommendation, the committee will need to review the case on an *ad-hoc* basis as additional reviews are received after the IAC meeting, using teleconferencing and electronic mail as appropriate.

### **Deferred Recommendation Process**

New and Renewal nominations that are not recommended for support by IAC are automatically entered into the 'Deferred Recommendation process'. For these nominations, the institution will be sent a synopsis of IAC's concerns, the external reviewers' reports and will be asked to submit, within 30 days:

- a one-page letter of support from the institution
- a response, with a maximum of two pages, that addresses the concerns outlined by the peer reviewers and the committee.

IAC will review the original submission and any supplementary information provided by the institution within 60 days of receiving the response and convene via teleconference, in order to make a final recommendation to the Steering Committee. If the institution does not provide a report in the 30-day timeline, the nomination will automatically be sent to the Steering Committee (without a second review by IAC) with a recommendation to not fund the nomination.

*Note that two teleconferences are scheduled each year to adjudicate the files sent to the NRR processes from the spring and fall IAC meetings (a final recommendation must be provided by IAC before the end of the fiscal year).*

### **CHAIRPERSON**

The committee Chairperson (Chair) is directly responsible for upholding the program's high level of excellence by ensuring that IAC functions smoothly, effectively and objectively, and according to the Program's policies. They establish a positive, constructive, fair-minded environment in which the nominations are to be evaluated. The Chair fulfills an oversight role and can also participate in the review of nominations.

The Chair's responsibilities include:

- ensuring that the program's *Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy of the Federal Research Funding Organizations* policy is followed prior to, during and after the meeting;
- ensuring the integrity and quality of the peer review process and ensuring that each nomination gets a fair assessment (that the peer review process is free of bias and is equitable to all nominees) reviewing the *Peer Review Procedures* in their opening remarks at the committee meeting;
- working with the Secretariat to calibrate the committee at the beginning of the meeting (to set the bar of excellence for the remainder of the meeting);
- ensuring the involvement of the entire committee in the review of each nomination;
- ensuring that opinions expressed by the College of Reviewer members are fully integrated into the discussion of each nomination;
- ensuring that 'special circumstances' (as applicable) within nominations are given appropriate consideration by the committee when doing its assessments and recommendations;
- ensuring nominations with career interruptions are fairly evaluated;

- ensuring that all documents (including CV updates and late reviews) are considered in the committee's assessments;
- appointing a delegate as Chair when they leave the meeting room because of conflict of interest or when acting as a reader on a file;
- guiding the committee to a consensus recommendation;
- reviewing and approving the committees' comments on nominations that are not recommended for approval or that are sent to the NND or END processes; and
- ensuring that all confidential peer review materials provided to them are handled safely and disposed of according to program policy.

#### KEY READERS

Nominations are assigned to a minimum of three committee members (readers) for assessment.

The responsibilities of key readers include:

- ensuring that they follow the program's *Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy of the Federal Research Funding Organizations* prior to, during and after the meeting;
- reviewing in depth their assigned nominations;
- ensuring the integrity and quality of the peer review process and ensuring that each nomination gets a fair assessment (that the peer review process is free of bias and is equitable to all nominees)
- ensuring that 'special circumstances' listed in their assigned nominations (as applicable) are given appropriate consideration within their assessments;
- ensuring nominations with career interruptions are fairly evaluated;
- ensuring that the opinions expressed by the College of Reviewer members are given appropriate consideration within their assessments;
- ensuring that all documents (including CV updates and late reviews) are considered in their assessments;
- leading the review of their assigned nominations by providing a verbal assessment to the entire committee during the meeting;
- flagging inflammatory comments within College members' reviews for Secretariat staff;
- participating in the discussion and review of all other nominations (for which they are not in conflict) before the committee;
- flagging nominations that include human pluripotent stem cell research to Secretariat staff; and
- ensuring that all peer review materials provided are handled safely and disposed of according to program policy.

