



OFFICE of RESEARCH

AGRI-FOOD PARTNERSHIP

Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance

Highly Qualified Personnel Scholarship Program Guide

November 2021

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HQP SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance offers the Highly Qualified Personnel Scholarship (HQP) program to support the development of skilled graduates who can meet the changing demands of the agri-food and rural sector. The health of these sectors depends on a diverse talent pool of skilled, forward-thinking leaders. The Alliance is dedicated to supporting advanced skill development and learning to enhance the intellectual capacity of our citizens to solve current and future problems.

The Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance is committed to promoting social, economic, environmental, and public health benefits through its programs. Through the Alliance, HQP scholarships are awarded to support future generations of researchers, policy makers, and innovators in agri-food. Masters and PhD students undertake research that addresses OMAFRA's research priorities and learn firsthand how forward-thinking research can be mobilized to have a positive impact on the scientific community, business and industry, and civil society.

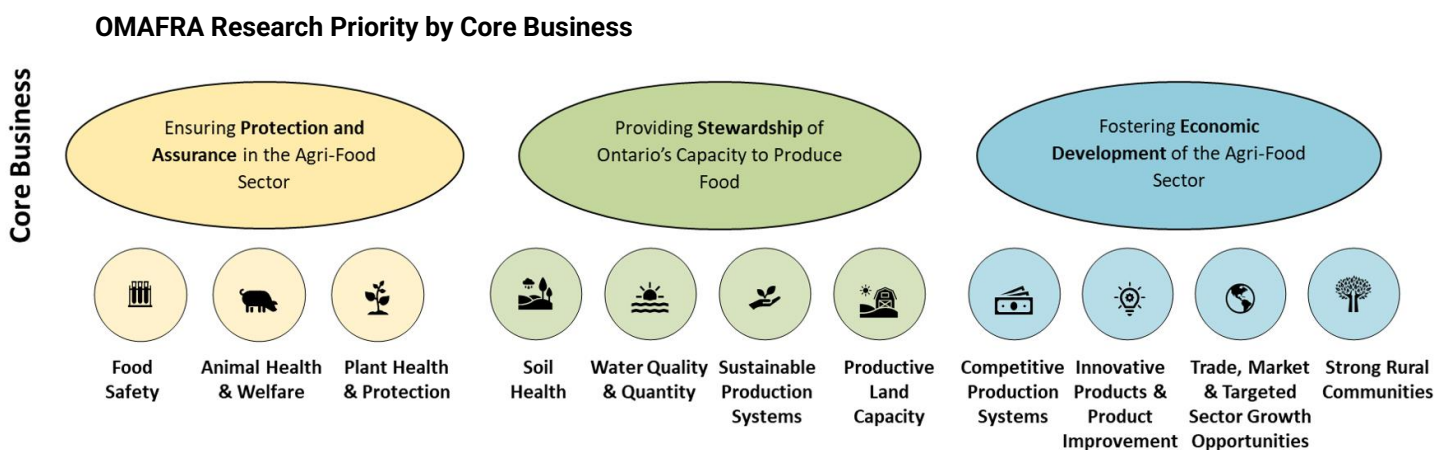
The HQP Scholarship Program is also supported by *Food from Thought*, a research program at the University of Guelph funded through the Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF).

Timelines for 2021/22 HQP Scholarship Program

- Program Launch: November 17, 2021
- Application submission deadline: January 18, 2022, at 1:00pm
- Anticipated award notification: March 2022
- Scholarships begin the subsequent semester enrolled (e.g., as early as May 1, 2022, if enrolled for the summer semester)

Research Priorities

Each year the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) undertakes a research priority setting process. Research priorities for the Alliance Research Program are aligned within the Ministry's core businesses and objectives: Protection and Assurance, Stewardship, and Economic Development as illustrated in the following image.



Each of these research priorities has a set of goals and research focus areas, in addition to five cross-cutting focus areas. Research priorities and focus areas are outlined in greater detail in the 2021-22 [OMAFRA Research Priorities](#) document. Scholarship applicants must demonstrate that their research proposal is within

scope of OMAFRA's research priorities and focus areas. However, scholarship applicants are not required to select or focus on a specific research question. Their graduate project also does not need to be funded by the Alliance.

PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY AND GUIDELINES

Applicant Eligibility

The HQP Scholarship Program provides financial support for students entering or enrolled in a University of Guelph graduate program.

All applicants must meet the following eligibility:

- Be a Canadian citizen, landed immigrant, or studying under an international visa;
- Have a **minimum GPA of A- (greater than or equal to 80%)** or equivalent in the last 10 full-time or equivalent credits of post-secondary university studies, indicated on a transcript (see below for details);
- Be entering semesters 1, 2, or 3 of a full-time Master's (thesis-based) or Doctoral program at the University of Guelph;
- Have a University of Guelph faculty advisor confirmed;
- Not be an OMAFRA employee;
- Not concurrently holding other major awards such as NSERC, SSHRC, OGS, Arrell or other major scholarship valued at \$15,000 or more per year (please see **Supplemental Funding** below for more details); and
- Have not previously held the HQP Scholarship Program award.

International students must have applied to or be enrolled in a graduate program at the University of Guelph at the time of the scholarship application. This ensures we have access to grades calculated through an official post-secondary transcript. The student must have a study visa when holding the award.

Transcript Requirement

It is the **student's responsibility to ensure they have included a transcript** (see below whether an official or unofficial transcript is required) in their HQP Program Scholarship application. If an **official transcript** is required and not supplied, the student's application will **not be eligible** for consideration of the scholarship.

An official transcript is required to be uploaded to the HQP Scholarship Program application **if you have not yet applied to graduate studies at the University of Guelph and you will be using grades from a university other than the University of Guelph to calculate eligibility for the scholarship program.**

If you do not need to provide an official transcript (based on the criteria above), an **unofficial transcript is still required to be uploaded to the HQP Scholarship Program application. International students can upload an unofficial transcript but must have already applied to the University of Guelph by the scholarship deadline.**

Supplemental Funding

Students cannot hold the HQP Scholarship and another major award such as NSERC, OGS, SSHRC, or another major award at the same time. A major award is considered a funding source that is awarded across the full program and is valued at \$15,000 or more per year. However, students can be recipients of other minor awards and scholarships (<\$15,000 per year) in addition to an HQP Scholarship. These minor awards will not reduce

the amount of funding students are eligible to receive from the HQP Program. Students may also hold Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) or Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTAs) without impacting their HQP Scholarship. If you have questions about the impact of other awards on eligibility for the HQP Scholarship Program please reach out to rescoord@uoguelph.ca.

Funding Availability and Guidelines

Funding amounts are determined by the type of graduate program and when the applicant begins the HQP Scholarship Program.

Entrance Scholarships

(Students Entering Semester One of their Graduate Degree Program)

| Program Type | Funding per Year | Total Funding | Duration |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Masters (thesis-based) | \$20,000 | \$40,000 | 6 semesters |
| Doctoral | \$25,000 | \$75,000 | 9 semesters |

Entrance Scholarships will start in Semester One of the Graduate Degree Program. Depending on the student's enrollment plans, this may be at the start of either of the 2021 Summer or Fall semesters, or the 2022 Winter semester.

In-Course Scholarships

(Students Currently in Semester One, Two or Three of their Graduate Degree Program)

| Program Type | Funding per Year | Total Funding | Duration |
|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Masters (thesis-based) | \$20,000 | \$20,000 | 3 semesters |
| Doctoral | \$25,000 | \$50,000 | 6 semesters |

In-Course Scholarships will start in the Summer semester of 2021.

Payment of Funds

The dissemination of scholarship funds will be via Student Financial Services at the University of Guelph. Funds will be transferred three times per year (at the beginning of each semester) upon confirmation of continued enrollment.

Transfer of funds for years two or three (if applicable) will be subject to satisfactory performance as demonstrated through the required Annual Progress Report completed by the student.

There is no provision for additional funding should the student not complete their degree within the allotted time.

