

PI Eligibility: Managing Changes in Academic Status - Case Studies

Case Study 1: Professor Smith resigns from McGill effective January 1, 2015, moves to University of Toronto, but keeps an adjunct status at McGill. Active Funds and Options/Solutions.

NSERC Discovery

Scope: supports research programs with long-term goals rather than a single short-term project or collection of projects. Discovery Grants give researchers the flexibility to explore the most promising avenues of research as they emerge. *This fund supports the partial salary of two students and a small amount of research supplies.*

Term: April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2018

Amount: 30K per year

Options:

- Request transfer of the grant to Toronto as of 1 Jan 2015 and if needed, subaward funds back to McGill to support students remaining at McGill that are still under PI's supervision.
- Request transfer of grant to Toronto at the beginning of the next budget grant year, i.e. April 1. If PI needs funds at Toronto in the interim, McGill can issue a subaward from 1 Jan to 31 March.
- If PI retains an eligible adjunct appointment at McGill (minimum 3-year contract), he may elect to leave the grant at McGill if the majority of the funds will be spent at McGill in support of students that are completing their degrees and remain under his supervision or to pay research-related expenses incurred at McGill (for example Core Facilities fees). Proof of 3-year adjunct appointment will be required by OSR.

*OSR and RFMS must be informed promptly of the change in status and departure. OSR will contact PI and help determine best course of action, will then inform NSERC of option selected and will work with PI, RFMS, and new institution (Toronto) to submit necessary paperwork depending on option selected and ensure smooth transition.

CIHR Operating

Scope: provides operating funds to support research proposals in all areas of health research including randomized controlled trials. *This fund supports a large amount of animal costs, and travel. There are two co-investigators (one of whom is at McGill).*

Term: April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2016

Amount: 100K per year

Options:

- Request transfer of the grant to Toronto as of 1 Jan 2015 and if needed, subaward funds back to McGill to support ongoing research activities by co-investigator.
- Request transfer of grant to Toronto at the beginning of the next budget grant year, i.e. April 1. If PI needs funds at Toronto in the interim, McGill can issue a subaward from 1 Jan to 31 March.
- As PI retains an eligible academic appointment with McGill (CIHR allows researchers to hold funding with an adjunct status as long as their primary appointment is within Canada), he may elect to keep the grant at McGill if significant expenses will continue to be incurred at McGill (given it is approaching the project period end date) and subgrant to Toronto any funds needed there.

* As there is a non-McGill co-investigator on this grant, most likely, there is an active subaward that will need to be taken into consideration. If either of the first two options are selected, the subaward will need to be terminated as of the effective McGill grant termination end date. Communication with the subaward institution is key to ensure a smooth transition for both lead PI and co-investigators; their projected expenses/unspent balance up to McGill's grant termination end date must be taken into consideration as part of the McGill closeout process.

** OSR and RFMS must be informed promptly of the change in status and departure. OSR will contact PI and help determine best course of action, will then inform CIHR of option selected and will work with PI, RFMS, new institution (Toronto) and subaward institution to submit necessary paperwork depending on option selected and ensure smooth transition of both the grant and subaward.

NanoQuebec/Prima (Quebec-based consortium)

Scope: supports the testing of the efficacy of NanoQuebec's expensive widget, the project involves three milestones, two of which have been completed. There are three other McGill-based researchers involved in the project.

Term: May 25, 2014 to December 31, 2017

Amount: 300K over three years (100K per milestone).

Options:

- As a provincial-based Sponsor, the grant cannot be relocated outside of Quebec:
 - A request could be made to retain the grant at McGill under the PI's adjunct status with appropriate and detailed justification as how the project will proceed under his direction.
 - A request could be made to name one of the co-investigators as lead PI.
- If either of these solutions are accepted, funds cannot be subgranted to Toronto unless otherwise approved by the Sponsor.
- For these type of awards, McGill is often advancing significant funds as the payments are milestone basis. It is therefore critical to contact OSR and RFMS promptly as Fund may need to be put on hold until a decision is made by Sponsor.
- In case of termination:
 - Contrary to Tri-Agency, they do not allow a "wind-down" period. Use of funds is terminated as of the termination of the PI's full-time academic appointment.
 - It is important to take into consideration the revenue received rather than the budget advanced in Banner/Minerva before any "spend-down" recommendation is made to the PI.
 - Spending should be limited to the amount of revenue received to date (per amount confirmed by RFMS Financial Administrator). Prompt communication between PIs, FSTs, RFMS and OSR is key to ensure over-spending is limited.