#### 3.4 Secretariat Staff

Secretariat staff are typically represented at the peer review meeting by the Associate Vice President; the Secretariat's Director of Programs; the Program Manager; and the Program Officers.

Their responsibilities include:

- ensuring that the committee follows the program's *Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy of the Federal Research Funding Organizations* prior to, during and after the meeting;
- ensuring the integrity and quality of the peer review process and ensuring that each nomination gets a fair assessment (that the peer review process is free of bias and is equitable to all nominees);
- assigning nominations to members of the College of Reviewers;
- providing advice and guidance to the committee on the program's policies;
- ensuring that the opinions expressed by the College of Reviewer members are given appropriate

- consideration by the committee;
- ensuring that ‘special circumstances’ (as applicable) within nominations are given appropriate consideration by the committee;
- ensuring nominations with career interruptions are fairly evaluated;
- ensuring that all documents (including CV updates and late reviews) are considered in the committee’s assessments;
- keeping notes on procedural aspects of the committee's functions;
- recording committee members’ comments for each nomination;
- working with the Chair to manage conflicts of interest;
- recording concerns raised by the committee on issues requiring later attention by staff;
- ensuring that all peer review materials provided are handled safely and disposed of according to program policy;
- facilitating the final approval of the nominations with the Steering Committee;
- flagging inflammatory comments within College members’ reviews; and
- flagging nominations that include human pluripotent stem cell research for follow-up.

## 4. The IAC Peer Review Meeting

### 4.1 Prior to the Meeting

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Committee members must read the program’s *Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy of the Federal Research Funding Organizations* and upon recruitment as an invitee, and again if invited as a full member, they must provide their signed ‘confidentiality and conflict sign-off sheet’ to the Secretariat prior to receiving nomination materials.

#### ATTENDANCE AT THE COMMITTEE MEETING

The effective and fair review of all nominations depends on the in-person presence of all committee members for the full duration of the committee meeting. Therefore, members are asked to make their travel arrangements accordingly.

#### ASSIGNMENTS

Committee members are provided with a list of all nominations to declare conflicts of interest. The Program Manager then uses this information to assign the files to committee members. Committee members can expect to receive two to three notices of assignments in the months preceding the committee meeting. The assigned nominations are shared via a SharePoint platform and include the member’s individual assignments and all materials required to assess the nominations.

#### PRE-SCORES

**A WEEK FOLLOWING THE LAST UPLOAD OF ASSIGNMENTS, MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO SUBMIT THEIR ‘PRE-SCORES’ (I.E. THEIR *PRELIMINARY* RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THEIR ASSIGNED FILES) TO THE SECRETARIAT. THE PROGRAM MANAGER WILL USE THESE PRE-SCORES TO CREATE THE ORDER OF REVIEW AND AGENDA FOR THE IAC MEETING.**

#### MATERIALS PROVIDED FOR REVIEW

The Committee will conduct its review and make its recommendations using the following documentation:

- the complete nomination file (including CV updates);
- the nominating institution's Strategic Research Plan Summary;
- the reviews provided by the College members (including 'late reviews');
- the Program Officer's summary of the reviewers' assessments, which includes an analysis of any contentious points that prevented the reviewers from reaching a consensus.

Nota Bene: Different rules apply regarding the letters of support included in the nomination files. Appendix A outlines the differences between Tier 1 and Tier 2 nominations, as well as between new and renewal nominations.

#### KEY READERS

Three key readers are assigned to each nomination; however, all committee members are expected to be familiar with all of the nominations submitted to IAC for review, respecting any conflicts of interest. The readers must do an in-depth evaluation of the nominations to which they are assigned and be prepared to lead the discussion on these cases. All IAC members that are not in conflict are encouraged to participate fully in the discussion of each nomination under consideration. *Note that while an evaluation form is provided to help readers complete their review, readers do not need to provide a written review of their assessments. A **verbal** assessment of the nomination, provided at the meeting, is all that is required.*

