



SGS Award Announcement

To: Graduate Chairs/Directors; Graduate Coordinators; Graduate Administrators
From: Sarah Pickering, Postdoctoral Administrative Officer
CC: Joshua Barker, Dean, School of Graduate Studies and Vice-Provost, Graduate Research and Education; John Peever, Vice-Dean, Students; Laura Stathopoulos, Director, Graduate Awards and Financial Aid
Date: September 25, 2024
Re: **2025 John Charles Polanyi Prizes**

Award Overview

Applicant Deadline to Graduate Unit:	Date set by Graduate Unit
Graduate Unit Deadline to SGS:	December 6, 2024
Value/Duration:	\$20,000
Level of Study:	Postdoctoral or has Faculty appointment
Required Legal Status:	Ontario resident
Results:	November 2025 by Agency

*** Applicants are to submit their application to their graduate unit or their supervisor's affiliated graduate unit, not the Graduate Awards Office (or the Dean of Graduate Studies as the COU announcement indicates).**

Purpose

To honour the achievement of John Charles Polanyi, recipient of the 1986 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, the Ontario Government established a fund to award John Charles Polanyi Prizes annually to up to five outstanding researchers or scholars who are in the early stages of their careers and at Ontario universities. The prizes, each of which is valued at \$20,000, will be conferred in the Fall of 2025. They are available in the areas of Physics, Chemistry, Physiology or Medicine, Literature, and Economic Science, broadly defined.

The John Charles Polanyi Prize is a prestigious award, and The University of Toronto is well represented on the [list of prize winners](#). It is our aim to remain successful in this competition and we continue to encourage graduate units to nominate their strongest, eligible candidates.

Read about [previous Polanyi Prize Winners](#):

- [2023 Polanyi Prize in Chemistry, in Economics, in Medicine and in Physics](#)
- [2022 Polanyi Prize in Literature, in Economics, in Medicine and in Physics](#)
- [2021 Polanyi Prize in Physics](#)
- [2020 Polanyi Prize in Physiology/Medicine and in Physics](#)

Eligibility to Apply

To be eligible for an award, applicants must:

1. Be normally resident in Ontario;
2. **Have received their doctoral degree from any recognized university in the world on or after September 1, 2021 or, if the doctoral degree has not yet been awarded, be confident that they will have completed all degree requirements by May 31, 2025** (an applicant who was on parental leave between the time of completion of the doctorate and the time of application may have their period of eligibility extended by six months);
3. Either be planning to continue to postdoctoral studies or hold a faculty appointment at a recognized publicly assisted university in Ontario.

Important: Nominating units must ensure candidates have been or will be offered a full-time postdoctoral position or faculty appointment that will be accepted before signing the application form.

Enquiries about these criteria may be directed to ExecDirectorQA@oucqa.ca.

Nomination/Application Process

All applicants must submit to their graduate unit or their supervisor's affiliated graduate unit (not Dean of Graduate Studies) **an electronic copy** of the following documents in a single PDF package by the graduate unit deadline:

1. The completed application form - available from the [Council of Ontario Universities' \(COU\) website](#);
2. Curriculum vitae (no page restrictions), including information concerning the application. Updates to curriculum vitae will not be accepted after submission;
3. A summary of the doctoral thesis (1 page maximum, written by the applicant);
4. A brief statement of research or scholarship to be undertaken during the period of the award, prepared by the applicant (maximum of 2 pages, an additional 1 page is allowed for diagrams, bibliography, etc.);
5. A non-technical summary of the statement of research or scholarship, written by the applicant (maximum 500 words);
6. Confidential letters (on letterhead and signed) from **four** assessors (**emailed directly to the nominating unit's graduate administrator before the unit deadline, not the Graduate Awards Office (or the Dean of Graduate Studies as the COU announcement indicates)**).

Mandatory arm's length assessors:

All applications must have at least two arm's length assessors from among the four assessors. Eligible arm's length assessors include those who have read the applicant's work, seen them present at conferences, but have not actually been involved with the applicant.

Additionally, the arm's length assessors cannot be:

- a relative or close friend, or have a personal relationship with the applicant;
 - in a position to benefit from the funding of the application;
 - affiliated with the applicant's current and/or proposed institutions;
 - professionally affiliated with the applicant, as a result of (but not limited to): being their supervisor, trainee, or thesis committee member, collaborating, publishing or sharing funding with the applicant, or having plans to do so in the immediate future.
- Letters should focus on an evaluation of the applicant's research or scholarship to date, and the research or scholarship being undertaken. In particular, the assessor should explain why the research is worthy of a John Charles Polanyi Prize, paying particular attention to the selection criteria outlined below. Assessor should also provide a short description of the relationship, if any, with the applicant.
 - Assessors must read and comment on the statement of research (or writing) being submitted as part of the application.
 - **Note:** COU allows external thesis examiners act as arm's length assessors

Notes:

Applicants do not need to obtain the Dean's signature or endorsement when submitting the application. The Graduate Awards Office will provide this endorsement to those applications selected by SGS to put forth to COU.

Postdoctoral fellows located at an affiliated hospital or undergraduate-only department should apply through the graduate unit where their supervisor is appointed.

Nominees who are newly appointed faculty members located at an undergraduate-only department/unit, please contact sgs.postdoc@utoronto.ca.

Results

- End of **January 2025**: The SGS Graduate Awards Office will notify those forwarded to SGS the University competition results.
- **April 2025**: The Council of Ontario Universities (COU) will notify successful recipients confidentially of the Ontario competition results.
- **November 2025**: The Council of Ontario Universities (COU) will announce the official results to the public.

Contacts & Resources

Please direct all questions regarding the John Charles Polanyi Prizes competition or nomination process at the University of Toronto to:

Sarah Pickering
Postdoctoral Administrative Officer
sgs.postdoc@utoronto.ca
[SGS Polanyi Prizes webpage](#)

COU Inquiries

Phone: 416-979-2165, extension 235
ExecDirectorQA@oucqa.ca
[COU Polanyi Prizes webpage](#)

Note: the COU does not provide advice on improving an application or provide feedback on an application.