

# **Dalhousie University Faculty of Agriculture McCain Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowships in Sustainable Agriculture Competition Guidelines (2023-2024)**

## **PURPOSE**

The McCain Foundation's commitment to supporting sustainable agriculture at Dalhousie University will allow the Faculty of Agriculture to attract postdoctoral researchers from around the world to Atlantic Canada by offering competitive postdoctoral fellowships. These fellowships will provide stipend and research funding for talented scholars to advance their careers, and research and innovations in sustainable agriculture at the Faculty of Agriculture, Dalhousie University.

## **GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS**

The McCain Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowships in Sustainable Agriculture ("McCain Fellowship") program intends to attract recently graduated PhD scholars of superior research ability to the Faculty of Agriculture. Applicants are not required to have completed their doctorate at the time of application, but they must do so prior to taking up the fellowship. There are no restrictions regarding nationality of applicants, but successful candidates must meet all Canadian Immigration requirements. These Fellowships are intended principally to attract new scholars to Dalhousie, meaning scholars not already at Dalhousie are strongly encouraged to apply.

**You are not eligible to apply if you fulfilled your PhD requirements prior to 1 January 2021.**

Questions of eligibility for these Fellowships are decided by the Associate Dean Research, Faculty of Agriculture, to whom any inquiries may be directed (see below). See Appendix I for allowable extensions to eligibility.

A Fellow may hold other awards valued less than the McCain Fellowship. The McCain Fellowship will supplement such awards up to a maximum of \$60,000 total for all awards.

## **TENURE**

Fellowships are awarded for a term of two years. If a Fellow holds external funding for less than two years, a full McCain Fellowship will be awarded for the remainder of the two-year period. A fellowship may be taken up at any time between 1 May 2024 and 15 January 2025 but preferably by 15 September 2024.

## **EVALUATION CRITERIA**

There are two main evaluation criteria, which are given equal weight

- 1. Applicant's research excellence and leadership in the research domain (50%):**  
Demonstrated research excellence and potential based on the quality of the applicant's research contributions (research history and impact relative to career stage);

demonstrated leadership and research potential within their field as defined by the sphere of influence and impact (considering research programs, institutions, communities and society at large).

2. **Quality and relevance of the applicant's proposed research program (50%):** Potential of the proposed research, carried out with the proposed supervisor, to position the applicant to have significant impact through a research-intensive career, while advancing the research strategies and goals of the Faculty of Agriculture, Dalhousie University, and McCain Foods. Factors considered include the quality of the proposal (e.g., originality, feasibility, significance), the research environment (e.g., support, facilities, collaborations), and alignment of the proposed research with Faculty of Agriculture, Dalhousie University, and McCain research priorities (see below).

### **VALUE**

Fellowships are valued at \$60,000 per year. This amount provides for a stipend and full benefits. The fellowship does not cover research expenses, which are expected to be covered by the supervisor (see below).

### **TEACHING**

McCain Fellows may engage in teaching or other similar duties in the Faculty of Agriculture. Such activities must not exceed three hours per week of the Fellow's time. No other paid work at Dalhousie or elsewhere may be undertaken by a Fellow without the permission of the Associate Dean Research, Faculty of Agriculture.

### **DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF COMPLETED APPLICATIONS**

The deadline is **March 15 2024** for receipt of completed applications and all supporting documents. If using postal or courier service, please allow sufficient time for delivery.

### **NOTIFICATION OF RESULTS**

The results of the competition are generally announced in April, and selected Fellows are notified by email of the results by the Dean, Faculty of Agriculture. Unsuccessful candidates are also notified by email.

### **SUPERVISOR ELIGIBILITY & EXPECTATIONS**

Any Assistant, Associate, or Full Professor in the Faculty of Agriculture is eligible to be a supervisor of a McCain Fellow. A supervisor may host only one (1) Fellow at any given time. The McCain Fellowship provides only salary support for the Fellow. It is therefore expected that the supervisor will cover all research expenses related to the research undertaken by the Fellow, unless reasonable alternative arrangements have been agreed to and specified in the research proposal. The supervisor will also agree to cover expenses up to \$2000 to allow the Fellow to attend a research conference in the second year of their Fellowship. Potential supervisors are expected to engage applicants during development of their proposal and therefore communicate with applicants regarding research support and expectations.

## APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Those eligible for a Fellowship should contact a potential supervisor in the Faculty of Agriculture to discuss the feasibility of your application, your proposed research project, and the potential for support from the faculty member and Department.

**Application documents must be combined into a single PDF document** and be forwarded to the McCain Fellowship Committee, as described below. **You must adhere to formatting and page limit instructions.** The following must be included in your application:

1. **A completed application form.**
2. **CV.** Four (4) pages maximum, single spaced, 1" margins, 12 pt font Times New Roman. This should highlight with dates: education, employment (current and past), Google Scholar or Research Gate profile links, awards or honors received, publications (journal articles, book chapters), presentations (invited or otherwise), research grants or contracts received, teaching experience, supervision/mentoring experience, leadership and service.
3. **Letters from two referees.** Your proposed supervisor in the Faculty of Agriculture cannot be one of your referees. Letters of support should be a maximum of two (2) pages, and comment on the following:
  - **Academic excellence**, as demonstrated by past academic results, transcripts, awards, and distinctions.
  - **Research potential**, as demonstrated by the applicant's research history, quality and originality of past research contributions, interest in discovery, judgement and ability to think critically, independence, and overall achievement relative to their peers.
  - **The proposed research**, its potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field, likely impact, and any anticipated outcomes.
  - **Personal characteristics and interpersonal skills**, as demonstrated by the applicant's past professional and relevant extracurricular interactions, leadership experiences, and collaborations.

Referees are to address their confidential reference letters to the McCain Fellowship Committee. Emails directly from the referee's institutional email address or paper copies will be accepted. Note that the McCain Fellowship Committee reserves the right to contact referees to confirm references.

4. If you have completed your PhD, we require **confirmation of completion from your Doctoral thesis**. This should be an official document or letter from the degree granting institution, sent to the McCain Fellowship Committee, as described below. If you are completing your PhD at the time of application submission, we require an official confirmation of enrollment from your Doctoral University.

5. **Thesis completed or in progress.** One (1) page maximum, single spaced, 1" margins, 12 pt font Times New Roman. Provide the full title and summary of your doctoral thesis. If you are describing an in-progress thesis, include only work that has already been done.
6. **Proposed Research.** Two (2) pages maximum, excluding references, single spaced, 1" margins, 12 pt font Times New Roman. Provide a detailed yet concise description of your proposed research project for the period during which you are to hold the award. Be as specific as possible. Provide background information to position your proposed research within the context of the current knowledge in the field. State the significance of the proposed research to your field, and its significance in advancing sustainable agriculture. State the objectives and hypothesis and outline the experimental or theoretical approach to be taken (citing literature) and the methods and procedures to be used. In this section you should also provide a **rationale for your choice for location of tenure** in the Faculty of Agriculture. This could include a description of your proposed supervisor's expertise and why you want to work with them, the relevance of the training environment to your proposed research, the steps you have taken to communicate with the proposed supervisor, etc.

There is no restriction to the area of sustainable agriculture research Fellows may engage in, but the McCain Fellowship Committee will consider most relevant research proposals that align with strategic areas of interest to the Faculty of Agriculture and McCain Foods, and projects that could involve collaboration with McCain Foods. For this call, McCain Foods has listed the following priority areas:

- Linking soil biology and functionality to soil management using DNA profiles and artificial intelligence
- Relationships between soil biology, soil health, and potato crop nutrient profiles
- Understanding the impacts of fumigation or fumigation alternatives on non-target soil organisms in potato production, or examinations of management alternatives to transition away from fumigation in potato production
- Optimizing nitrogen input in potato production across variable soils for greenhouse gas reduction (CO<sub>2</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>O)
- Pathogen detection in potatoes during storage

The Faculty of Agriculture Research Strategic Plan can be found [here](#). The sustainability strategy and priorities for McCain Foods can be found [here](#), and sustainability reports and links to thought-leadership pieces from McCain senior leaders can be found [here](#).

