REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Issued By
Parkinson Canada

GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD
(2026 Cycle)

Release Date:	Sept. 2, 2025
Application Deadline (online submission):	November 3, 2025 (5:00 PM EST)
Application Notice of Decision:	March 2026
Funding Start Date:	July 1, 2026
Duration of Award:	2 years

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Important Changes to the 2026 Competition

1. **Guidance on the use of artificial intelligence**: A new guidance on the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools has been developed for applicants and for grant reviewers (see the relevant section below for more information).
2. **Research Priority Area: Women with Parkinson's - health and well-being:** Parkinson Canada has earmarked $100,000 of the research competition budget to research projects with a focus on women's health and well-being in Parkinson's. More details are provided below.

BACKGROUND

Parkinson Canada is pleased to offer its graduate student award program (the "Program") as a strategic initiative to encourage promising young scientists to enter the field of Parkinson's research and to invest in research training that offers promise for future work in the area of Parkinson's disease. Parkinson Canada wishes to encourage continued growth and revitalization in the fields of Parkinson's research in Canada by supporting talented young scientists and providing students with an opportunity to enter into the area of Parkinson's research during the early stages of their training. Parkinson Canada intends to provide awards in the amount of up to $20,000 per year over a two-year term, to outstanding applicants who meet the eligibility criteria of the Program and who have been approved by its Trainee Award Committee (the "Trainee Committee"). As incentive and recognition for the award, it is encouraged that supervisors will also contribute to the award. Funds awarded under the Program are to be used to cover salaries for research training in Parkinson's-related areas.

Through this initiative, Parkinson Canada invites studentship applications ("Applications") from applicants committed to conducting research in areas relevant to the cure, cause, prevention, improved treatment and/or understanding of Parkinson's disease, related disorders including: Multiple System Atrophy (MSA), Progressive Supranuclear Palsy (PSP) and other Parkinson's conditions. Parkinson Canada encourages applications from the fields of biomedicine, health services and systems research, population studies, and clinical research. This initiative is consistent with, and reflects, Parkinson Canada's commitment to support innovation and renewal in the national Parkinson's research field and to foster international leadership potential in this area.

The Program is available to only those students engaged in full-time research training in a graduate school. At the time of application, all candidates must be enrolled in graduate study program at the PhD level.

Note: The Graduate Student Award for the Master's level is not available.

RESEARCH THEMES OF PARKINSON CANADA

Parkinson Canada provides funding to support projects across all fields of research related to Parkinson's Disease. The following Research Themes (described below) have been developed for the purposes of internal tracking and reporting broadly on our research funding history and trends. In your application, you will be asked to choose a primary Research Theme which aligns with your project.

1) **Symptomatic Treatments:** treatments that ease outward symptoms of Parkinson's (e.g., medications for tremors).
2) **Disease Modifying Therapies:** treatments that target the underlying mechanisms of Parkinson's to interfere with disease progression (E.g. medical interventions targeting α-Synuclein aggregates).
3) **Diagnosis & Risk Factors:** understanding risk factors and predictors of Parkinson's for earlier diagnosis and intervention (e.g. biomarkers, genetic studies, etc.).
4) **Causes of Parkinson's:** understanding the physiological processes that lead to Parkinson's and its symptoms (ex. alpha-synuclein aggregation, mitochondrial dysfunction, etc.).

5) **Living Well with Parkinson's:** interventions, technologies, and programs to improve the quality of life (QoL) for people affected by Parkinson's and studies to understand barriers to better QoL (E.g. diet and exercise interventions).

FUNDS AVAILABLE

The Program offers awards for the support of projects with budgets of up to $20,000 per year over a two-year term to exceptional applicants who have been approved for funding by the Trainee Committee. Funds cannot be used to cover tuition costs. As incentive and recognition for the award, it is encouraged that supervisors will also contribute to the award.