#### How to assess nominations:

Reviewers must recognize that all individuals carry assumptions and, therefore, must be cognizant of their own biases in evaluating nomination packages. The [unconscious bias module](#) offers a number of tools for recognizing and mitigating the effects of bias

- A. Familiarize yourself with the program by reading the [detailed description](#) of the Canada Research Chairs Program.
- B. When reviewing the nominations, you should apply the different selection criteria for both [new](#) and [renewal](#) nominations (Tier 1 vs. Tier 2).
- C. You must assess the quality of the institutional environment, commitment and fit with the University's Strategic Research Plan. The institution must describe the quality of the existing or planned institutional environment and must demonstrate that it and, as applicable, any affiliated institutions, hospitals, institutes, etc., will provide chairholders with the support they need to ensure the success of their work. Institutions also submit a Strategic Research Plan (SRP) outlining their priority research areas and their plans for the Chair. You must assess the fit of the proposed Chair with the institution's SRP by reading the [SRP Summary](#) for the nomination for which you are reviewing. In addition to being available on the program's website, this document is also included in the review package.

#### Special Chairs

The program sets aside a special allocation of 120 chairs ("Special Chairs") for institutions that have received one per cent or less of the total funding disbursed by the three federal granting agencies over the three years prior to the year of the allocation. The evaluation criteria to assess these nominations are the same as those for any other nomination. However, members should consider that some institutional characteristics (e.g., opportunities for collaboration, access to graduate programs, access to research space, access to professional grant writing services or research office support) may differ between institutions eligible for special chairs and the other participating universities. For example, a researcher

affiliated with a small institution that does not have a graduate program in their area of expertise will necessarily make rather different contributions to student training than a researcher from a large institution that offers an extensive and well-established graduate program.

## ASSESSING PRODUCTIVITY

An important evaluation criterion is the excellence of the nominee. A key factor in assessing this criterion is the productivity of the individual. *When assessing their assigned nominations IAC members must consider the following:*

### Career Interruptions and Personal Circumstances

The Secretariat acknowledges that certain circumstances may affect a nominee's record of research achievement. In order to fairly assess a nominee's research productivity, reviewers and IAC members are instructed to give careful consideration and be sensitive to the impact of these circumstances. *Examples of circumstances that could affect productivity:*

- **Career interruptions:** occur when - for health, family or other reasons - a nominee is taken away from their research work for an extended period of time (e.g. pregnancy, early childcare, eldercare, etc).
- **Slow-downs:** occur when - for health, family or other reasons (e.g. pregnancy, early childcare, eldercare etc) - a nominee's research productivity slows down (i.e., the nominee was not taken completely away from their work).
- **Publication delays:** legitimate delays in the dissemination of research results due to circumstances that make it impossible or undesirable to publish important results (e.g. a delay in publication to protect intellectual property, a delay to ensure that the protocols for publishing or disseminating research that involves Indigenous stories are respected, etc.)
- **Interdisciplinary research:** the indicators of achievement and excellence in interdisciplinary research, or in emerging areas, may be different from those for research in the mainstream of a given field. Researchers conducting inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary research or research in emerging fields may face additional challenges that can affect productivity.
- **Institutional characteristics:** the varying institutional characteristics between small, medium and large institutions may affect productivity. Opportunities for collaboration and networking, access to graduate programs, access to research space, access to mentoring and coaching, access to professional grant writing and editing services or research office support may differ between institutions (for example, a researcher affiliated with a small institution that does not have a graduate program in their area of expertise will make different contributions to student training than a researcher from a large institution that offers an extensive and well-established graduate program).

**Note:** *For renewal nominations, 'senior level administrative responsibilities' is not considered an acceptable reason for a reduced level of productivity.*

### Intellectual Leadership

Canada Research Chairholders' involvement in broader intellectual leadership activities, such as the stewardship of large initiatives (e.g. the leadership of a network of researchers or key stakeholders or of a national facility), is important and may allow them to have a greater influence and impact at a national and international level. This may in some cases negatively affect their individual productivity (as measured by traditional peer review metrics e.g. publication record, federal granting agency funding, etc.). While adjudicating nominations, external reviewers and committee members should recognize and consider these intellectual leadership activities as being legitimate activities of a Canada Research Chairholder and take this into consideration when assessing the excellence and productivity of the nominee.

