

Call for Applications for Global Skills Opportunity

The McMaster Health Forum offers undergraduate students the chance to do field work in partnership countries to enhance their professional skills and benefit from remarkable training, mentoring and networking opportunities, which can be taken for course credit. The Forum is an inter-faculty initiative that strives to be a leading hub for improving health and social outcomes through collective problem solving. Operating at the regional/provincial level and at national levels, we harness information, convene stakeholders and prepare action-oriented leaders to meet pressing health and social issues creatively. The Forum acts as an agent of change by empowering stakeholders to set agendas, take well-considered actions and communicate the rationale for actions effectively.

As part of our commitment to prepare action-oriented leaders in addressing pressing health and social challenges creatively, we are proud to have been selected to host a Global Skills Opportunity program which will run from September 2021 to March 2025. Through this program the McMaster Health Forum will enable emerging leaders within McMaster University's undergraduate community to build knowledge and skills to support health- and social-system strengthening internationally. We will leverage McMaster Health Forum's programs to support skills development in policy, political and systems analysis, evidence synthesis, and stakeholder engagement, while building on our experience with student mentorship, leadership development and facilitating international exchange.

About the Global Skills Opportunity in Developing Skilled Future Leaders in Strengthening Health and Social Systems

GSO awardees will have the opportunity to learn important skills and contribute to strengthening health and social systems in any of more than 140 Commonwealth and low- and middle-income countries where the Forum, and its partners, have robust relationships focused on health- and social-system strengthening. Awardees will become part of our large and growing network of health- and social-system leaders.

All current McMaster undergraduate students are eligible to apply. While open to all undergraduate students, the national program targets groups for whom international experiences have traditionally been less accessible - specifically Indigenous students, students from low-income backgrounds, and those with disabilities. It also aims to diversify the destination countries where Canadian students pursue international learning.

Our nine core partners who can serve as hosts to outgoing interns, include: Africa Centre for Evidence in South Africa; Caribbean Centre for Health Systems Research and Development (CCHSRD) in Trinidad and Tobago; Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) in Trinidad and Tobago; Evidence-Based Medicine Center of Lanzhou University in China; Faculty of Medicine at the Universidad de Antioquia in Colombia; Institute for Health Systems Research at the Ministry of Health in Malaysia; Knowledge to Policy Center in Lebanon; REACH Policy in Uganda; and The George Institute for Global Health in India.

GSO awardees will:

- participate actively in all training, mentoring and networking opportunities, either face-to-face or online, as well as in all evaluations of such opportunities, during their period as an awardee;
- provide appropriate receipts for all travel-related financial support requested from the program;
- adhere to all reporting requirements, which includes tracking all additional travel-related expenses that they cover themselves or through other means (which is required for the Forum's reporting);
- identify opportunities for experimentation in the program and lead the development and evaluation of any 'experiments'; and
- participate actively mentoring and networking as an alumni of the program.

Eligibility requirements

GSO awardees need to:

- 1) be enrolled at McMaster University in an undergraduate program;
- 2) be in good standing in that registered undergraduate program;
- 3) be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident; and
- 4) be aged 18 years or older.

Priority groups

Under the direction of the national program, undergraduate applications from the following groups will be prioritized:

- 1) Indigenous students (students who report being an Indigenous person, that is, First Nations, Metis or Inuk (Inuit));
- 2) students from low-income backgrounds (students who report to be in receipt of Canada Student Grants, or similar non-repayable student financial assistance offered by provinces and territories, or, in the absence of receiving non-repayable student financial assistance, can provide information to demonstrate that they require financial support to study or work abroad); and
- 3) students with disabilities (students who report to have a difficulty or impairment due to a long-term condition or health problem and/or experiences a limitation in their daily activities or have sought accommodation from McMaster's Student Accessibility Services).

Selection process

A selection committee, made up of McMaster Health Forum faculty and staff will evaluate all candidates based on their:

- 1) potential for real-world impact in strengthening health and social systems globally;
- 2) past experience with community engagement, both in Canada and in other countries; and
- 3) alignment of their proposed opportunity on health- or social-system strengthening with priorities identified by a country with which the McMaster Health Forum or one of its seven core partners has strong relationships.

How to apply

- 1) Global Skills Opportunity application timelines will be posted on the Forum site – <https://www.mcmasterforum.org/learn-how/experiential-learning/global-skills-opportunity/how-and-when-to-apply-gso>
- 2) Applications must be submitted electronically to the McMaster Health Forum at forum@mcmaster.ca quoting “GSO application” in the subject. Applications must be combined into one PDF file with the contents appearing in the order presented in the “Application requirements”, and the file name must be in the format of: lastname_GSO_application.

Application requirements

- 1) two- to three-page cover letter that describes:
 - what you would bring to the Forum and the Global Skills Opportunity program (in terms of knowledge, skills and experiences),
 - how your work during the opportunity will benefit the host organization and/or country, and
 - what you would gain from the opportunity.
- 2) whether you are a member of at least one of the priority groups;
- 3) confirmation of the academic credit options available to you to which your experience during the opportunity can be applied (all students must receive academic credit of some kind from their program);
- 4) the academic terms or terms you which to engage in the opportunity; and
- 5) proof of enrollment in your undergraduate program (typically obtained through Mosaic).

Terms of the award

Recipients of the Global Skills Opportunity will receive:

- 1) Awardees from one of the priority groups will receive a maximum of \$6,000 to cover travel expenses (e.g. return airfare, visa costs) and living expenses (e.g. food, accommodation, health insurance and an installation allowance) for physical mobility component, and a maximum of \$500 academic expenses for the virtual mobility component.
- 2) Awardees not from one of the priority groups will receive a maximum of \$4,000 to cover travel expenses (e.g. return airfare, visa costs) and living expenses (e.g. food, accommodation, health insurance and an installation allowance) for physical mobility component, and a maximum of \$250 academic expenses for the virtual mobility component.

These funds are to help cover expenses that are directly related to the opportunity. Most opportunities will involve a four to six week physical mobility component spent in-person with an international partner as well as a virtual component for the month prior to, and the month after the physical component. It is expected that all awardees will commit at least 12 months to the McMaster Health Forum including at least one semester prior to going abroad and at least one semester after returning from going abroad. You must be a registered McMaster student throughout the opportunity.

This project is funded by Global Skills Opportunity, the Government of Canada's outbound mobility pilot program.