RESEARCH PRIORITY AREA – WOMEN WITH PARKINSON'S: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Parkinson Canada is prioritizing research with a focus on **the health and well-being of women with Parkinson's**. This focus recognizes that women are uniquely impacted by Parkinson's due to biological, social, and health care factors that remain underexplored. Eligible projects must explicitly examine issues relevant to women's health and well-being, such as hormonal influences, symptom expression and treatment response in women, health care access and bias, and psychosocial well-being. For this research priority area, $100,000 of our competition budget will be earmarked for projects that directly examine sex- and gender-related differences, challenges, and opportunities in Parkinson's. Applications that do not explicitly address a research question focused on women's health and well-being will not be considered under this funding priority.

PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

Partnership funding programs are available for this trainee award program. For more information on the available partnership programs, including funding amounts, award durations, and additional application procedures, please visit our ['Apply for Funding'](#) webpage.

ELIGIBILITY

Parkinson Canada wishes to support training excellence and development of the wide scope of Parkinson's research in Canada. Applications will be accepted from applicants who meet the eligibility criteria summarized below and who propose to continue their training or conduct research at an *"Approved Institution"* - Canadian post-secondary institutions and their affiliated institutions, including hospitals and research institutes; or other organizations, as determined by the Research and Clinical Advisory Committee of the Board of Directors of Parkinson Canada in consultation with the Trainee Committee, provided that the applicant's research or research-related activities fall within the mandate of Parkinson Canada.

- Only those students engaged in full-time research training in a graduate school are eligible for support. At the time of application, all candidates must already be **enrolled at the PhD level**.
- Applications will be accepted from Canadian citizens who propose to train at an Approved Institution located within or outside of Canada, and from international applicants proposing to train at an Approved Institution located in Canada who fulfill the criteria for a student visa.
- Those who are currently funded by a Parkinson Canada grant, award or fellowship, with outstanding reporting requirements are ineligible to apply.
- Those who have previously been funded through a Parkinson Canada Graduate Student Award, are ineligible to apply.

In the evaluation of the Application, Parkinson Canada's Trainee Committee will typically consider academic record, Aptitudes and experience, Research Project and Training environment. Applicants will be given an opportunity to describe any career interruptions.

LOCATION OF TRAINING & SUPERVISION

Under the terms of the Program, Applications will be accepted from Canadian citizens who propose to train at an Approved Institution located inside or outside of Canada, and from international applicants proposing to train at an Approved Institution located in Canada. Awards granted under the Program shall be held in trust by the Approved Institution at which the proposed supervisor of the successful applicant (an "Approved Supervisor") holds a faculty appointment.

An Approved Supervisor should be an investigator actively directing research either in the field of Parkinson's disease or working in a highly relevant discipline and must be able to provide the successful applicant with a strong training environment. Other training locations may be considered by the Trainee Committee, provided that the facility is an Approved Institution and the research or research-related activities conducted at such location falls within the mandate of Parkinson Canada.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE (EDIJ)

Parkinson Canada is committed to advancing the principles of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Justice throughout the organization. In the 2026 Research Competition, we are asking all applicants to complete a self-identification questionnaire, as a first step to better understand the demographics of our applicant pool and of our grant recipients.

We are complying with the highest standards of privacy and security to ensure that this deeply personal information is collected and stored in a secure manner. Our self-identification questionnaire closely mirrors the form used by federal funding agencies (E.g. CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC), and covers the same demographic dimensions. We are asking that all applicants to our research competition complete the questionnaire, but an applicant can choose the option "I prefer not to answer" for any question where they don't feel comfortable sharing information.

The information from these self-identification questionnaires will only be accessed and reviewed after all applications have been fully reviewed and funding recommendations are completed, to ensure that this information will not be used to make any funding decisions. This personal information will only be reviewed by 1-2 staff members who have been trained in EDIJ principles.

All collected answers will be transferred into a de-identified aggregated format for internal review of our grant programs and to identify any major gaps where we are not reaching or attracting research applicants from historically underrepresented groups. We also promise that any data that we share with the public or key stakeholders from these findings will be in this de-identified aggregated format to protect the identity of individuals who have shared their personal information with us.

GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

For Applicants: Applicants are responsible for ensuring that information included in their applications is true and accurate and that all information sources are correctly referenced. Applicants should be aware that generative AI tools may lead to the incorrect recognition of source publications. Applicants must state if and how generative AI has been used in the development of their application. In cases where generative AI has been used, the applicant must also review and confirm the accuracy of the content. Applicants should also be aware that most online AI tools retain submitted information, and that intellectual property or confidential information (including identifiable patient data) uploaded onto AI

tools may be retained and used in the future by these tools. Any potentially sensitive data should be de-identified or anonymized prior to upload.

For Grant Reviewers: The use of publicly available generative AI tools is **strictly prohibited** for grant reviewers for evaluating grant applications. This includes using translation tools such as DeepL or creating summaries using ChatGPT. Uploading application materials into generative AI tools could result in breaches of privacy and the potential loss of custody of intellectual property and confidential information.

REVIEW PROCESS

The evaluation of Applications submitted to Parkinson Canada will be completed by the Trainee Committee through a peer review process. The Scientific Reviewers on the Trainee Committee are composed of prominent neurologists, neurosurgeons, neuropathologists and neuroscientists from across Canada. The peer review process is a cornerstone of Parkinson Canada's research program and provides for the highest quality of objective adjudication.

The Trainee Committee is responsible for the evaluation of all Applications submitted to Parkinson Canada in response to this Request for Applications, to rate each of the Applications so that they may be ranked in order of priority for funding by Parkinson Canada. External reviewers will be solicited for additional expertise as needed. The Trainee Committee anticipates that it will provide each applicant whose Application to participate in the Program has been declined with written notice of such decision and where possible, a brief written critique of the substance of their Application.

In addition to our Scientific Reviewers, Parkinson Canada is proud to involve the voices of People affected by Parkinson's in the evaluation of all of our grants and awards. As a patient focused organization, we want to leverage the unique and valuable perspective of lived experience experts into our decisions on which projects will be funded. That way we can ensure that the identified needs and interests of people affected by Parkinson's are reflected in our research program. This year, our lived experience reviewers will review the Project Impact and Patient Engagement Statements and provide a score that will account for 10% of the overall application score. Their score will be based on the application's potential impact towards the lives of Canadians with Parkinson's and the applicant's efforts to engage the community of people affected by Parkinson's into the design of their project and their knowledge dissemination efforts.

This year we have established a new Advisory Group, which is composed of past lived experience reviewers. This Advisory Group will hold 2 virtual meetings in Sept.-Oct. where interested applicants will be able to meet with and get feedback from past lived experience experts on their applications as it pertains to how they design their studies to improve the experience of patient participants in clinical studies, that project outcomes are designed to maximize impact to daily lives of people with Parkinson's, and that future knowledge translation activities are done with the general Parkinson's community in mind. For more information on this opportunity please email ko.currie@parkinson.ca.

REVIEW CRITERIA

The principal consideration used to evaluate Applications is research excellence potential. A variety of additional criteria will also be considered by the Trainee Committee in the evaluation process. Parkinson Canada has designed the application form around these criteria and gives the applicant and supervisor space to provide the appropriate information relating to each of the criteria listed. Each of the criteria listed below will be considered in assigning the overall ranking of the Application, weighting them as indicated for each Application:

- **CANDIDATE – 40%**
  - Academic Record

- o Honours & Awards
- o Research Experience
- o Letters of Reference/Support
- o Publications

- **PROJECT – 40%**
  - o Project Novelty (10%)
  - o Project Feasibility (10%)
  - o Impact of Project and Relevance to Parkinson's Disease (20%)

- **SUPERVISOR/ENVIRONMENT – 20%**
  - o Supervisor's Research Track Record
  - o Training environment & opportunity to learn

In addition to the above criteria, all applications will also be reviewed with respect to the following:

- The adequacy of the proposed protection of humans, animals, or of the environment, to the extent that they may be adversely affected by the project proposed in the application. The Trainee Committee will also examine the provisions for the protection of human subjects (if any) and the safety of the research environment.