**CRCs in Senior Administrative Positions**

Some researchers are highly productive and are able to deliver at a level expected of a CRC while also being in senior level administrative positions. As such, the program does not have a formal policy prohibiting chairholders from holding these types of positions. However, it is the responsibility of the institution (in collaboration with the chairholder) to ensure that chairholders who hold senior administrative positions have time to carry out their program of research at the level that is expected of a Canada Research Chair.

Chairholders who, because of a lack of time to devote to research, have difficulty meeting their research objectives run the risk of not being renewed. Note that for renewal CRC nominations, senior level administrative responsibilities are not considered to be acceptable reasons for a reduced level of productivity (e.g. career interruptions or special circumstances).

**Publications**

When assessing the productivity of the nominee, as determined by the quality and impact of their contributions to the field. IAC should focus on the quality of a publication's content and NOT simply the number of publications nor the quality or impact factor of journals. Committee members must not only use metrics such as H-indices when determining the productivity of a nominee.

The forms of research publications can vary greatly among disciplines. In addition to the more traditional peer-reviewed journals, researchers also publish books, chapters of books and articles, monographs, memoirs or special papers, review articles, conference/symposia proceedings and abstracts, patents, creative or artistic works, government publications, policies (e.g. for federal, provincial and/or municipal governments, for/with band councils), research reports, papers presented at scholarly meetings or conferences, and other forms of written scholarly expression or participation in public discourse and debate which constitute a contribution to research.

Some fast-moving research fields, such as some areas of computing science, genetics or microelectronics, use special means to reach the target audience quickly. Communications, quick-print reports, letters and electronic distribution of pre-prints are important vehicles for disseminating research results. All such contributions should be treated equally when assessing quality and impact, and reviewers should not regard certain types as "second class" or "grey literature." Venues with the highest impact (as measured by readership or attendance) may not be the most appropriate for a nominee's research results. It is up to the candidate to explain the choice of venues for dissemination.

When assessing productivity, reviewers should also be sensitive to legitimate delays in research and dissemination of research results. Some circumstances make it impossible or undesirable for researchers to publish important results of their research prior to their nomination, such as respecting an Indigenous protocol that a story or aspect of research is not for public dissemination or the protection of intellectual property may require a delay in publication.

**Collaborative Endeavours and Interdisciplinary Research**

Increasingly, research on the most significant problems requires the combined knowledge, expertise and contributions of many researchers often from various disciplines and/or stakeholders from various communities or industry sectors. Such collaborative and concerted activities are encouraged by the tri-agencies, and reviewers should be particularly careful to give adequate credit to effective research interaction. Creativity and innovation are at the heart of all research advances, whether made individually or in groups. The role of collaborative and interdisciplinary work as a means to greater achievement in research must be fully valued by the peer review system. The indicators of achievement and excellence in interdisciplinary research, or in emerging areas, are often not as evident as those for research in the mainstream of a given field. Therefore, reviewers should recognize and appreciate the additional challenges inherent in interdisciplinary research, in collaborative research, and in community-based research.

These proposals may appear somewhat unfocused compared to other research programs. Reviewers are asked to take this into account in their assessments, as well as to keep an open mind to the practices and methodologies across the wide range of disciplines and types of research included in CRC nominations.

### **Equity within the Program**

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 funds in partnership with the agencies 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.