Notification of successful FRQNT team grant

Dr. Smith submitted a FRQ-NT team grant with 5 other co-investigators. They have just received word that the grant was successful, but have yet to receive their award notice or fund account.

Solution:

The FRQ does not allow researchers to hold funds if their primary appointment is outside of Quebec. A request must be made to transfer the PI-ship to one of the co-investigators. The Sponsor may determine that the departure of the lead PI will significantly undermine the conduct of the project and consequently, refuse the nomination of a new PI and terminate the award.

Case Study 2: Professor Smith submits resignation letter to Department on January 1 2016 with an effective termination date of April 30 2016 and moves to University of Beijing. He does not retain an academic appointment at McGill. Active Funds and Options/Solutions.

NSERC Discovery

Scope: supports research programs with long-term goals rather than a single short-term project or collection of projects. Discovery Grants give researchers the flexibility to explore the most promising avenues of research as they emerge. *This grant supports three students who are 7 months away from graduation.*

Term: April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2017

Amount: 22K per year

Solution:

In order to be eligible to hold NSERC funds, PIs must have a primary academic appointment with an eligible Canadian university (note: an adjunct appointment is not considered a primary appointment). Since the researcher is no longer in Canada, this grant must be terminated as of the PI's termination date. A phase-down period up-to six months will be considered for commitments encumbered, especially student support, prior to termination date. No new expenses or encumbrances are permitted after notification of PI's departure. NSERC could be approached to extend by a few months the wind-down to accommodate the graduation schedule of the students.

- Contact RFMS to ensure the Fund is promptly frozen to prevent any additional expenses and encumbrances.
- Contact OSR who will inform NSERC of the termination and assist in the completion and submission of required documents.

NSERC Strategic Network

Scope: funds large-scale, multi-disciplinary research projects in targeted research areas that require a network approach and that involve collaboration between academic researchers and Canadian-based organizations. *This strategic network is local, with over 5 researcher clusters across universities in Canada. It involves two Canadian mining partners.*

Term: April 1, 2014 to March 31, 2019

Amount: \$1 million per year

Solution:

Since Dr. Smith will no longer hold an eligible academic appointment in Canada, a request must be made to NSERC to transfer the grant to a Canadian co-investigator. If that individual is not a McGill faculty, the grant will be terminated and transferred to another eligible institution.

- The Fund must promptly be put on hold until a decision is made by NSERC. No new expenses can be charged or encumbered on the Fund until then.
- Given the nature of the grant, there are most likely subawards to other institutions that must be taken into consideration should the grant transfer to another institution. Communication between the investigators and research offices is key to ensuring a smooth transition.
- Given the involvement of industry partners, there is also likely the need to assess the status of, and impact to, related research contract Funds.
 - Should the NSERC grant need to be transferred to another institution, most likely amendments transferring the contracts to that institution will also be needed.
 - It is important to take into consideration the revenue received from these contracts rather than the budget advanced in Banner/Minerva before any “spend-down” recommendation is made to the PI.

*Prompt notification to OSR and RFMS is critical. OSR will contact PI and help determine best course of action, will assist with notification to NSERC, and will work and coordinate with PI, FSTs, RFMS, new institution (if grant is transferred) and subaward institution(s) the completion and submission of necessary paperwork to ensure smooth transition of the grant, the industry research contract(s) and subaward(s).

Cancer Research Society – Operating Grant

Scope: supports basic and fundamental research on all types of cancer in order to contribute to the advancement of science aimed at preventing, detecting and treating this disease. *This grant is primarily used for travel, partial salary for a research assistant, and lab materials and supplies.*

Term: September 2014 to October 31, 2016

Amount: \$60K per year

Solution:

As CRS is a Canadian-based granting agency, they do not allow the transfer of their grant to an institution outside Canada.

