



“Psychology Works” Fact Sheet: Guidance for Psychology Students as Relates to COVID-19

As the COVID-19 situation evolves around the globe, students’ day-to-day lives are being increasingly disrupted: courses have been moved from in-person settings to online formats; visits with friends and families have been prohibited; access to resources such as the on-campus library, student counselling services, or other campus spaces has been lost; some students have had to leave, quickly in some cases, their student residence; in-person conferences have been cancelled; competition and application deadlines have been delayed; internship, residency and co-op/practicum placements have been cancelled or altered; and for some, research projects have been interrupted.

This document provides an overview of Canada’s COVID-related student funding support, as well as resources to help psychology students deal with the impact of the coronavirus on their research, training, and academic work.

More detailed information specific to Canada’s research funding support and information from the funders can be found in the CPA’s Fact Sheet on Research Funding Information as Relates to COVID-19 (<https://cpa.ca/corona-virus/cpa-covid-19-resources/>).

Information from Canada’s Tri-Funding Agencies

Canada’s tri-funding agencies (Canadian Institutes for Health Research – CIHR; Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada – SSHRC; Natural Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada - NSERC) are closely monitoring the evolution and impact of COVID-19 and are taking necessary actions to support its grant, scholarship, fellowship, and awards recipients; support its applicants and peer reviewers; protect their staff; and modify their operations. Below are links to messages from the tri-agencies.

- Tri-Agency Message on COVID-19 (<https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/51915.html>)
- Reimbursing non-refundable travel fees due to disruptions caused by COVID-19 (<https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/51898.html>) and (https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Media-Media/ProgramNewsDetails-NouvellesDesProgrammesDetails_eng.asp?ID=1133)
- Funding ongoing and incremental costs of research activities during the COVID-19 pandemic (https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/InterAgency-Interorganismes/TAFA-AFTO/guide-guide_eng.asp)
- Tri-agency College and Community Innovation Program – Applied Research Rapid Response to COVID-19 (https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Innovate-Innover/CCI-COVID_eng.asp)
- NSERC and SSHRC Grant Extensions. Academic institutions can immediately approve extension requests up to 12 months for Agency grants with an end date between February 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021, inclusive.





Each agency is also regularly updating their websites with messages from the presidents and updated information for the research community.

- **CIHR:** <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/51917.html>
- **SSHRC:** https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/news_room-salle_de_presse/covid-19-eng.aspx
- **NSERC:** https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Media-Media/NewsRelease-CommuniqueDePresse_eng.asp?ID=1139

Student Support; Awards, Scholarship and Fellowship Competition Deadlines

The Government of Canada has announced significant emergency support for students and recent graduate impacted by COVID – expanded student and youth programming, enhanced student financial assistance for Fall 2020, Canada Emergency Student Benefit, Canada Student Service Grant, and International Students. Information on this support can be found here:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2020/04/support-for-students-and-recent-graduates-impacted-by-covid-19.html>

In early May, the tri-agencies announced that training award recipients (master's, doctoral, and postdoctoral) may defer the start date of their award, or request an unpaid interruption of up to four-months for reasons related to the COVID-19 situation (https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/42405.html#05_04_2020). For master's and doctoral award holders, this can be adjusted to align with the next available start date (May 1, 2020; September 1, 2020; or January 1, 2021). The agencies will continue to support training award holders who, given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 situation, can only devote part-time hours to their research. They may continue to hold their awards and will be paid at the full amount. The amount will not be prorated, and the end date of the award will remain unchanged.

Visit the program webpages listed below for additional information specific to the following student award, scholarship and fellowship competitions and what impact COVID may or may not be having on their deadlines:

- Canada Graduate Scholarships – Master's Program (https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/Pg-CS/CGSM-BESCM_eng.asp).
 - Release of results in the Research Portal was postponed from April 1st to April 15th, 2020
- Canada Graduate Scholarships – Doctoral Program (https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/Pg-CS/CGSD-BESCD_eng.asp)
- Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships (<https://vanier.gc.ca/en/home-accueil.html>)
- Banting Postdoctoral Fellowships (<https://banting.fellowships-bourses.gc.ca/en/home-accueil.html>).
 - Launch of the 2020 competition is postponed until June 1st, 2020. The application deadline is to be confirmed.
- Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplements https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/Pg-CS/CGSForeignStudy-BESCEtudeEtranger_eng.asp
- NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Award (USRA).