IAC should reinforce standards of rigor, fairness, respect, openness, transparency and equity throughout the evaluation process; members must consider the following when assessing nominations:

- Excellence remains the principal criteria in assessing CRC nominations, but excellence should not be limited to its narrow and traditional sense. Non-linear career paths and all metrics of excellence (e.g. leadership, applied research, mentoring, strong community partnerships, etc.) should be taken into account. Increased diversity is fundamental to achieving research excellence, as the capacity for innovative, complex, strategic thinking increases when there are diverse voices and lived experiences involved in research enterprises;
- Reviewers should be aware of the potential for systemic bias in the assessment of "quality". For example, focusing only on journals ranked in traditional fields may disadvantage scholars in interdisciplinary or emerging fields. Moreover, nominees with career leaves may have less research output, given the leave and potential slow-downs leading up to and after the time away from research. However, these nominees may be as or more qualified as those with less research output. As such, reviewers should consider multiple sources in assessing the quality of publications such as acceptance rates, impact not only in research publication, but knowledge mobilization both in and outside of academia (e.g. policy work, community-based work, work with Indigenous organizations/government);
- Reviewers must recognize that all individuals carry assumptions and, therefore, must be cognizant of their own biases in evaluating nomination packages. The [unconscious bias module](#) offers a number of tools for recognizing and mitigating the effects of bias;
- Reviewers should carefully consider 'personal circumstances' e.g. career breaks such as pregnancy, early childcare, eldercare, illness, immigration, etc. as a legitimate explanation for lags in research productivity;
- Reviewers should recognize that there is evidence of bias in how institutions allocate resources and support to members of under-represented groups and ensure that the institutional commitment in the nomination package is as strong for members of designated groups as it is for others;
- Reviewers should ensure that they assess fairly the quality of training for internationally educated scholars rather than favoring graduates of domestic institutions who are part of existing networks;
- Reviewers should be aware of the roles that informal networks play in supporting some candidates and excluding others from processes that promote excellence. Activities such as mentoring, coaching, networking, reviewing, invited lectures etc. are important mechanisms for helping to advance the careers of early career researchers; however, faculty from underrepresented groups

often have a more difficult time accessing mentors, coaches, networking, etc. As such, the committee should be aware of unintentional bias in favor of nominees because of their access to or exclusion from these informal networks;

- Reviewers should be aware of the role of support services – professional grant writing, editing etc. – particularly at larger universities, in the development of the CRC nomination process. Where such services exist, access to them might not be equal to all candidates;
- Where appropriate, reviewers should provide feedback that will assist unsuccessful nominees in advancing; and
- Reviewers should also be aware of the importance of emerging areas including inter-disciplinary, cross-sectoral research, action research, community-based research, translational research, practice research, etc. that are legitimate and important; the excellent scholars who engage in these types of research may be less well-established as these are new ways of conducting research. They should also be aware of the importance of research on diversity-related issues (gender studies, disability studies, immigration and settlement studies, Indigenous Studies).

In recent years, the Chairs program has taken several actions to ensure that all qualified researchers can access and benefit from the program. Further information can be found at the Chairs website at the following link:

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

## Research by and with Indigenous Peoples

When evaluating research by and with Indigenous Peoples, it is important to keep the following in mind:

- Committee members should be familiar with the [Guidelines for the Merit Review of Indigenous Research](#);
- It is important that research is conducted in a way that respects Indigenous protocols and the principles of Indigenous ownership, control, access and possession;
- Committee members should keep in mind that working when working with Indigenous communities, researchers may require more time to, for example, develop an OCAP agreement, ensure there is a relationship based on trust and respect, get approval from the Indigenous communities to publish research, ensure Protocols are respected, etc.; and
- Committee members should also keep in mind that knowledge mobilization for Indigenous communities may take many different forms and that research by and with Indigenous communities should benefit those same communities.

## 4.2 During the Meeting

### REVIEW PROCESS

It is important that the committee follow defined procedures during the peer review meeting in order to function in a consistent manner. ***A summary of the peer review procedure to be used by the committee during the meeting is provided in Appendix B.***

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Any committee member who has a conflict of interest with a nomination (as defined in Section 1.2 above)

must not take part in the discussion of that nomination. Committee members who are in conflict must leave the room before the nomination is discussed. The Chair and program staff are responsible for monitoring conflicts and for resolving areas of uncertainty.

