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Name:	Policy on the Use of NSERC and SSHRC General Research Funds
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Origin:	Associate Vice President Research
Approved:	2017-JUN-06
Issuing Authority:	Vice President Academic & Research and Vice President Finance & Administration
Responsibility:	Associate Vice President Research and Senior Director, Financial Services
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Purpose:

To describe the means by which funds from the General Research Funds provided by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council can be accessed, allocated and used at Saint Mary's University.

Scope:

The policy and the procedures contained in this document apply to all members of the University community eligible to receive funding from NSERC and/or SSHRC.

Definitions and Abbreviations:

1. "the University" - refers to Saint Mary's University
2. "NSERC" - the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada
3. "SSHRC" - the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
4. "University Community" – all full-time and part-time faculty and staff, all full-time and part-time students (both undergraduate and graduate), all post-doctoral fellows and research associates, all non-salaried visiting researchers/professors (including students from other institutions; hereafter called visiting researchers/professors in this document), and all people hired on term positions and/or casual employment positions at Saint Mary's University
5. "TAFAG" – the Tri-Agency Financial Administration Guide
6. "General Research Fund(s)" (GRF or GRFs) – the funds transferred with the authorization of NSERC and SSHRC each year to the University from unspent funds of expired or terminated grants.

7. "President" – refers to the President of the University
8. "Associate Vice President Research" (AVPR) - refers to the Associate Vice President Research at Saint Mary's University
9. "Financial Services" – refers to the department of Financial Services at Saint Mary's University under the authority of the Senior Director, Financial Services
10. "Faculty Members" - refers to faculty members of Saint Mary's University in the fields of natural sciences and engineering or social sciences and humanities who meet the eligibility requirements to receive NSERC and/or SSHRC funding

Background¹:

The NSERC and SSHRC General Research Funds (GRFs) are special accounts opened as trust accounts under the authority of the President (or his/her authorized delegate), into which the unspent funds of expired or terminated grants are transferred with the authorization of the granting agencies.

The objective of the GRF is to reinvest unspent funds from previous years in order to support research in the fields of natural sciences and engineering or social sciences and humanities, as applicable.

The University is required to keep separate GRF accounts for each of the agencies, namely NSERC and SSHRC. The financial administration of the funds must also be kept separate. The funds must be administered in a centralized manner, and the institution must manage the funds meticulously. The institution must thus ensure that it has clearly stated policies and directives with respect to the management, disbursement and use of the funds. The agencies' eligibility and compliance requirements for expenditures charged to grants also apply to expenditures charged to the GRF. It is the responsibility of the person responsible for the GRF, that is, the president of the institution or his/her authorized delegate, to authorize expenditures charged to the GRF in accordance with the requirements and conditions of the grants and with the institution's and the agencies' policies. No other party may initiate or authorize expenditures without the president's or his or her delegate's written delegated authority.

¹Adapted from Guidelines for the General Research Fund

Policy:

The Associate Vice President Research (AVPR) is the President's delegate in the management and utilization of the NSERC and SSHRC GRFs. The AVPR, working in collaboration with the relevant personnel in Financial Services, will ensure that the GRFs will be used in a manner consistent with NSERC and SSHRC requirements for accessing and utilizing the funds to support research in the fields of natural sciences and engineering, and the social sciences and humanities at the University. Financial Services will be responsible to apply annually to NSERC and SSHRC for authorization to transfer funds to the GRFs, and to report on the use of the funds annually as required by NSERC and SSHRC.

Procedures:

As part of the annual financial reporting to NSERC and SSHRC, Financial Services will apply for authorization from NSERC and SSHRC to transfer unspent funds from expired grants from the previous fiscal year to the respective University's GRFs.

Once the University is given approval to transfer such unspent funds into the respective GRFs, the AVPR will then use the funds at her/his discretion throughout the year to support research in the fields of natural sciences and engineering or social sciences and humanities at the University. To promote the active use of unspent funds for various research projects, the NSERC and SSHRC expect institutions to spend at least 50% of the GRF opening balance during the year.

The policies and requirements stated in the Tri-Agency Financial Administration Guide (TAFAG)², plus all relevant policies and requirement of the University on the use of research funds, apply at all times to the use of GRF funds.

It is Financial Services' responsibility to ensure that GRF funds are used to cover eligible expenses associated with the direct costs of research and that all expenses charged to the GRF are authorized by the AVPR. In some cases, the AVPR may assign defined amounts from a GRF to individual Faculty Members (e.g. start-up grants or bridge funds). In such cases, the individual Faculty Member is subject to all relevant policies and requirements of the University as well as those of the agencies stated in the Tri-Agency Financial Administration Guide (TAFAG).

Indirect or overhead costs, such as costs associated with facilities and basic utilities, the purchase and repair of office equipment, administration fees, insurance for research equipment and vehicles, and basic communication devices such as telephones and fax machines, are not eligible.

Financial Services is responsible for preparing the annual financial reports on the use of the GRFs to NSERC and SSHRC, respectively. These reports will be sent under the authorization of the AVPR to the relevant agency.

Updates to the Policy:

The AVPR, in collaboration with the Senior Director, Financial Services, will review this policy to ensure that it is up-to-date with requirements of NSERC, SSHRC and the TAFAG. This will normally occur annually, but never less than biennially. Should the AVPR or the Senior Director, Financial Services, be informed by NSERC or SSHRC of required changes to the Policy between these reviews, they will endeavor to revise the Policy appropriately as soon as possible after becoming aware of these notices.

²http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Professors-Professeurs/FinancialAdminGuide-GuideAdminFinancier/index_eng.asp