- Promptly inform OSR and RFMS who will review the terms of funding, the status of the Fund and will freeze the account to ensure no additional expenses or encumbrances are made to the grant.
- OSR will inform the sponsor of the change in PI status and coordinate Fund closeout with PI and RFMS.
- A request could be made to the sponsor regarding a change of PI to a co-investigator (if applicable) and/or phase-down period for encumbered student support.

*Take note that for these types of Sponsors (not-for-profit organizations that fund research from donations), they may deny all expenses incurred on the grant if the PI’s resignation is within a few months of award acceptance.

Case Study 3: Professor Smith resigns from McGill November 1, 2014, moves to Harvard University, but keeps an adjunct status at McGill. Active Funds and Options/Solutions.

CIHR Operating

Scope: provides operating funds to support research proposals in all areas of health research including randomized controlled trials. *This grant supports the personnel and material expenses in labs at McGill and Concordia, and has researchers at both institutions acting as co-investigators.*

Term: April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2017

Amount: \$60K per year

Options:

Contrary to NSERC & SSHRC, CIHR allows adjunct professors who have a primary academic appointment outside of Canada to retain their grants at as long as they spend a minimum of 6 months per year at a Canadian institution.

Consequently, PI may:

- Request retention of PI-ship if he can document that he will be spending 6 months per year at an eligible Canadian institution.
- Request for a change in PI to one of the co-investigators.
 - If the grant is transferred to Concordia:
 - The subaward to Concordia will need to be terminated as part of the McGill Fund closeout process.
 - A new Fund will most likely be needed for the McGill co-investigator (Concordia subaward back to McGill).
 - If Dr. Smith continues to be involved in the project, a subaward can be issued to Harvard.

*Prompt notification to OSR and RFMS will ensure that efforts between PI, FSTs, RFMS, OSR and Concordia are coordinated. OSR will ensure that CIHR is promptly notified and that the necessary documents are completed and submitted.

Industry Research Agreement

Scope: *Dr. Smith works with XYZ Corp to test the strength of new crop designs. Payment is based on milestone, three of which are completed with three more to go. Two McGill students working on the project, along with a co-investigator at the University of Montreal.*

Term: September 1, 2014 to October 31, 2016

Amount: \$50K per milestone (\$300K total)

Options:

- Depending on PI's preference, the sponsor must be approached to secure their approval to:
 - Retain the contract at McGill under PI's adjunct appointment status
 - Transfer the contract to the co-investigator at UdeM
 - Terminate the contract
- Status of scope of work/deliverables will be required
- OSR will ensure appropriate contract amendment is executed
- Prompt notification to OSR and RFMS is needed to assess revenue received versus budget advanced in Banner/Minerva before any "spend-down" recommendations are made to the PI.
 - If expenses greater than revenue received, Fund will be frozen until a decision is made by Sponsor
 - If expenses less than revenue received, Fund budget will be adjusted to reflect revenue received to date.
 - If contract is transferred to UdeM, a new Fund may be needed if a subcontract back to McGill is needed to support the students remaining at McGill who are working on the project.

CIHR New Investigator Salary Award

Scope: provides outstanding new investigators with the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their independence in initiating and conducting health research through provision of a contribution to their salary.

Term: April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2017

Amount: \$60K per year, including fringe benefits

Solution:

The CIHR New Investigator Salary Award is awarded to promote a new Canadian investigator's research program. It cannot be retained if the PI leaves Canada and cannot be transferred to another individual. The award must be terminated.

NIH Sub-grant from Université de Montréal

Scope: The NIH R01 is equivalent to the CIHR operating grant – it provides support for a specific research project.

Foreign institutions are often eligible to hold funding. *The funding received from this sub-award pays for the expenses Dr. Smith is testing for the lead PI in his main lab, along with 8% indirect costs.*

Term: July 1 2013 to June 31, 2018

Amount: \$30K per year

Options:

- The NIH allows a researcher to retain funding with an adjunct status so the subaward could be retained at McGill if needed.
- Terminate the McGill subaward and have UdeM reissue it to Harvard:
 - UdeM will need to inform NIH and submit new budgets for the Harvard subaward which will need to account for their much higher indirect costs rate (unless negotiated otherwise by Dr. Smith and Harvard)
- Upon notification to OSR and RFMS, Fund will be frozen until decision is made and all parties appropriately notified.