#### INFLAMMATORY COMMENTS

On occasion, the committee receives an assessment which it judges to be biased, unfair, or personally hurtful to the applicant. A nominee or university may not accept that the review of their nomination was fair if a written review contains comments that could be construed as sarcastic, flippant, arrogant, or inappropriate in any way. In such a case, the committee is asked to flag these to the Secretariat. The committee comments will be used to inform the institution/nominee that the committee does not endorse the views or the tone of the assessor in question. In extreme cases, the committee may recommend that a particular assessor not be consulted in future.

If an assessment is insulting, degrading or defamatory to a nominee, the program officer may choose not to show that assessment to the committee.

#### VOTING

After a full discussion of the nomination the Chair should attempt to guide the committee to a consensus recommendation.

If a consensus cannot be reached, the entire committee will be instructed to vote on whether or not to recommend funding of the nomination, using the following guidelines:

- the Chair will call the vote on the nomination in question;
- all committee members, excluding the Chair, will vote via an email to Secretariat staff indicating either a 'yea' vote (recommending approval of the nomination) or 'nay' vote (recommending rejection of the nomination), or indicating their intentional abstention;
- the votes will be tallied and recorded by Secretariat staff, and the result will be announced by the Chair;
- in the case of a tie – the recommendation will be for rejection, as a majority (50% +1) is required for approval.

*\*\*Please note: Any IAC member who questions whether the vote is a true expression of the will of the committee may question the validity of the vote by requesting another vote using a different method or a revote – this request will be considered by the Chair and implemented as needed.*

#### COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The committee's comments are used to inform the institution and the nominee of the determining factors in the recommendation of the nomination. Using a template that outlines the program's evaluation criteria, the committee indicates where along the program's evaluation criteria the nomination did not meet expectations.

The committee comments may also include (when appropriate) additional feedback such as:

- the major strength(s) and weakness(es) of the nomination;
- the factors and issues that had the greatest impact on the evaluation, or where the committee had

- important advice for the applicant;
- salient aspects of the committee's discussion (level of enthusiasm etc);
- resolution of reviewer disagreement (which view expressed in the college members' reviews did the committee favour);
- feedback on inflammatory comments within college members' assessments (where present); and
- encouragement or discouragement in relation to a resubmission (as applicable).

Following the meeting, the committee notes will be finalized by the Secretariat and may be reviewed by the Chair of the committee if necessary.

#### END OF MEETING REVIEW

Once all nominations have been reviewed, if the committee feels that any nomination(s) has been treated inconsistently, a second review of that nomination is permitted. Any committee member with a conflict of interest must again leave the room.

An essential component of any peer review committee meeting is the final review of the committee's effectiveness and functioning, and a discussion of policy issues that may have arisen in the course of its deliberations. This discussion provides an opportunity for program staff to address any concerns of the committee members and for staff to record feedback on the peer review process as part of the program's ongoing efforts to maintain an effective and high-quality peer review system.

### 4.3 After the Meeting

#### Upholding Confidentiality After the Meeting

Committee members must continue to uphold the program's *Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy of the Federal Research Funding Organizations* after the meeting by not discussing information included within the peer review materials, meeting deliberations or committee recommendations with any individual (including other committee members) after the meeting.

The documentation provided for review contains personal and confidential information. To prevent unauthorized access, it must be stored and handled in a secure manner at all times. Following the meeting members must destroy the materials in a secure manner (e.g., by deleting electronic files, shredding or burning paper or returning it to the Secretariat). Please see the guide provided in Appendix C.

Any loss or theft of the documentation must be reported to the Secretariat; and all enquiries to committee members regarding committee deliberations must be referred to the Secretariat.

#### Approval of Funding Recommendations

The Steering Committee considers IAC's funding recommendations usually two to three weeks after the peer review committee meeting and makes final funding decisions.

