

## **Frequently Asked Questions Canada Excellence Research Chairs (CERC)**

### **What is the Canada Excellence Research Chairs (CERC) Program?**

The Canada Excellence Research Chairs (CERC) program is a new program that will strengthen Canada's ability to attract the world's top researchers and develop ambitious research programs in the four priority research areas noted in the Government's Science and Technology (S&T) strategy: environmental sciences and technologies, natural resources and energy, health and related life sciences and information and communication technologies.

The CERC program will attract Canadian and international researchers of the highest calibre who can positively contribute to Canada's global competitiveness and future prosperity. The program dedicates \$10 million over seven years to each chairholder and their research team to support the pursuit of excellence in research.

### **How is the Canada Excellence Research Chairs program different from the Canada Research Chairs program?**

The CERC program is a distinct program that targets the very top tier of world-class researchers in the four priority areas outlined in the S & T strategy. The Canada Research Chairs (CRC) program, created in 2000, supports researchers in all disciplines and is linked to the strategic research priorities of individual universities. The CERC program is intended to go further than the CRC program, by encouraging the principle of world-class excellence at Canada's post-secondary institutions as per the priorities in the S & T Strategy, which have been deemed to be of economic importance to Canada.

### **How is the Canada Excellence Research Chairs program beneficial to Canada?**

The CERC program will bring many important benefits to Canada's universities and to all Canadians. The research conducted by the global leaders who receive a Chair will spur innovation and the advancement of knowledge in this country. Researchers from around the world will come to Canada and forge strong international partnerships in research and business. Our university researchers and university students will benefit from interaction with these world-class researchers.

### **Who is responsible for delivering the Canada Excellence Research Chairs program?**

Canada's three research granting council's (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Natural Science and Engineering Council (NSERC), and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR)) under the direction of SSHRC will provide all the guidance, support and tools needed to administer and promote the CERC program. The chairholders will fall under the four priority areas in the Government's Science and Technology (S&T) strategy: environmental sciences and technologies, natural resources and energy, health and related life sciences, and information and communication technologies, as determined by the Science, Technology and Innovation Council (STIC).

### **Does the Canada Excellence Research Chairs program help to position Canada globally as leader in research and higher learning?**

Yes. The CERC program confirms Canada's standing as a global centre of excellence in research and higher learning. The \$1.4 million annual award paid to the chairholders for seven years will allow researchers to build the teams and acquire the tools they need to conduct world-class research.

### **How does the Canada Excellence Research Chairs program fit in with government priorities?**

The Government of Canada is dedicated to ensuring our future success by implementing its new Science & Technology strategy and investing in building research capacity in priority areas. The

Canada Excellence Research Chairs program is one of the ways the Government is delivering on this commitment. Introduced in budget 2008, this program strengthens Canada's ability to attract the world's top researchers and develop ambitious research programs in the four priority research areas noted in the S&T research strategy: environmental sciences and technologies, natural resources and energy, health and related life sciences and information and communication technologies. This program will encourage partnerships, promote excellence, and help brand Canada as a leader in research. Retaining the best minds in Canada is a government priority.

#### **Why would researchers want to undertake their research in Canada?**

Canada has a world-class research infrastructure that includes 92 universities, located from coast-to-coast-to-coast. Moreover, Canada has made a substantial investment in research and innovation over the last decade which means researchers will be working in a country that appreciates the social and economic value of research excellence. Canada is also a beautiful, friendly, multi-lingual, tolerant society.

#### **What is the selection process for Canada Excellence Research Chairs?**

CERCs will be awarded through a two-stage competitive process. In Phase I, universities will compete for the opportunity to establish Chairs in priority research areas; in Phase II, a short-list of universities will recruit world-class researchers and compete for the 20 Chairs that will be funded under the program.

The Canada Research Chairs Secretariat will arrange the international peer review of university proposals for CERC Chairs and will provide the results of these reviews to a prestigious and distinguished Selection Board.

For a detailed description of the selection process, please visit [www.cerc.gc.ca](http://www.cerc.gc.ca).

#### **What is the role of the Selection Board?**

A prestigious and distinguished arms-length Selection Board, comprised of world renowned international and Canadian experts, will recommend to a tri-agency Steering Committee the universities best suited to host the CERCs, as well as the individuals most qualified to be chairholders.

