PRE-SUBMISSION PEER REVIEW PILOT

On Operating Grant Applications for CIHR Funding

Pre-submission peer review can play an important role in enhancing the quality of grant applications. The importance and effectiveness of the pre-submission peer review process is well recognized across Canada. CIHR applications routinely undergo internal peer review at most Canadian universities prior to being forwarded to the CIHR Funding Council. It is therefore prudent and critical that CIHR applications at Lakehead University also be pre-submission peer reviewed. The function of pre-submission peer review is to provide critique to applicants for improvements of their grant applications for eventual success. Such a process reduces errors and helps to establish a level of quality, both perceived and actual, in grant applications. Pre-submission peer review ensures that the research proposal has been appraised by other scientists/researchers with appropriate knowledge. The success of the pre-submission peer review process depends on the reviewers, the quality of feed back, and most importantly the willingness of faculty (i.e., grant applicant) to participate early in the process – by having their grant applications reviewed by others and by reviewing the grant applications of colleagues.

To ensure that researchers at Lakehead University receive the benefit of the pre-submission peer review process in the competitive research funding arena, the Office of Research is putting in place a process that will enable CIHR applications for funding to be internally peer reviewed prior to submission to the CIHR funding agency. This process will be *voluntary*. The participants will receive financial support up to $5000 if their applications meet or exceed minimum criteria (i.e., a score of 3.5 or higher notified by the CIHR) and they commit to strengthening their research grant applications for resubmission in the subsequent round of CIHR funding competition. A maximum of three awards per year are presently envisioned by Lakehead University.

A grant applicant is eligible for a second pre-submission peer review award if they have undergone the internal peer review process a second time and have obtained a higher ranking from the CIHR in a subsequent competition. A grant applicant would also be eligible for a second award if they have significantly changed the direction of their research, undergone the internal review process and received from the CIHR a score of 3.5 or higher.

Time Schedule for the Pre-Submission Peer Review Process

In order to begin the pre-submission peer review process, the grant applicants would submit the application title and abstract (proposal summary) along with the names of their suggested internal faculty reviewers to the Office of Research no later than 60 days before the application deadlines (September 15 and March 1 full application deadlines) set by the CIHR. It is recommended that applicants try to find three internal peer reviewers. The applicant would be responsible for securing their reviewers and providing them with the peer review forms. A copy of these forms is available from the Office of Research.

The Office of Research recognizes that for some researchers it may be difficult to recruit suitable internal peer reviewers on campus and may need to seek out external peer reviewers. Applicants are encouraged to contact the external peer reviewers on their own, but if the need arises, the Office of Research would organize the peer review activities by contacting the external reviewers and forwarding the research proposals in

electronic format to them for review. Peer reviewers (whether internal or external) should have expertise in the area of the applicant's research proposal.

It is the intent of the Office of Research to expedite the pre-submission peer review process in a congenial and timely manner, therefore applicants are encouraged to interact with their reviewers on a regular basis to get the maximum benefit of the pre-submission peer review process and are encouraged to give serious consideration to the reviewer's comments. All internal and external peer reviews should be completed 20 days before the application deadlines set by the funding agencies. This will give applicants ample time to complete any necessary revisions and formalities.

Finalized grant applications along with the completed peer review comment forms are to be submitted to the Office of Research no later than 15 days before the CIHR deadline. The Office of Research will ensure the applications are complete and forward them to the CIHR.

Monitoring For Future Directions

The final outcomes of the pre-submission peer review process should be tracked and feedback collected from both researchers and reviewers as to their experience with the entire procedural aspect of the process. Based on the feedback information, regular and timely improvements or adjustments to the pre-submission peer review process can be implemented.

Conceptual Flow Diagram of the Pre-Submission Peer Review Process

	60 days to Funding Agency Application Deadline	55 days to Funding Agency Application Deadline	20 days to Funding Agency Application Deadline	15 days to Funding Agency Application Deadline	
Potential Grant Applicants	Applicant submits titles, abstract and suggested internal /external reviewer names to the Office of Research	Applicant contacts internal/ external reviewers and arranges for timely review	Peer Review complete & Amendments to application as suggested by reviewers complete	Applicant submits final grant application and completed peer review comment forms to Office of Research & Office of Research ensures applications are complete in all respects	**Office of Research Forward applications To the research grant funding agency**