

## Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship: Review Guidelines for Applicant Assessment

The **Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship** seeks to award individuals who show exceptional research potential, innovative and impactful project proposals, and access to a supportive, inclusive research environment that fosters growth and collaboration. The program prioritizes candidates with strong leadership abilities and the potential to contribute meaningfully to both academia and society.

Applicants are assessed across two key criteria:

### 1. Candidate Profile and Potential – 50%

*Please focus on both quantitative and qualitative evidence of impactful work, beyond solely traditional academic metrics*

- **Originality and significance of academic achievements relative to career stage:** Assess the uniqueness of the candidate's contributions, considering the scope and novelty of their work, while recognizing their career stage and the opportunities available to them.
- **Evidence of impact:** Evaluate both the qualitative and quantitative impacts of the applicant's work, considering their overall contributions to knowledge, community, policy, interdisciplinary efforts, and real-world applications. Avoid over-reliance on bibliometric measures like journal impact factors; consider the broader contributions made through research collaboration, mentorship, public outreach, or open science.
- **Ability to communicate research results:** Assess the candidate's demonstrated ability and commitment to effectively communicate research findings and engage diverse audiences, including non-academic stakeholders, and their role in promoting open and reproducible research practices.
- **Leadership potential and community contributions:** Evaluate the candidate's demonstrated leadership in their field, including mentorship (formal or informal) of collaborators, students, relevant partners, other professionals, or community members; contributions to and creation of safe, equitable and inclusive research environments, practices and norms; and/or training in methodologies, knowledge systems, or cultural practices and approaches in the research context.

### 2. Quality of Proposed Research Program – 50%

*Please focus on innovation, feasibility, and real-world impact*

- **Clarity, merit, and feasibility of the proposed research program:** Assess the coherence and feasibility of the applicant's research proposal plan, including its alignment with their previous research and its potential to achieve significant outcomes. Consider how realistic and well-supported the project is in terms of available resources, methodologies, and timelines.
- **Originality and significance within the research field:** Evaluate the originality/innovation of the proposed research, considering its potential to contribute new knowledge, methods, or technologies. Innovation should be construed not only in terms of novelty but also in terms of how the proposed research program addresses pressing challenges and advances understanding in the field.

- **Potential impact on academia and society:** Evaluate the broader potential impact of the proposed research in academic contexts, including interdisciplinary contributions, as well as societal contexts (e.g., policy, industry, public health, environmental sustainability, etc.). If applicable, consider the alignment of the project with open research principles, reproducibility, and accessibility.
- **Alignment between the supervisor’s expertise and the proposed research program:** Evaluate how the supervisor’s expertise complements the applicant’s proposed project, ensuring there is a strong mentoring relationship that enables success in the proposed objectives.
- **Supervisor’s capacity to provide guidance and support professional growth:** Assess the supervisor’s track record of mentoring early-career researchers (e.g. undergraduates, graduate students, postdoctoral researchers) and their commitment to providing constructive feedback, fostering independence, and promoting inclusive research practices. Consider how the supervisor supports the applicant’s career development, including facilitating access to networks, and career opportunities.

In alignment with DORA, research contributions extend beyond published journal articles to include a variety of outputs such as reports, datasets, software, guidelines, and knowledge mobilization activities. Reviewers should:

- **Assess excellence and productivity broadly**, considering factors beyond publications, such as individual workstyles, collaborations, mentoring, and context-specific opportunities. Consider the available research/leadership opportunities in evaluating the applicant’s track record.
- **Evaluate the applicant’s context and personal circumstances**, including career stage, parental leave, illness, disability, or other personal factors, and adjust expectations accordingly.
- **Focus on the impact and significance of contributions** rather than the number of outputs. Avoid over-relying on journal-based metrics (e.g., Impact Factor) as proxies for quality, as they can introduce bias. The content of the research is more important than the journal in which it is published, as emphasized by DORA.

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