HOW TO APPLY

The HQP Scholarship Program awards funding annually via a competitive call for applications process.

Online Application System - Research Management System (RMS)

All Alliance programming is administered in the RMS. Log in to the RMS through the [OMAFRA RMS Log In webpage](#). Please contact rescoord@uoguelph.ca if you experience any difficulties logging in.

Please register under "Universities, Colleges, Research Institutes", and register under "University of Guelph" **if you are a current UofG student**.


To open an application, select the applicable HQP Scholarship Program and click on “Determine Eligibility”. Confirm your eligibility to apply for funding to access an application.

For the best experience we suggest using the latest version of Chrome, Firefox, or Safari. Internet Explorer is no longer supported by the RMS platform provider.

HQP SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM APPLICATION

Support for Applicants

The following supports are available to assist applicants in the application process:

- This program guide;
- Instructions and tool tips (denoted by ) in the RMS application template.
- If you have questions related to the funding program, please contact Keith Warriner at x56072 or kwarrine@uoguelph.ca;
- If you experience technical difficulties or need support with the RMS application template, please contact our Research Program Coordinators at rescoord@uoguelph.ca.

HQP Scholarship Program Application Template

The HQP Scholarship Program application consists of several sections that are navigated via tabs across the top of the on-line application in the RMS. All tabs must be completed, including the faculty application section. Only the faculty advisor **can view and edit** the faculty application section. The student and faculty advisor must complete the declaration tab in order to submit. The majority of the application instructions are provided in the RMS, but some additional guidance is provided below.

A validation process will take place upon submission to ensure all mandatory fields are complete.

Research Priority Selection

Select the Research Priority and Research Focus Area that your project will address from the drop-down lists in the RMS.

Faculty Invitation Process

Inviting faculty advisors is a new process in the RMS. This process is described in the application template in the RMS. Faculty advisors must confirm their participation in the project, be registered in RMS, and complete their section by the application due date. Only the faculty advisor **can view and edit** the faculty application section. **It is the student’s responsibility to submit the application by the deadline, January 18, 2022, at 1:00pm.**

To invite your faculty advisor as a CO-Applicant to the application, select ‘Invitations’ on the left sidebar. This is the only way your faculty advisor can be associated with your application. Once your faculty advisor has accepted the e-mail invitation and is registered in the RMS, they will appear in the team table and your faculty advisor will be able to complete their portion of the application. Only one faculty advisor should be invited to the proposal if the student is co-supervised. If needed, the other supervisor can be provided with a copy of the application, using the ‘View Application’ button at the top of the application.

The faculty application section will provide information to assess the student's research and innovation potential, along with how the proposed project aligns with OMAFRA's priorities. The faculty advisor should explain how the student will benefit from holding an HQP Scholarship and how they plan to help the student achieve those benefits. Also, confirmation that the student will be provided with the resources required to undertake the project for the duration of the scholarship should be provided.

Allow your advisor enough time to complete their section of the application before the submission deadline. You cannot submit an incomplete form. Also, only one person can edit the application form at a time.

Supporting Documentation

The following documentation is required in PDF format with your application:

- Student curriculum vitae (CV) outlining any relevant experience in agri-food, research, and business sectors, and any experiences which convey leadership/entrepreneurship skills. These should include volunteer positions demonstrating leadership, past awards, experience presenting, publications, posters etc.
- **Most recent official or unofficial student transcript (see Transcript Requirement for which is required)**

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Submitted applications will be reviewed by a committee including University of Guelph and OMAFRA representatives. All reviewers are required to consent to a confidentiality agreement and make a conflict of interest declaration prior to accessing and reviewing submitted applications.