Applications are reviewed on an individual basis and as such, candidates will be evaluated on the stage of their research experience.

Where a trainee and supervisor are submitting an application to the same competition, trainees submitting their own proposal will be given priority for funding considerations.

GENERAL POLICIES

This Request for Applications made by Parkinson Canada is subject to the General Policies (the "Policies") contained in Parkinson Canada's Research Program Application Guidelines (the "Guidelines"), which the applicant shall be deemed to have accepted upon submission to Parkinson Canada of an Application to participate in the Program. Failure to comply with the Policies may result, in addition to any other remedies Parkinson Canada may have at law, in termination of the Program and exclusion of the applicant from future grant and fellowship award competitions.

A successful applicant who has received an award under the Program may not transfer the award to another institution unless exceptionally approved by the chairs of the Research Policy Committee and Trainee Committee (please see Guidelines).

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS AND TERMS OF FUNDING

All successful applicants shall comply with the reporting obligations outlined in the Guidelines. Parkinson Canada requires studentship recipients to submit Annual and Final Progress Reports. The advance of the portion of the award to be made in the second year of the term of the Program is conditional upon submission of an Annual Progress Report to Parkinson Canada in substance and form satisfactory to the Trainee Committee at the end the first year of the term of the Program.

The **Progress report** shall be submitted to research@parkinson.ca no later than **one year after the start of the award**. Progress report guidelines and instructions will be provided by Parkinson Canada in advance of the report deadline.

A **Final Report** detailing the results of the successful applicant's progress, in substance and form satisfactory to the Trainee Committee, shall be submitted to research@parkinson.ca no later than **three months after** the termination of the two-year term of the Program.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

Applications are submitted online through the Parkinson Canada online application system called SMApply. It can be accessed through the following link which is also available on the Parkinson Canada website at https://parkinsoncan.smapply.io/. **The deadline to submit applications is November 3, 2025 (5:00 pm EST).** **Applications received after this time will not be considered and will be disqualified from the competition. There will be no exceptions.**

Applications for Graduate Student Awards include the following:

> **Important note on document formatting**: When preparing your application, all application documents to be uploaded must have page margins of **1 inch minimum (2.54 cm)** and use **12-point font** (Times New Roman, Arial or Calibri). Failing to follow these instructions may negatively impact the evaluation of your application and could lead to it being withdrawn.

1. **Project Summary**: Please state in **400 words or less [**_500 words French (FR)]_ the scientific or clinical question being asked, the methods you will use to address it, and the expected outcome. *(To save space, you do not need to include basic information such as the description of Parkinson's disease)*
2. **Project Impact Statement**: Please describe your project and how it will impact the lives of Canadians affected by Parkinson's using language for a general audience (**750 words max;** _900 words FR_). This section will be scored by Lived Experience Expert Reviewers (whose score accounts for 10% of the overall application). Applicants should use the following subheadings to organize their statement:
   - **Background** – what is the current state of research for your project?
   - **Hypothesis/Research Question** – what do you hope to learn?
   - **Methodology** – what tools and techniques will be used?
   - **Impact** – how will the project outcome affect the lives of Canadians with Parkinson's and the research community (short-term and long-term)? Include estimated timelines to clinical use, describe the possible benefits to daily life or access to healthcare, and any new scientific resources that may be generated for future use.
3. **Patient Involvement Statement**: Please state in **150 words or less** (_180 words French_) how you have engaged (or plan to engage) with people affected by Parkinson's in the design of your study. This engagement strategy may include considerations for patient recruitment, requirements for participation in clinical activities, or knowledge translation activities for the project outcomes. Please note that this section will also be reviewed and scored by lived experience reviewers.
4. **Project Narrative: (2 pages max.;** _2.5 pages FR_**)** including:
   - **Background** of proposed studies and **hypothesis** to be tested.
   - **Specific aims** of the research
   - **Methods** and experimental details (Describe the **candidate's role** in the project)
   - The 2-page maximum applies only to the project narrative and does not include supporting documentation described below.
5. **Supplemental Materials (Literature references)**: A supplemental document may be uploaded to list literature references cited in the project narrative. Any information submitted in addition to this will not be forwarded with the application to the Trainee Committee for review.
6. **Biographical information** of the applicant to be provided by completing the Parkinson Canada Biographical Sketch Form (for trainees), including a summary of:
   - **Education & Degrees** - (including date of enrollment and anticipated graduation date for your PhD program).

