

SSHRC  CRSH

Audit of the Adequacy, effectiveness and Efficiency of the Non-Financial Administration of the Fellowships, Scholarships and Prizes Program.

Management Action Plan Responses



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada 

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Management Action Plan Responses

Control Element	Audit Recommendation	Management Response	Responsibility	Due Date
<p>Governance</p>	<p>1. The Director of the Fellowships and Institutional Grants Division implement a formal mechanism to measure, monitor and report Fellowship award holder outcomes and/or performance information</p>	<p>Accepted. Some tracking of award holders is being undertaken by asking them to inform SSHRC of completion of degrees and future plans. However, a more comprehensive approach to performance reporting is being developed with the implementation of Council wide MRRS, which will include specific performance indicators for fellowships and prizes programs. Performance information will be collected through different data collection tools including the Statistics Canada Post Graduate survey, SSHRC's Administrative Database, and other similar tools. The Performance Measurement Framework of November 2007 identifies target dates for the development and collection of data sets on an annual basis within a timeframe of five years.</p>	<p>Director, FIG in conjunction with Director, Corporate Performance, Evaluation and Audit</p>	<p>The exact timelines for the collection of data is being determined in collaboration with CPE division as part of the MRRS implementation plan.</p>
	<p>2. The Director of the Fellowships and Institutional Grants Division implement a formal business planning mechanism that considers financial and HR requirements on an annual basis.</p>	<p>Accepted. Consideration of financial and human resources is being currently done through budget planning and annual business case development. A more systematic and formal business planning process will be implemented in 2008-2009 to align with the newly developed Integrated Corporate Management Framework and with discussion on roles and responsibilities between Programs, PPIA, Finance and CPE. The Division business planning will be integrated with Directorate and corporate business planning cycles. A business plan will be prepared annually.</p>	<p>Director, FIG (in conjunction with VP Grants and Fellowships)</p>	<p>2008-09</p>

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	3. The Director of the Fellowships and Institutional Grants Division review the current process to help ensure that sufficient supporting documentation is kept in order to substantiate applicant evaluations.	Accepted and Done. The spreadsheets resulting from competition meetings and teleconferences already substantiate the evaluation of the selection committees. We are instituting a procedure whereby both the committees Chairs and the Director of FIG sign off on all of the competition spreadsheets.	Director, FIG	IMPLEMENTED as of January 02, 2008
Risk Management	4. It is recommended that the Director of the Fellowships and Institutional Grants Division support the implementation of a risk identification and management mechanism specific to the Fellowships awards and that risk be formally considered in the monitoring of award holders.	Done An Integrated Management and Accountability Framework (RMAF) and Risk-based Audit Framework (RBAF) for SSHRC were submitted and approved by the Treasury Board in 2006. The risks for all SSHRC divisions along with prevention, risk mitigation and management strategies were identified as part of that exercise and are annually and formally documented. Two risks were identified as being relevant to the Fellowships division (the quality, credibility and viability of decision-making for the allocation of grants and fellowships and the adequacy of information and technology systems and management). For both risks the likelihood is medium, and the impact is high and moderate. Management actions have been identified for both and are being implemented. As the corporate Risk profile is updated, the Fellowship Division will support the identification and management of risks specific to the division's work.	Director, FIG	IMPLEMENTED
Communication	5. The Vice-President, Grants and Fellowships and Director, Fellowships and Institutional Grants Division	Done	Assistant Director, FIG	May 2008

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	<p>should consider enhancing the current sharing/exchange of information on lessons learned and the identification of preferred approaches to solving difficult files, on a more timely basis.</p>	<p>Competition Postmortems and Sessions on lessons learned, from 2007-2008 competitions are being held with staff.</p> <p>Identification and resolution of difficult files has been done through discussion with the Senior Staff, Assistant Director and Director. The process will be reviewed and documented to provide a more structured process to staff for earlier identification and speedier resolution of difficult files.</p> <p>Case scenarios of frequently occurring difficult cases will be prepared for learning purposes.</p>		
	<p>6. The Director of Fellowships and Institutional Grants Division formally document the competition policies and procedures and any other required policies and procedures and communicate it to all staff.</p>	<p>Accepted.</p> <p>All staff are trained (in the case of new employees) and re-trained (in the case of existing employees) before each competition. They are also provided with documents which outline the screening process for each competition. In addition, senior officers have a document which outlines the processes to be applied to the various types of difficult cases, and decisions are explained in writing on each file to the officers involved. A binder has been assembled of existing procedures. It will be supplemented with documentation of any procedures not currently included. Manuals are provided to all Committee members to outline the evaluation processes they are to undertake. They are also briefed on the process by the program officers. Such documentation and communication will be ongoing to ensure that all procedures are updated and clearly communicated. In addition, a review of the SSHRC Competition</p>	<p>Director, FIG</p>	<p>December 2009</p>