- The application deadline has been suspended, and NSERC will continue to accept applications past May 1, 2020, without penalty. The USRA program for summer 2020 will go forward, even in the event of a shortened or cancelled work term. In the event that a university remains closed in May, USRA work terms can begin when the university reopens in the summer; NSERC will be honouring the full value of the award. NSERC is exploring options should universities remain closed in the summer and encourages students and research directors to examine the possibility of working remotely.

Other Funding Sources

Students with funding from sources other than the tri-agencies (for example, provincial funding, associations, foundations, private industry, universities); in that case, check in with your funding provider to assess the impacts of COVID on your research funding and deadlines.

Studying from Home

Given the many weeks since physical distancing has been in place, and schools have transitioned to virtual learning, many students have already set up home workspace. Nonetheless, below are a few things to keep in mind when studying from home:

- **Remember to have realistic expectations** for your work and progress during a global pandemic. It is okay if you feel that you do not have the mental or emotional capacity to produce knowledge or undertake research during a global crisis.
- If possible, **set up a dedicated workspace** where you can keep study materials and have virtual classes or group chats, so that you keep your studies separate from the rest of your life. Try to remember proper ergonomics when setting up your workspace.
- Take some time to make sure you **have all necessary resources at your disposal** to effectively conduct your studies, as this could help mitigate potential stressors. For example, install any required software on your computer or order a headset and webcam for online classes. Reach out to your professor or students' union if you need support and resources.
- As much as possible, **keep your study space quiet and free from distractions**. If you have roommates, you could use headphones (ideally noise-cancelling headphones) to drown out noise. Make sure your space is inviting so you want to spend time there (you could sit by a window or add a plant or favourite trinket to your desk).
- **Contact your internet provider** for free or low-cost internet options if you do not have Wi-Fi at home and are unable to access the online resources that can help you continue your education.





Setting a schedule for school and life

- **Maintain a consistent routine:** This includes sleep-wake times, exercise, and work/school schedules. It can be easy to do schoolwork all day because it feels like there is nothing else to do. Establishing and maintaining a routine will help you maintain a sense of normalcy and keep your schoolwork and home life separate.
- **Take breaks:** It's important to take breaks to rest your eyes, your mind and your body. If it's hard for you to remember to take breaks, you could set up a timer for 90 minutes and then take a 15-minute break.
- **Check in with supervisors/professors about expectations:** Maintain good communication with your supervisors and professors. Have a clear understanding about whether moving to online classes changes expectations around assignments, exams, and other academic requirements. For example, you could ask for flexibility on timelines given your current time zone.
- **Stay connected to others:** Develop a plan to keep in touch with friends, family, and colleagues. Schedule regular phone calls or facetime chats. Tap into social media and tech platforms that allow virtual group gatherings.

Impacts on Graduate Students, Student Research, and Professional Training

Graduate students and trainees have been particularly impacted during COVID-19 due to stressors arising from financial uncertainty; pressure to graduate within a given time frame and before funding runs out; managing research and teaching responsibilities; and disruption in academic work and transition to remote learning. During these times, students would benefit from:

- Talking to one's university's research officer to understand what, if any, impacts COVID-19 will have on any student funding one may have (e.g., scholarships, bursaries, fellowships).
- Assessing if one's research can be conducted through online surveys or if one's research protocol can be moved to an online experiment.
- Talking to one's supervisor/professor(s) about working on publications, while not losing sight of the mental and emotional resources required to cope with COVID-19.

Professional Training Impacts

Some graduate students and trainees have also been particularly impacted by disruption to practicum/co-op placements, internships, and other face-to-face skill building activities. Students should talk to their department head or co-op/practicum coordinate (if applicable) about the impacts of cancelled practicum placements and co-op work terms, as well as options for extending work terms with placement providers and finding new placements.