#### **Who is on the Selection Board?**

##### **Chair**

Derek Burney, Senior Strategic Advisor, Ogilvy Renault LLP

##### **Vice Chair**

Robert Prichard, President and Chief Executive Officer, Torstar Corporation

##### **Board Members**

Thomas Kierans, Vice President and Chair, SSHRC Council

James Edwards, Vice-President and Chair, NSERC Council

H. Arnold Steinberg, Vice-Chair, CIHR Council

Richard Dicerni, Deputy Minister, Industry Canada

Additional Board members will be appointed in the Fall of 2008 and will include international researchers from a variety of disciplines.

#### **What is the evaluation process for Canada Excellence Research Chairs?**

The Research Chairs will be identified through a highly competitive two-stage process:

**Phase I** - universities will compete for the opportunity to establish Chairs by submitting documentation that addresses the evaluation criteria described below.

Each eligible institution will be provided with a target number of applications it may submit; the maximum number of allowable applications will be communicated to universities in September 2008. Up to 40 applications will be invited to proceed to Phase II of the competition.

**Phase II** - universities will be invited to recruit world-class researchers and to compete for up to 20 Chairs by demonstrating the world-class excellence of the nominee and of his/her proposed research in the priority areas identified.

For a detailed description of the evaluation process, please visit [www.cerc.gc.ca](http://www.cerc.gc.ca).

#### **What are the priority research areas for Canada Excellence Research Chairs?**

All Chairs will be awarded in the four research priority areas outlined in the government's S&T strategy. Proposals that address one or more of the following sub-priority areas will receive higher ranking in the assessment and selection process:

- ◆ **Environmental sciences and technologies**
  - Water (health, energy, security)
  - Cleaner methods of extracting, processing and utilizing hydrocarbon fuels, including reduced consumption of these fuels
  
- ◆ **Natural resources and energy**
  - Energy production in the oil sands
  - Arctic (resource production, climate change adaptation, monitoring)
  - Biofuels, fuel cells and nuclear energy
  
- ◆ **Health and related life sciences and technologies**
  - Regenerative medicine
  - Neuroscience
  - Health in an aging population
  - Biomedical engineering and medical technologies
  
- ◆ **Information and communications technologies**
  - New media, animation and games
  - Wireless networks and services
  - Broadband networks
  - Telecom equipment

#### **What are the evaluation criteria for Canada Excellence Research Chairs?**

The program is based exclusively on excellence and submissions will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. The institution's research strengths in the proposed field, assessed against global standards of excellence;
2. The promise of the proposed field of research for the chairholder, measured in the context of leading global research in the proposed field;
3. The likelihood that the work associated with the proposed chairholder will be recognized as globally relevant and will advance the frontiers of research in the field globally;
4. The extent to which the proposal fits in one or more of the priority and sub-priorities areas identified;
5. The ability of the university to sustain the research advantage created by the proposed chairholder after the seven year term of the chairholder expires;
6. The ability of the institution to leverage additional resources; and
7. The potential to apply the research results from the chairholder to advance public policy and/or the potential to commercialize research discoveries from the chairholder

Universities invited to participate in Phase II will recruit world-class researchers and nominate them to become CERC chairholders. Applications will be assessed based on the following criteria:

1. Quality of the Nominee and of the Proposed Program of Research

The selection will be based on the highest standards of research excellence. Chair nominees should:

- be outstanding and innovative researchers whose accomplishments have made groundbreaking impacts in their fields;
- be recognized internationally as a world leader in their field;
- have superior records of attracting and supervising graduate students and postdoctoral fellows (taking into account practices in the relevant field or discipline) and, as Chairholders, be expected to attract excellent trainees, students and future researchers;
- be proposing an excellent, original, innovative research program of the highest quality.

2. Integration with the University's Proposal in Phase I

The university is required to demonstrate the strong match between the nominee and its application in Phase I to establish a Chair at the institution. When deciding whether to recommend a given nominee for the short-list in Phase II, reviewers consider institutional environment, institutional commitment, and fit with the Phase I application.

For a detailed description of the evaluation criteria, please visit [www.cerc.gc.ca](http://www.cerc.gc.ca).

**What is this year's submission deadline for Canada Excellence Research Chairs?**

Phase I Application Deadline: November 28, 2008 for a decision to be made in April 2009.

Phase II Nominations Deadline: July 6, 2009 for a decision to be made on November, 2009.

For the most recent news on submission deadlines, please visit [www.cerc.gc.ca](http://www.cerc.gc.ca).