Once the Steering Committee has approved the final funding recommendations, universities are informed of the decision and receive a copy of all review documentation. The Program Manager informs the institution's Vice-President of Research (or designated Senior Authority) with the funding decision for nominations where the decision is not favourable.

*\*Note that the Secretariat does not edit the evaluations submitted by the College of reviewers prior to them being sent to institutions.*

## Appendix A: Letters of Reference

Nominating institutions should solicit letters of reference from diverse sources.

### 1. New Nominations

**Tier 1:** All three letters must be from established authorities in the field who are not in a [conflict of interest](#) with the nominee. One letter must be from an international authority in the field, i.e. a recognized authority in the nominee's field who does not reside in the country in which the nominee is currently working.

**Tier 2:** One of the three letters must be from an established authority in the field who is not in a [conflict of interest](#) with the nominee. In addition, for the two other letters of reference, referees may not be affiliated with the nominating institution unless they are the nominee's PhD or postdoctoral supervisor.

Please note that the guidelines related to the letters of reference differ from Tier 1 and Tier 2 nominations to take into account the difficulties in obtaining letters of reference from authorities in the field who are at arm's length from Tier 2 nominees.

### 2. Renewals Nominations

For both **Tier 1 and Tier 2 renewals**, all three letters must be from established authorities in the field who are not in a conflict of interest with the nominee. One letter must be from an international authority in the field, i.e. a recognized authority in the nominee's field who does not reside in the country in which the nominee is currently working.

Note that the Secretariat does not verify the letters for conflict; it is expected that institutions abide by the rules indicated in the program's guidelines. Should a conflict be found, the Committee is to disregard the letter, and flag the conflict in the checklist.

## Appendix B: Peer Review Procedure for IAC Committee Meetings

1.	The Chair (following the order of review document provided before the meeting) identifies which nomination will be reviewed.
2.	Members who are in conflict leave the room <b>before the names of the three readers are announced</b> (if the Chairperson is in conflict, they must appoint a committee member to act as Chair during their absence).
3.	The Chair identifies the first, second and third readers assigned to the nomination, and whether a CV update or a late review was received for the file, and indicates any special circumstances listed by the nominee, including any career leaves.

4.	<p>The first reader:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• briefly introduces the nominee and the proposed research;</li> <li>• provides their assessment of the quality of the nominee, quality of the research, and integration with the institution's strategic research plan;</li> <li>• if the application is a renewal, comments on the chairholder's performance during the tenure of the nominee's CRC funding; and</li> <li>• comments on the reviews received from the College of Reviewers (flags 'inflammatory comments', if present).</li> <li>• comments on whether 'special circumstances' (including career leaves) were included in the nomination and confirms that these were taken into consideration during their assessment</li> <li>• confirms that additional information (e.g. CV updates, late reviews) were included in their assessment (if applicable).</li> </ul> <p>Note: The first reader may take only 2 or 3 minutes to present nominations that are outstanding, whereas some other proposals may take 5-10 minutes.</p>
5.	<p>The second and third readers assigned to the nomination provide additional comments (also confirming that special circumstances, including career leaves, were taken into account in their assessments), adding their perspectives and/or confirming the first reviewer's opinion or not. <i>Comments by the second and third readers are often 1-3 minutes, but occasionally longer depending on the complexity of the review.</i></p>
6.	<p>All committee members are given the opportunity to provide their views and raise additional issues (if any).</p>
7.	<p>The Chair:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• summarizes the overall strengths and weaknesses of the nomination and the committee's discussion; and</li> <li>• attempts to guide the committee to a consensus recommendation (where a consensus seems likely and appropriate);</li> </ul> <p>and / or;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• calls for a vote by the full committee (excluding the Chair). The voting will be via email to Secretariat staff. Secretariat staff will tally and record the results, recognizing that a recommendation for approval will require a majority (50% plus 1) vote. The committee recommendation will then be announced by the Chair.</li> </ul> <p><i>**Please note: Any IAC member who questions whether the vote is a true expression of the will of the committee may question the validity of the vote by requesting another vote using a different method or a revote – this request will be considered by the Chair and implemented as needed</i></p>

#### Once all nominations have been reviewed

- **If** the committee feels that any nomination(s) has been treated inconsistently, a secondary review of that nomination is permitted. Any committee member with a conflict of interest must again leave the room.
- Policy and procedural issues that may have arisen in the course of the deliberations of the committee meeting are discussed. The Secretariat welcomes comments and suggestions to improve the peer review process.