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		<p>Processes in 2006 identified areas for improvement which include recommendations to harmonize program literature at the horizontal program division level and is planned for implementation in the very near future.</p> <p>Finally, biweekly Staff meetings have been institutionalized to inform staff of latest developments.</p>		
	<p>7. The Vice-President of Grants and Fellowships and the Director of Fellowships and Institutional Grants Division review its current external communication strategy to determine its effectiveness in communication of key attribute of the program information to all stakeholders.</p>	<p>Accepted.</p> <p>An overall SSHRC Communication Strategy has been developed. Within this overall strategy, a customized FIG communication plan was prepared in conjunction with the Director Communications. It was presented to FIG staff and Director on January 22, 2008. It will be implemented by September 2008. The FIG communication plan includes, among other things, better use of SSHRC Booth at Congress and university visits. Special consideration will be given to University Office of Graduate Studies liaison officers who interact directly with students.</p> <p>Student Liaison Officers (SLOs) and Deans of Graduate Studies at each university are sent Roles and Responsibilities documents for the Doctoral and Master's programs each year. In addition, they are invited to a Regional Meeting each year. At these meetings, they are informed about new developments and may ask questions about the pre-selection processes they administer on our behalf. We will contact the SLOs each summer to be sure that they are still the SLO and to verify the name of the current Dean.</p>	<p>Director, FIG (in conjunction with Director, Communications)</p>	<p>Sept., 2008</p>

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Information Management/Information Technology	8. It is recommended that the Vice-President Grants & Fellowships continue to support the Bi-Council IM/IT strategy.	<p>Accepted. VP Grants and Fellowships is already actively engaged in the bi-Council IM/IT strategy as it relates to FIG and RDG. Activities are underway for automation of business processes.</p> <p>The Vice-President, Grants and Fellowships is co-chairing the bi-council EAMS Steering Committee that is overseeing the implementation of a new platform for e-business.</p>	Vice-President, Grants and Fellowships Branch	On going
Human Resources	9. The Director of the Fellowships and Institutional Grants Division re-assess Fellowships' recruitment and retention strategies and align these with federal best practice benchmarks. In addition SSRHC/Fellowships should consider the development and implementation of an HR strategy. This strategy should also be integrated with annual business planning (financial and HR).	<p>Accepted. Human resource and financial planning are already occurring as a part of the Council-wide planning. It will be further integrated as the Corporate Management System is operationalized.</p> <p>The Director is currently developing an integrated HR strategy using information from the HR Annual Report, Divisional HR Scorecard, and Employee Engagement Survey results in order to analyze trends related to recruitment and selection strategies, turnover issues, retirement planning, training and career development, and organizational climate. Based on these trends, recruitment and staffing activities are already under way to fill current and anticipated vacancies.</p> <p>Based on the analysis of the results of the Employee Engagement survey conducted in November 2007, the</p>	Director, FIG (in consultation with Director, Human Resources)	July 2008

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		Director/Division is currently working on an action plan to address key areas for improvement that will be integrated into a broader retention plan.		
	10. The Vice-President of Grants and Fellowships and the Director of the Fellowships and Institutional Grants Division clearly communicate to all Fellowships staff and managers the plans, priorities and other strategies in a timely manner in order to minimize the risk of misinterpreting key award management and delivery expectations.	IMPLEMENTED January 25, 2008 In addition to the existing program information sessions mentioned above, existing FIG all Staff Meetings will be used to inform staff of developments from the Tri-Council, Council, SMC, 3PMC and OMC Committee meetings.	Director, FIG	January 2008
	11. The Director of the Fellowships and Institutional Grants Division examine the possibility of aligning staff training needs with the level of experience and implement a mentoring process to further support the development of individuals currently in acting positions.	Accepted. A FIG divisional learning plan for all staff has been developed in conjunction with the HR learning consultants. Training is being provided on an on-going basis, and monitored as a part of the performance assessment cycle. Special consideration will continue to be given to mentoring and to career development needs of all staff. In addition and following the SSHRC Employee Engagement Survey, and divisional action plan was developed. It will be implemented by summer 2008.(see also Management Response under question # 6)	Director, FIG (in conjunction with Director, Human Resources)	Implementation completed Fall 2008
	12. The Director of the Fellowships and Institutional Grants Division review the current competition timelines to determine if application deadlines could be pushed further in the fall and winter semester and/or if the process could be streamlined for committee members.	Partial Agreement The issue of shifting competition timelines to later in the Fall has been examined in several occasions. Council is bound by its partnership with the Universities in managing the whole awards process (the deadlines are dependant and follow a cycle that starts at the university level given that the institutions	Director, FIG (in conjunction with VP Grants and Fellowships and FIG Directors from sister councils)	2008-2009

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		<p>participate in the pre-selection of awards processes). In addition, SSHRC tries to coordinate deadlines and timelines with NSERC and CIHR.</p> <p>The issue will be explored again as a part of the SSHRC overall Continuous Program Improvement initiative that will be launched in 2008-2009 and the Tri-Council Single Window Action Plan.</p>		

Suggested Date for Follow-up: End of Fiscal 2009/2010.