7. **Applicant's statement.** One (1) page maximum, single spaced, 1" margins, 12 pt font Times New Roman. Here you may elaborate on items listed in your CV by providing additional comments on, for example:
  - **Most significant contribution.** Describe what you judge to be your most significant contribution to research and innovation. Describe its impact and significance to other researchers. For collaborative contributions, describe your role. A contribution

does not have to be, for example, a single publication. A group of closely related publications could be discussed as a single contribution.

- **Research experience.** Describe the skills and abilities you have gained through your experience. If you have relevant work experience, discuss the benefits you gained and its relevance to your proposed research.
- **Relevant activity.** Describe your professional, academic, and extracurricular activities, interactions and collaborations that best demonstrate your communication, interpersonal and leadership skills. Examples of these include: teaching, mentoring, supervising; project management; science promotion and outreach; Chairing or serving on committees; organizing conferences; work experience; etc.
- **Special Circumstances** that have affected your performance or productivity. This includes delays in disseminating research results due to health problems, family responsibilities, parental leave, disabilities, trauma and loss, Covid-19, or other applicable circumstances.

8. **Publications.** Provide PDF copies of two (2) of your most significant or relevant peer-reviewed publications. These and other publications should be listed in your CV.
9. **Letter of Support.** A letter of support must be provided by the Dalhousie faculty member with whom you wish to work. The letter should comment on: the quality of the applicant and proposed research; alignment of the proposed research with the Faculty's research strategy; the benefits that would accrue from the proposed collaboration; judgement of the candidate's published or accepted papers. The supervisor should also make clear how they plan to support the Fellow's research, and the overall quality of the research environment (e.g., facilities, technical support, etc.).

Applicants assume total responsibility for ensuring that their applications are complete and received by the deadline of **March 15 2024**. Applicants should not submit any additional documentation except when specifically requested.

## **CHECKLIST**

A complete McCain Fellowship application will consist of the following (see above for details):

### **Submitted by Applicant (in a single, combined PDF document):**

- Completed McCain Fellowship Application form
- CV
- Description of thesis completed or in progress
- Description of proposal research
- Applicant's statement
- Copy of 2 publications

### **Arranged by Applicant (submitted McCain Fellowship Committee on behalf of Applicant):**

- Official confirmation of completion or enrollment in Doctoral program
- Two confidential letters of reference
- Letter of support from proposed supervisor with whom you wish to work

### **ALL DOCUMENTS MUST BE FORWARDED TO:**

McCain Fellowship Committee  
c/o Dr. Chris Cutler  
Suite 113 Cumming Hall  
Faculty of Agriculture  
PO BOX 550  
Truro, Nova Scotia  
Canada, B2N 5E3  
[chris.cutler@dal.ca](mailto:chris.cutler@dal.ca)

**Questions can be directed to Dr. Chris Cutler, [chris.cutler@dal.ca](mailto:chris.cutler@dal.ca)**

## **APPENDIX I – Allowable Extensions to Eligibility**

The window of eligibility for PhD degree completion can be extended by a cumulative maximum of two years if the applicant had their career interrupted for one or more of the following reasons:

- parental leave
- illness
- health-related family responsibilities
- mandatory military service
- disruptions due to war, civil conflicts and/or natural disasters in the country of residence

"Career interruption" refers to a period when the applicant was not working (full-time or part-time) and when their research output was completely interrupted. Additionally, for health professionals who have engaged in post-degree non-research-related clinical training (e.g., residency), the eligibility window can be extended by the duration of this training.

No other exceptions will be allowed.

Interruptions used to extend the eligibility window for degree completion must have occurred after the fulfilment of your degree requirements and before the application submission deadline. "Fulfilled all requirements of the degree" refers to the date that the applicant completed all the steps required for obtaining their degree. Although these requirements may vary by institution and degree type, they normally include thesis defense corrections and thesis deposition. Note that convocation is not considered a degree requirement.