- **Positions & Honours** – previous positions (including current), list of honours, awards, and positions on any committees.
- **Publications** - where the applicant has participated as a co-author, first-author, etc. (describe the contribution of the applicant for each publication). Includes scientific papers, book chapters, etc.
- **Other Contributions** – posters, oral presentations, commercialization activities and intellectual property.
- **Funding** – list all current, pending, and completed funding support.
- Maximum 4 pages

7. **Academic Transcripts:**
   - An up-to-date original or certified copy of transcript(s) of the applicant's academic record must be included. Transcripts must be issued by the Registrar's Office, scanned and uploaded. Transcripts printed from the candidate's personal university account are not considered to be official. Copies may be certified by the proposed supervisor, department head, or notary public. Foreign transcripts **MUST** be accompanied by a certified English or French interpretation and a clear explanation of the grading system.
   - International candidates are encouraged to obtain official conversions of their grades to GPA by their institute.

8. **Three (3) letters of reference/support**:
   - Maximum 1 page (each)
   - The supervisor's statement of support can be used as one letter.
   - Letters of reference should highlight the applicant's strengths as they relate to suitability/experience in research (e.g. originality, technical ability, demonstrated skills, judgment, critical skills etc.).
   - For international candidates, sponsors are encouraged to comment on the grades and/or class ranking of the candidate within the content of their letters.

9. **Signature of the supervisor** (and of an authorized signing official of the applicant's host institution.

10. **Supervisor Support Materials:**
The applicant should arrange for his or her proposed supervisor to prepare the following information:

   a. **Letter of support** from supervisor (max 1 page).
   b. **Training environment form:** using the template document provided, the supervisor will describe the proposed training program for the applicant. This will include: responsibilities and time allocation for the applicant; past supervisory experiences; the training environment and the collaborative milieu, and the teaching to be provided to the applicant.
   c. **Supervisor's biographical information**: using the Parkinson Canada biographical sketch form (for Principal Investigators). Maximum length is 4 pages.

11. **EDIJ Self-Identification Questionnaire**: All applicants are required to complete a self-identification questionnaire on SMApply (under the EDIJ Self-Identification Questionnaire Program). The purpose of this questionnaire is for Parkinson Canada to better understand the demographics of our applicant pool and of our grant recipients. The applicant may choose the option "I prefer not to answer" for any question where they do not feel comfortable sharing personal information. The answers provided will have no bearing on any funding decisions and will only be used for internal evaluation of our funding programs. All answers from the questionnaires will be migrated into a de-identified aggregated format so that no responses can be tracked back to any one individual, and all responses will be deleted from SMApply before Aug. 31, 2026.

Applications may be submitted in either English or French. Best efforts will be made to assign French-speaking reviewers with appropriate research expertise for any applications that are submitted in French. In accordance with CIHR guidelines and evidence that documents written in French require more space than similar documents written in English, we will grant longer page/word allowances for applications written fully in French. French-speaking applicants may also ask to have any application guides and materials translated into French. For more information please contact research@parkinson.ca.

All applications must be submitted via our online application system (SMApply – https://parkinsoncan.smapply.io/). Please retain copies of all application documents in case there are any issues accessing application files. Incomplete applications or applications received later than **November 3, 2025 (5:00 pm EST)** will not be considered **under any circumstances. Any applications in violation of these guidelines are subject to disqualification at the discretion of the Trainee Committee.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE REFER TO:

The Parkinson Canada 'Apply for Funding' webpage, or contact Ko Currie (*Research Funding and Partnerships Manager*), ko.currie@parkinson.ca.