Case Study 4: Professor Smith obtains a one-year sabbatical leave from January to December 2014, and then obtains approval for a second one-year personal (unpaid) leave for 2015. During the second leave she takes up a prestigious fellowship at Oxford supported by a grant managed at Oxford, while maintaining her research program at McGill. Active Funds and Options/Solutions.

NSERC Discovery

Scope: supports research programs with long-term goals rather than a single short-term project or collection of projects. Discovery Grants give researchers the flexibility to explore the most promising avenues of research as they emerge. *This grant supports three students who are 7 months away from graduation.*

Term: April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2015

Amount: \$60K per year

Solution:

NSERC and SSHRC do not allow a researcher to retain funding if they are on leave for longer than one year; they require at least one year between two sabbatical/research leaves for a grant to continue. As such, the grant would termination at the end of the first 12-month leave.

- The PI may wish to contact NSERC to request a phase-down period for committed student support. It is recommended this be done before the 2nd leave is considered as plans would need to be made with the department/Faculty if NSERC refuses the extension.

*Upon notification to OSR and RFMS, OSR will inform NSERC and Fund closeout will proceed. If the PI wishes to request a phase-down period, the Fund will be frozen until NSERC's decision.

CIHR Team Grant

Scope: This is a major CIHR Team grant in personalized medicine, involving multiple researchers across the country. The program required that 4 provinces be presented in the team membership. Dr. Smith is the only researcher from Quebec.

Term: July 1, 2014 to October 30, 2019

Amount: \$1M per year

Options:

- Contrary to NSERC & SSHRC, CIHR will allow a PI to maintain PI-ship if they are on a leave period of more than one year but spend a minimum of six months per year at an eligible Canadian institution.
- If this is not the case, a change in PI and in this scenario, a change in grantee institution, will be necessary.
- Given the complexity of such changes for these types of multi-party team grants, prompt notification to OSR and RFMS is key to ensuring optimum coordination and smooth transition.

Notification of successful NSERC renewal

Dr. Smith recently submitted a renewal of his NSERC Discovery grant and was successful. The effective start date will be April 1, 2015, however the award notice has not yet arrived.

Solution:

NSERC regulations do not allow a researcher to retain funding if they are on leave for longer than one year; they require at least one year between two sabbatical/research leaves for a grant to continue. NSERC must be informed of the 2nd leave before the notice of award is released and asked to defer the start date.

Key points to remember

- Tri-Agency grants:
 - NSERC & SSHRC: PI is no longer eligible to hold their grants if their primary academic appointment is outside of Canada, even if they hold an adjunct appointment at a Canadian university.
 - CIHR: adjunct professors can maintain PI-ship of their grant if they can document that they will spend at least 6 months per year at an eligible Canadian institution.
 - Non-medical leaves of greater than 12-months requires notification. There must be at least one year between two non-medical leaves unless the PI can document that he/she will be spending at least 6 months at an eligible Canadian institution.
 - Must be promptly notified of the following changes in PI academic status:
 - Full-time to part-time
 - Leaves of greater than 12-months
 - Resignation
 - Retirement & Emeritus Appointment
 - Adjunct Appointment
- Provincial grants:
 - PI is no longer eligible to hold their grants if their primary academic appointment is outside of Quebec.
- Other Canadian-based granting agencies: will not allow their grants to be transferred to foreign institutions.
- Be mindful of significant expenses made after PI has confirmed resignation. Sponsor may deny expenses incurred after notification date (prior to final departure date). Furthermore, be mindful of expenses charged to recently awarded grants after PI has confirmed resignation. Again Sponsor could deny such expenses. If the PI wishes to make expenses, best to obtain prior approval from the granting agencies before authorizing.

***** It is critical to inform OSR and RFMS as soon as the PI submits his letter of resignation (or sooner if known). Do not wait until the change in payroll appointment form is processed. Lack of prompt notification increases risk of ineligible expenses that the department/Faculty will need to absorb*****