

International Policy and Strategy

Summary

SSHRC's [strategic plan for 2006-11](#) has, as a major objective, strengthening and expanding support for Canadian leadership of and participation in international research. Accordingly, the present document sets out a framework and key commitments for enhancing excellence in Canadian social sciences and humanities research and research training through international collaborative research and the internationalization of research training. Strategies for achieving this include allocating more resources to supporting international collaboration, integrating more such collaboration and training into existing programs, and developing a new suite of programs, such as the International Opportunities Fund, which target important and timely opportunities to expand Canadian contributions to and benefits from international research.

Background

In 2004, SSHRC undertook a broad range of studies as well as extensive consultations with stakeholders in universities, government, and the non-profit sector. The purpose was to explore how to renew the social sciences and humanities research enterprise in Canada. In light of changes in how knowledge gets produced and in the massive societal demand for new knowledge, the Council's new vision attaches great importance to the social, economic and cultural impacts of research. This vision has evolved into a plan that proposes broad new directions for SSHRC that emphasize building connections to maximize the impact and quality of humanities and social sciences research.

Both the consultations and commissioned studies emphasized the need for SSHRC to promote stronger connections across borders and disciplines and to adopt a formal strategy to support international research collaboration and international student mobility. As a result, a major priority of SSHRC's new five-year strategic plan is to further develop international research collaboration.

In March 2005, the Council adopted the policy framework described below.

The Impact and Importance of International Research Collaboration

While international collaboration has always been an intrinsic part of the scholarly endeavour, the forces of globalization are accelerating the scope, pace and importance of international research.

Canadian researchers collaborate internationally more than ever before. They lead and lend their expertise to research projects conducted all over the world and, in doing so, help develop a Canadian perspective on the world and bring Canadian knowledge to the world. In all fields of the social sciences and humanities, they co-publish with foreign researchers to a greater extent than the world's average. In many of these fields, co-authored publications with foreign researchers have doubled over the past twenty years (see [Larivière, Lebel & Lemelin 2004](#)).

International collaboration is essential for access to the world pool of knowledge and expertise, in particular for a medium-sized country such as Canada. International collaboration is also indispensable for bringing different research perspectives to bear on key national and global issues. In addition, for researchers to adequately address vast, complex and interconnected global issues increasingly requires that they pool resources and expertise on an international scale.

It is equally important that we “internationalize” advanced training if we wish to develop graduates and scholars who are internationally knowledgeable, culturally flexible, and who take into account, in their work, the increasingly interdependent nature of the world. To this end, universities are creating new structures and programs to promote mobility, to internationalize curricula, and to build international partnerships. They are also competing for international students in an increasingly aggressive higher education market (see [Knight 2004](#)).

Around the world, governments, postsecondary institutions and granting agencies are working to internationalize their national research efforts. Many are making significant investments in research and training which represent important opportunities for Canadian researchers and students.

SSHRC recognizes that participating in international collaboration is crucial to sustaining excellence in Canadian research and training. As the leading Canadian granting agency for the social sciences and humanities, SSHRC has a pivotal role to play in identifying and seizing opportunities to promote and position Canadian research internationally. As importantly, SSHRC is committed to advancing Canada’s leadership on, and contribution to, major policy issues in international research with counterpart organizations around the world.

The Need for an Integrated International Policy and Strategy

In a context of burgeoning opportunities and finite resources, SSHRC adopted a framework to guide the development of international research partnerships, activities and programs.

A broad range of stakeholders—including research agencies, universities, foundations, and governments—are involved in the internationalization of research and research training. This diversity of contributors and perspectives makes it important for SSHRC to coordinate its activities so that they complement and add value to existing initiatives.

Canada has a strong research and policy capacity in the social sciences and humanities. As the visibility of SSHRC and its research community increases, SSHRC receives more and more invitations from agencies and institutions abroad to play an active role in international initiatives. A framework is therefore needed in order to be able to make judicious choices.

Finally, while several SSHRC programs already support international collaboration—and with great impact—the following issues significantly limit the ability of Canadian researchers to contribute to international research:

- Current programs operate on a limited number of annual deadlines, which makes it difficult for researchers to seize new opportunities in a timely manner.
- Major collaborative projects involving many countries usually require each country to fund its own national component. The conflicting timetables and individual peer-review systems of the various agencies make implementing these projects, at best, extremely labor-intensive and, at worst, simply impossible. In the case of collaboration with researchers from developing countries, these difficulties are compounded.
- Pre-research activities such as exploratory and planning meetings—considered key in the successful setup of collaborative ventures—are not currently widespread enough to facilitate international activities.

- The available institutional and organizational support is often not sufficient to assist researchers to set up and develop international collaborative activities.
- Without cooperative arrangements between universities, organizations and funding agencies, researchers and students cannot participate in, or have access to, certain international networks and initiatives.
- SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships are tenable outside Canada but their number, value, and lack of direct built-in incentives limit the number of students who pursue some or all of their doctoral studies abroad. Canada Graduate Scholarships are higher in value, but cannot be used for international studies. SSHRC's commissioned studies and consultations both point to the need for better ways to promote the internationalization of graduate education and the mobility of graduate students.

