

Ontario Women's Health Scholars Awards, 2025-26

The Ontario Women's Health Scholars Awards Program was established with the support of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to ensure that Ontario attracts and retains pre-eminent scholars studying women's health. For the academic year 2025-26, the program offers up to:

- two one-year awards of \$25,000 (plus a research allowance of \$1,000) at the master's level;
- three renewable one-year awards of \$35,000 (plus a research allowance of \$2,000) at the doctoral level; and
- two one-year awards of \$50,000 (plus a research allowance of \$5,000) at the postdoctoral level.

Anyone wishing to submit an application for an Ontario Women's Health Scholars Award must meet their University's submission deadline of December 2, 2024.

Please note that this announcement relates only to new awards. For information on renewal of an existing award, go to <http://cou.ca/about/awards/ontario-womens-health-scholars/>. Note that renewals are competitive and also based upon available funding.

Program Goals

The Ontario Women's Health 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 about women's health and its translation into improved health for women, more effective health services and products for women, and a strengthened health care system.

This community will:

- promote, assist and undertake interdisciplinary, integrative women's health research relating to such areas as bio-medical research, clinical research and research respecting health systems, women's health services, the health of populations, societal and cultural dimensions of women's health, and environmental influences on women's health;
- create a robust women's health 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 women's health in Ontario and the world;
- address emerging women's health opportunities, threats and challenges, and accelerate the discovery of cures and treatments and improvements to women's health care, prevention, and wellness strategies;

- promote the dissemination of knowledge about women’s health and the application of women’s health research to improve the health of women in Ontario;
- build the capacity of the Ontario women’s health research community through the development of scholars and the provision of sustained support for scientific careers in women’s health research; and
- exercise leadership within the Ontario research community and foster collaboration with individuals and organizations in Ontario that have an interest in women’s health or women’s health research.

Award Eligibility and Conditions

- To be eligible for an Ontario Women’s Health Scholars award, an applicant must be a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada at the time of the application deadline (January 31, 2025).
- To be eligible for a master’s award, an applicant must be registered as a full-time student in a master’s program at an Ontario university at the beginning of the award period (i.e., fall 2025), and must 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.
- To be eligible for a doctoral award, an applicant must be registered as a full-time student in a doctoral program at an Ontario university at the beginning of the award period (i.e., fall 2025) and must remain registered as a full-time student throughout the term of the award; a doctoral student remains eligible until the end of the 15th term of full-time study.
- To be eligible for a postdoctoral award, an applicant must be engaged in full-time research at an Ontario university at the time of taking up the award (i.e., September 1, 2025), and must have completed all requirements for the doctoral degree by May 31, 2025 and normally no earlier than January 31, 2022). In cases where an applicant completed all requirements for the doctoral degree before this date, an explanation of extenuating circumstances (e.g., childrearing responsibilities) must accompany the application.
- During the year an Ontario Women’s Health Scholars Award is held, the recipient is precluded from holding any other award that offers financial support of more than \$30,000 for that same year (subject to the university’s own policies).
- Any publication of any kind, written or oral, related to the research undertaken by a recipient during the term of an Ontario Women’s Scholars Award shall acknowledge the support of the work from the Ontario Ministry of Health and Ministry of Long-Term Care with the following notation:

The Ontario Women’s Health Scholars Award is funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Ministry of Long-Term Care

This acknowledgement shall precede all similar acknowledgments of financial support for the work of equal or lesser amounts, and shall also indicate that the views expressed in the publication are the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Long-Term Care.

Funding

During the one-year period commencing September 2025:

- a master's award recipient will receive \$8,333 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.
- a doctoral award recipient will receive \$11,666 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.
- a postdoctoral award recipient will receive \$4,166 per month, for each of the 12 months in which they are engaged full-time in postdoctoral research in an Ontario university.

In all cases, payments will be made by the university through its customary procedures and on its customary schedule (typically equal monthly payments during the term); the accountable research allowance, to cover costs directly related to the research, including research equipment, materials and supplies, will also be paid by the university through its customary procedures.

Application Process

Application forms are available at <http://cou.ca/about/awards/ontario-womens-health-scholars/>, or from the 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 or postdoctoral study and any progress already made in this research, 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.) .

An application for a master's or a doctoral award must also include

- 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 of appraisal of the applicant from two assessors.

An application for a postdoctoral award must also include

- a brief summary of the doctoral thesis of no more than 300 words;
- confidential letters of appraisal of the applicant from four assessors, signed and on letterhead, of whom two
 - must not have been associated with the applicant as a supervisor, a member of the applicant's supervisory committee, or a co-author; and

- are, if at all possible, not at the university at which the applicant was a doctoral student.

The letters of appraisal of an applicant for any award (master's, doctoral or postdoctoral) should focus on an evaluation of the applicant's research to date, and on the research the applicant proposes to undertake during the period of the award, paying particular attention to the criteria for selection described below. Assessors should also provide a short description of the relationship, if any, with the applicant.

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 or postdoctoral fellow 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 2, 2024. 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, 2025. The sponsoring Dean is also required to certify, in writing, the applicant's eligibility, and to indicate, for any applicant for a master's or doctoral award, which term of their program the applicant will be in at the commencement of the award. Applicants can only apply through one sponsoring university.

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 Ontario Women's Health Scholars Awards at the master's and doctoral level 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 women's health;
- 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 applicant's publication record;
- Written letters of appraisal; and
- The appropriateness of the choice of institution and supervising investigator.

The Selection Committee assesses applicants for Ontario Women's Health Scholars Awards at the postdoctoral level on their talent, the excellence of their work, the vision they bring to their endeavors, and the impact that they foresee resulting from their work, as indicated by:

- The program of study and research and its potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge about women's health;

- The degree of originality and expected contribution to the advancement of knowledge about women's health;
- Significance of the research for women's health, understood to encompass scholarly or intellectual significance as well as social and cultural significance;
- The suitability of theoretical perspectives;
- The appropriateness and expected effectiveness of the research strategies or methodologies;
- The suitability and expected effectiveness of plans to communicate research results both within, and, as appropriate, beyond, the academic community;
- Where appropriate, the nature and extent of research training;
- Written letters of appraisal; and
- The appropriateness of the choice of institution and supervising investigator.

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

Enquiries and Applications

If you wish to enquire about any aspect of the Ontario Women's Health 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 applicant questions can be answered by reading the announcement; we do not provide advice on improving an application, or provide feedback on an application.