With respect to the impact on internships, the CPA, Canadian Council of Professional Psychology Programs (CCCPP), and the Association of Canadian Psychology Regulatory Organizations (ACPRO) issued





a joint statement recognizing the impact COVID-19 is having on the operation of professional psychology training programmes and on their faculty, staff and students (<https://cpa.ca/cpa-ccppp-acpro-statements-regarding-covid-19/>). It is important to understand that decisions about training will be made at several levels (<https://ccppp.wildapricot.org/news>). The first level is between the internship program and the university, as they jointly determine if the requirements for the internship have been met. The second level of decision making lies with the regulators, who will make independent decisions on a case-by-case basis about whether a candidate for licensure/registration/certification has met the provincial standards that are outlined in legislation and bylaws.

Conference Cancellations

The pandemic has also resulted in the cancellation of many in-person conference and knowledge mobilization activities, which is also impacting students and trainees in terms of lost opportunities to present at or attend conferences. Until such time that in-person conferences can resume, students should seek opportunities to present and/or participate in virtual conferences. The CPA’s national convention will be offered virtually in July and August 2020; check the CPA’s website regularly for more information on how to participate and/or present at the virtual event.

If you had been accepted to submit at a conference and the conference was cancelled, contact the conference organizers regarding their policy about creating an abstract book or conference proceedings, noting the conference acceptance on your CV, and obtaining the word on how to do so. The CPA will be preparing an abstract book of all accepted presentations; below is information on how to cite your presentation if you were accepted to present at the CPA’s 2020 National Convention in May 2020.

Surname, Initial. & Surname, Initial. (2020, May 27-30). Title of accepted submission. [specify type of presentation – poster, Gimme-5, 12-minute talk, etc.]. 81st Canadian Psychological Association Annual National Convention, Montréal, Quebec, Canada. (insert link to Abstract Book PDF when available) (Conference cancelled due to COVID-19)

Alternative Learning Opportunities

- Register for online continuing education offerings, from the CPA as your national association or from one of the provincial psychological associations, many of which are presently free or significantly discounted.
- Explore or deepen your learning of new research methods or statistical applications by downloading freely available software.
- Learn more about Open Science (<https://cos.io/>) and the preregistration (<https://cos.io/prereg/>) process.
- Source publishers that are providing free access to books and journals online.
- Take in the APA webinar (<https://www.apa.org/education/coping-webinar-students>) in which psychologists Lynn Bufka and Vaile Wright discuss ways for undergraduate and graduate students to navigate the shifting COVID-19 crisis.





Self-Care and Student Wellness

During this time, it is important to take care of yourself and pay attention to your mental well-being.

- Review the Student Wellness and COVID-19 fact sheet (<https://cpa.ca/psychology-works-fact-sheet-student-wellness-and-covid-19/>) co-authored by the CPA and the Canadian Federation for Students collaborated
- Review the CPA's Fact Sheet, Psychological Impacts of the Coronavirus (<https://cpa.ca/psychology-works-fact-sheet-psychological-impacts-of-the-coronavirus-covid-19/>) and other fact sheets developed by the CPA specific to COVID (<https://cpa.ca/psychologyfactsheets/>)
- View a Student Section Presentation on Self-Care for Students delivered at the CPA's 2020 National Convention (https://cpa.ca/docs/File/Students/2019/Self-Care%20for%20Grad%20Student_Halifax%202019_AP_GJ_AR.pdf)
- Follow health and safety guidelines
- Take breaks from the news
- Take care of your body by eating healthy, exercising regularly, getting plenty of sleep, and not increasing your consumption of alcohol and drugs
- Take care of your mind by engaging in activities that keep your mind thoughtful and stimulated
- Connect with others whether virtually or by phone
- Call a health care provider such as a psychologist, social worker, counsellor, family physician, or psychiatrist, if symptoms of psychological distress persist beyond a couple of weeks, persist to the point where you are not able to carry out the home or work-related activities permitted by physical distancing advisories, and are accompanied by intense feelings of despair or helplessness or suicidal thoughts

Where do I go for more information?

To obtain important and up to date information about COVID-19, visit the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) website at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

Provincial, territorial, and some municipal associations of psychology often maintain referral services. For the names and coordinates of provincial and territorial associations of psychology, please visit: <https://cpa.ca/public/whatisapsychologist/PTassociations>

This fact sheet has been prepared for the Canadian Psychological Association by Dr. Lisa Votta-Bleeker, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Psychological Association.

Date: May 7, 2020

Your opinion matters! Please contact us with any questions or comments about any of the *Psychology Works* Fact Sheets: factsheets@cpa.ca





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