

The Autism Scholars Awards, 2024-25

The Autism Scholars Awards Program was established with the support of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities to ensure that Ontario attracts and retains pre-eminent scholars studying autism. For the academic year 2024-25, the program offers one one-year award of \$18,000 at the master's level, and up to two one-year awards of \$20,000 at the doctoral level. Anyone wishing to submit an application for an Autism Scholars Award must meet their University's submission deadline of December 1, 2023.

Program Goals

The Autism Scholars Awards Program aims to establish a research community that meets or exceeds internationally accepted standards of scientific excellence in its creation of new knowledge concerning child autism, and its translation into improved health for children through more effective services and products for children with autism, and thereby adds to the province's capacity in diagnosis and assessment of autism and the quality of its treatment system.

This community will:

- promote, assist and undertake research into paediatric behavioural sciences and autism within the academic community, and increase advanced research relating to autism, especially its diagnosis and treatment;
- create a robust autism research environment in Ontario, based on internationally accepted standards of scientific excellence and a rigorous peer review process, that will attract, develop, and keep excellent scholars and provide them with the opportunity to contribute to the improvement of research and treatment in Ontario and the world;
- address emerging opportunities, threats and challenges and accelerate the discovery of cures and treatments and improvements to autism care, prevention, and wellness strategies;
- promote the dissemination of knowledge about autism and the application of autism research to improve the health of children in Ontario; and
- build the capacity of the Ontario autism research community through the development of scholars and the provision of sustained support for scientific careers in autism treatment and research.

Conditions of the Award

- To be eligible to receive an award, an applicant must be
 - a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada at the time of the application deadline (January 31, 2024), and
 - registered as a full-time student in a master's or doctoral program at an Ontario university at the beginning of the award period (fall 2024), and remain registered as a full-time student throughout the term of the award.
- A master's student remains eligible until the end of the sixth term of full-time study.
- A doctoral student remains eligible until the end of the 15th term of full-time study.
- During the year an Autism Scholars Award is held, the recipient is precluded from holding any other award that offers financial support of more than \$20,000 for that same year (subject to the university's own policies).

Funding

During the one-year period commencing September 2024, a master's award recipient will receive \$6,000 per term for each of the three terms of full-time registration in a master's program in an Ontario university, as long as they do not exceed the sixth term of their master's study. Payments will be made by the university through its customary procedures and on its customary schedule (typically equal monthly payments during the term).

During the one-year period commencing September 2024, a doctoral award recipient will receive \$6,666 per term for each of the three terms of full-time registration in a doctoral program in an Ontario university, as long as they do not exceed the 15th term of their doctoral study. Payments will be made by the university through its customary procedures and on its customary schedule (typically equal monthly payments during the term).

Application Process

Application forms are available at offices of the Deans of Graduate Studies in Ontario universities. A complete application requires:

- an application form completed by the applicant;
- the applicant's *curriculum vitae*, which should include information regarding the eligibility criteria;
- a statement of no more than 1,000 words describing the research to be undertaken during the period of graduate study, and a non-technical summary of no more than 500 words, both written by the applicant (one additional page is allowed for diagrams, bibliography, etc.);
- the applicant's undergraduate and (if appropriate) graduate transcripts, which may be either
 - official transcripts sent directly by the Registrar's office of the issuing university, or
 - copies verified and certified as accurate by the Registrar's office of the sponsoring university;
- confidential letters from two assessors, signed and on letterhead, which should focus on an evaluation of the applicant's research to date, and the research being undertaken during the

period of graduate study for which the applicant will hold an Autism Scholars Award, if successful.

The applicant must ask each assessor to transmit the appraisal electronically. It should not be sent to the applicant, but directly to the Dean of Graduate Studies (or as prescribed by the university) at the sponsoring university (i.e., the university at which the applicant will be a graduate student during the period of study supported by the award if the application is successful). The deadline for receipt of the appraisals by the Dean is December 1, 2023. By the same date, the applicant must submit the remaining parts of the application package electronically to the Dean. Applicants can only apply through one sponsoring university.

It is the sponsoring Dean's responsibility to submit the complete application package, which should be sent electronically to ExecDirectorQA@oucqa.ca by January 31, 2024. The sponsoring Dean is also required to certify, in writing, the applicant's eligibility, and to indicate which term of their master's or doctoral program the applicant will be in at the commencement of the award.

Any sponsoring university may submit no more than two applications per award level (master's and doctoral), to a maximum of four applications in all. It is therefore expected that sponsoring universities will prescreen applicants, paying particular attention to the criteria for selection described below.

Selection Process

Members of the Selection Committee are nominated by the Deans of Graduate Studies in Ontario's universities, and selected by the Ontario Council on Graduate Studies. The Selection Committee assesses applicants for Autism Scholars Awards on their talent, the excellence of their work, the vision that they bring to their endeavours, and the impact that the committee expects to result from the applicant's work, as indicated by:

- The program of study and research and its potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge about autism;
- Past academic results, demonstrated by transcripts, awards and distinctions;
- Relevant professional and academic experience, including research training, as evidenced by papers presented at conferences and the candidate's publication record;
- Written letters of appraisal; and
- Appropriateness of the choice of institution and supervising investigator.

Enquiries and Applications

If you wish to enquire about any aspect of the Autism Scholars Awards, send an email to ExecDirectorQA@oucqa.ca, or call 416-979-2165, extension 235. To submit applications, Deans of Graduate Studies should email them to ExecDirectorQA@oucqa.ca.

Note: In our experience, most questions can be answered by reading the announcement; we do not provide advice on improving an application, or provide feedback on an application.