

Advisor's Report on Appeal of Discovery Grant

Applicant's Name : D.A.S. Fraser

University : University of Toronto

Evaluation Group : 1508-033

The applicant appealed the decision of the committee on the grounds of error and procedural unfairness in the review process. The applicant has complete access to another comparable application, 9436-2010, which received higher ratings in all three evaluation areas of NSERC. (Note that due to NSERC's Privacy and Confidentiality rules, I do not have access to application 9436-2010.)

The committee supplied only the three ratings and no further comments in its Message to Applicant. The two referee reports on file were supportive of the applicant.

The applicant provides a comparison of the two above-mentioned proposals. Under Excellence of the Researcher, number and venue of publications, presentations and honours are compared. A comparison of the two Research Proposals is provided, however, the appellant admits that this is the "most subjective aspect of the review process." With respect to the Training of HQP, application 9436-2010 has 21 HQP supported versus 18 for the appellant.

The applicant is a professor Emeritus and clearly specifies his/her activities in Appendix C of Form 100, with research involvement four days per week. Section 6.8.3.3 of the NSERC Peer Review Manual provides clear guidelines as to how applications from Emeritus professors are to be evaluated.

"Applications from Adjunct and Emeritus professors are evaluated using the same criteria, scale and indicators as all other applicants, supplemented by consideration of the extent of the applicant's contributions to research, including involvement with other faculty and the training of HQP. They are assessed against the same expectations as all other established researchers in terms of the quality of their contributions, their proposed work and their training of HQP. "

From the NSERC documentation, I quote, "An appeal of a decision on an NSERC application must be based on a compelling demonstration of error or procedural unfairness in the review process. The appeal procedure is designed to ensure that the applicant has been treated fairly and consistently in the context of a program that has limited funds."

Many of the arguments in the appellant's letter centre on comparisons of numbers. Certainly numbers of papers and students can be used as a measure of productivity; however, the Evaluation Committee was instructed to assess applications on the basis of quality and impact. I can only assume that the committee judged the quality and impact of application 9436-2010 to be higher than that of the appellant in the three evaluation criteria.