After the **eligibility requirements** have been met, applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Description of research project (by the student):** Ensure that the problem and approach to the research project are well articulated. Clearly indicate any benefits to capacity building or filling a need in for the Ontario agri-food sector.
- **Background and interest in the agri-food sector (by the student):** Clearly state all aspects of your current or past involvement and interest in the agri-food sector (include education, volunteer, and work experience).
- **Alignment with OMAFRA priority (by the faculty advisor):** The research project completed by the student should clearly address an [OMAFRA priority](#).
- **Student career goals:** Ensure that your career path is linked to the Ontario agri-food sector and clearly articulated. Describe how the HQP Scholarship Program will assist your career goals.
- **Student CV:** The CV should demonstrate your experience and interests related to the agri-food sector, research, leadership, entrepreneurship, and business innovation (this can include volunteer positions). The CV should have a professional appearance and should list any publications (peer reviewed or otherwise) and posters you have been a part of, any presentations you have completed, and any past awards that you have received.

- **Benefit to student (by the faculty advisor):** The statement should demonstrate that they understand and will encourage the career vision of the student and how this translates into a benefit for the Ontario agri-food sector and meeting the goals of the HQP program.

SCHOLARSHIP COMMITMENT

Course Requirement

Those who receive an HQP Scholarship are required to enroll in **UNIV*6050 Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Agri-Food Systems**. The course includes 70 contact hours and contributes 1.0 credit.

*Most departments have specific course requirements within their degree programs. Applicants are advised to consult with their Graduate Coordinator to determine if the UNIV*6050 course could be substituted for another required course.*

Attendance at HQP Recognition Event

During the Fall semester, a recognition event will be held to enable scholarship holders to present and interact with government, industry, and academic representatives.

Post-Graduation Employment Survey

Scholarship recipients are expected to participate in a post-graduation employment survey, used to help evaluate the impact of the HQP Scholarship Program on participants' early career development.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST AND POST AWARD PROCESSES

Scholarship Application Checklist

Attend the HQP Scholarship Program Virtual Town Hall (Thursday, November 25, 2021 from 10:00 am to 11:00 am).

Apply to the University of Guelph for graduate studies (mandatory for international students).

Develop project concept.

Develop the proposal by completing all tabs in the RMS. Ensure the proposal is complete and well-written.

Append student CV and transcript (either official or unofficial as described in the [Transcript Requirement](#) section).

Submit your HQP Scholarship Program application in the RMS by the **submission deadline (January 18, 2022 at 1:00 pm)**.

Scholarship Decision Notification and Award Phase

- Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the review and approval process via the RMS.
- Applicants must address any conditions in the offer described in the notification email through the RMS.

- Award Agreements are issued for projects once the response to conditions of funding have been addressed and approved by reviewers. Execution of Award Agreements will occur by an online 'DocuSign' process. The student (Lead Applicant) and the faculty advisor (Co-applicant) will receive notification via email that there is an Agreement to sign.

Post-Award Reporting

- Annual and Final reports are to be completed in the RMS by the HQP Scholarship recipient (the student) and endorsed by the faculty advisor.
- Annual reports are due 30 days after the anniversary of the scholarship start date and will be reviewed and approved if acceptable or revisions may be requested.
- Final reports are due 60 days following the conclusion of the graduate program/scholarship. Some of the summary fields will be published publicly.
- Reports are reviewed and approved on completeness and merit by Alliance staff.
- Please contact rescoord@uoguelph.ca if there are any changes to the start and end dates of the application after submission, or if you have any questions about the reporting process.

Ongoing receipt of the scholarship funding is dependent on satisfactory progress of the student by the faculty advisor and timely submission and approval of an Annual and Final report submitted by the HQP Scholar to the Alliance through the RMS. The Ontario Agri-Food Innovation Alliance reserves the right to withhold or withdraw funds if these requirements are not met and/or the student does not complete their graduate studies.

Transfers

Master's students receiving an HQP Scholarship who intend to transfer to a PhD program are eligible to receive funding at the PhD award level if the following conditions are met:

1. Documentation of the successful program transfer must be provided.
2. The PhD research project must clearly address an OMAFRA priority.
3. The Alliance must have funding available to accommodate the increased payment requirements.

If these conditions are met, the Alliance will grant the student one additional year (three semesters) of funding at the PhD award level and will top up the student's scholarship from the Masters to PhD award level for any remaining semesters in the Masters program. Students should contact rescoord@uoguelph.ca for assistance with requesting a transition from the Masters to the PhD HQP award.