## Acronyms

TIPS	Tri-Agency Institutional Programs Secretariat ( <i>The Secretariat</i> )
IAC	Interdisciplinary Adjudication Committee – Peer review committee of the Canada Research Chairs Program.
CIHR	Canadian Institutes of Health Research –Federal agency that funds health research.
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada – Federal agency that funds research in the social sciences and humanities.
NSERC	Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council – Federal agency that funds research in natural sciences and engineering.
Tri-agency	The term tri-agency is used when referring to all three federal funding agencies (CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC).
CFI	Canada Foundation for Innovation – An organization funded by the federal government which supports research infrastructure such as equipment, laboratories, databases etc.
T2J	Tier 2 Justification – A one-page justification that must be provided by an institution in cases where they are nominating an individual who is beyond 10 years from their highest degree to a Tier 2 Chair. These justifications are peer reviewed by a sub-committee of IAC.
DRP	Deferred Recommendation Process – New nominations and renewals that are not recommended for support by the Interdisciplinary Adjudication Committee are automatically entered into the Deferred Recommendation Process (DRP).
SRP	Strategic Research Plan of a university which demonstrates how they will use funding from the Chairs Program to attract and retain world-class experts. Members of the College of Reviewers and the interdisciplinary Adjudication Committee consult the SRP Summary when peer reviewing a nomination.
HQP	Highly Qualified Personnel – It is expected that Canada Research Chairholders help train the next generation of highly skilled people through student supervision, teaching, and the coordination of other researchers' work.

## Appendix C: Guide on Handling Documents Used in Peer Review

Nomination and peer review documents contain personal information as well as information whose unauthorized disclosure could reasonably be expected to cause serious injury (such as prejudicial treatment or loss of

reputation or competitive advantage) to an individual, organization or government. As such, these documents are subject to regulation under the **Privacy Act**, the **Access to Information Act** and the Policy on Government Security (PGS). Measures must be followed to ensure that information contained in applications, internal and external reviews and committee discussions remain strictly confidential. Improper or unauthorized collection, use, disclosure, retention and /or disposal of this information can result in a privacy breach.

## Document Handling Procedures

### 1. Storage

All materials used in the peer review process must be stored in a secure manner to prevent unauthorized access:

- All paper copies of applications and peer review documents must be stored in a locked cabinet. They should never be left unattended in an open area.
- IT media (e.g. CDs, USB keys) containing peer review files must be stored in a locked cabinet.
- When possible, avoid saving local copies of applications and peer review documents. If electronic versions of peer review information are required, please save them on your computer hard drive or IT media, using security measures such as secure passwords on your desktop, laptop and / or at the file level. Never save peer review documents on your organization's network.
- Delete electronic files as soon as you are done with them.

### 2. Transmission

As information contained in peer review documents is confidential, its transmission should be restricted to times when it is absolutely required:

- Applications and / or peer review documents must be encrypted prior to sending by e-mail.
- Paper copies and / or IT media containing peer review files must be sent by 1st class mail, priority, registered mail or by reliable private courier services.

### 3. Destruction

When no longer required, peer review related documents and files must be destroyed using a secure method:

- IT media containing peer review documents may be shredded at your institution or may be returned to the Secretariat for destruction.
- Paper copies may be shredded at your institution or may be returned to the Secretariat for destruction.
- All locally saved electronic documents must be deleted.

## Privacy Breach Process

If you suspect that applications or peer reviews documents have been compromised (e.g. stolen laptop, lost USB key, misplaced application document), please inform the Secretariat immediately.