Objective and Principles

The objective of the present policy—and of the strategy, activities and programs it promotes—is to enhance excellence in Canadian social sciences and humanities research and research training through Canadian participation and leadership in international collaborative research and the internationalization of research training.

In all international activities that it conducts or supports, SSHRC will ensure that:

- there is clear value-added for Canada's social sciences and humanities community and for Canada;
- it takes into account the diverse needs and approaches of the entire range of social sciences and humanities research, including individual and team research, disciplinary and multidisciplinary research, and collaboration with researchers in the natural and health sciences.
- Canadian social sciences and humanities research can make a clear and significant contribution to the research issues at the heart of the collaboration;
- resources are deployed effectively, building on existing mechanisms, to ensure that new collaborative activities do not duplicate or overlap unduly with activities already undertaken by Canadian universities and other organizations;
- in the case of any program supported or sponsored by the Council, research funding is allocated strictly on a competitive basis and in a transparent manner;
- its activities respond, as appropriate, to other national policies and priorities to which social sciences and humanities research can directly contribute.

Within the framework of these principles, SSHRC will also take into account the particular challenges of collaboration with researchers from developing countries.

Key Commitments

To achieve the overall objective of the policy and strategy, SSHRC will:

- provide more opportunities for new and established Canadian researchers to have access to, contribute to, and lead international collaborative activities;
- promote the contribution of Canadian social sciences and humanities research to addressing major global issues and international research agendas;
- increase opportunities for research trainees to study and conduct research in an international context, in particular through facilitating mobility.

New Mechanisms

In order to meet the policy's overall objective, fulfill the foregoing commitments, and address current gaps, SSHRC has made, or will make, investments in three new areas:

1. An **International Opportunities Fund** to allow researchers to seize emerging collaborative opportunities in a timely, flexible manner. The program will enable Canadian researchers to develop, participate in, and lead international research collaborations that support both pre-research and research activities and that offer important opportunities to advance Canadian research.
2. **Leadership in, and support for, international research collaboration on major research and research policy issues**, through the strategic research clusters programs and through international networks and workshops that develop the humanities and social sciences.
3. **Support for enhanced student mobility**. This may involve enhancements to the current Doctoral Fellowships and Canada Graduate Scholarships programs: the exact form such changes will take will depend on the results of the upcoming assessments of these programs. SSHRC will also assess and present options for additional mobility measures that would benefit Canadian research students in the social sciences and humanities.

Strengthening Existing Support for International Collaboration

In addition to new programs and new strategic interventions, SSHRC will reinforce its existing support for international collaboration through the following measures:

- Create scope for accepting foreign co-investigators into the Standard Research Grants program—provided that analyses of the introduction of similar opportunities in other SSHRC programs show positive results.
- Promote international linkages, collaboration and comparative perspectives in SSHRC's strategic and joint initiative programs by (a) using joint initiatives to co-fund international collaborative ventures; (b) promoting international collaboration in those targeted programs that lend themselves to comparative approaches; (c) strengthening support for the international dimensions of the Strategic Research Clusters Development Grants program; and by (d) designating, as a specific part of the program, clusters that are primarily international in concept and scope.
- Facilitate international collaboration in other SSHRC programs by (a) integrating, as appropriate, the international dimension in any new programs; (b) ensuring that existing programs and procedures offer no barriers to such collaboration; (c) effectively publicizing international opportunities available in these programs; (d) involving more foreign scholars as adjudicators and encouraging peer-review exchanges with key foreign counterparts.

Corporate Commitments

SSHRC commits itself to incorporating internationalization as a generic aspect of its activities and policies, and to systematically monitoring this dimension through its standing committees and Council. This includes commitments to:

- operate as a broker and conduit between Canadian and foreign researchers in the social sciences and humanities;
- represent and position Canadian social sciences and humanities research and research policy internationally through a stronger presence at key forums and in

important think tanks, as well as through effective organization-to-organization linkages;

- improve SSHRC's operational effectiveness by cooperating with other agencies at the policy and program levels;
- allocate specific program and operational resources to sustain the strategy;
- set targets and performance measures to monitor progress.

Appendix 1. SSHRC's International Strategy: Objective, Key Commitments, Mechanisms

Strategic objective	Key commitments	New Investments	Enhanced Current Platform
<p>To enhance research excellence through international collaborative research and the internationalization of research training</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To provide opportunities for new and established Canadian researchers to lead and contribute to international collaborative activities 2. To promote Canada's leadership in, and the contribution of Canadian social sciences and humanities research to, major global issues and international research agendas 3. To increase opportunities for research trainees to study and conduct research in an international context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Opportunities Fund • Emphasize the international dimensions of the clusters program or designate internationally grounded clusters as a specific part of the program • International networks and workshops linked to major research agendas and the development of the social sciences and humanities • New mobility incentives/program based on needs assessment and appropriate models that would benefit Canadian students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the possibility to integrate foreign co-investigators in the Standard Research Grants program (following impact analysis) • Use joint initiatives for international collaborative ventures • Facilitate international collaboration throughout SSHRC programs by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensuring there are no barriers to such collaboration - integrating the international dimension in new programs as appropriate - making international opportunities within mainstream program structure more visible - internationalizing peer review • Possible enhancement of SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships Program and Canada Graduate Scholarship Program (based on 2007 program evaluation results and needs assessment)