Panelists: Dr. Hugh Chipman (Mathematics & Statistics), Dr. Darlene Brodeur (Psychology), Dr. Kirk Hillier (Biology), Dr. Suzie Currie (Dean of Science)

Common Pitfalls

- **Lack of fit with the NSERC mandate.** Make sure your proposal responds well to the mandate!
- Failure to establish a program of research (a trajectory with long-term impact). **NSERC funds research programs, not projects.**
- **Lack of detail in the research proposal.** Provide enough detail to ensure someone from your area will be convinced you know what you’re doing.
  - This includes **methodological detail.** It’s important to convince reviewers you have a broad and impactful program of research, but you also need to describe the specifics of your research design.
- Weak or non-existent objectives. **Describe long-term objectives for your research program and short-term objectives for this specific grant.**

Key Strategies

- Give your **Notification of Intent (NOI)** the attention it deserves. It’s very important, especially for helping the committee pick good committee reviewers.
- **Choose your referees carefully.** When pitching referees, pitch someone who is likely to write a thoughtful and thorough review. Also provide a good mix of referees from small and large institutions.
- **Respond directly to the Discovery Grant Merit Indicators.** Committee members will use these to settle debates about applications.
- **Provide context where necessary.** For example, in the Excellence as a Researcher section, if you’ve had a less productive period, you can explain why. Don’t invite speculation.
- **Feature publications that relate directly to your proposal.**
- If you have other active funding, **clearly articulate what makes this application different.**
- For the **Budget Justification**, explain how each budget item will facilitate doing **X. Need isn’t good enough.**
- Use the **Summary** to effectively communicate your research to the generalists on the committee (remember: generalists are still scientists; they are not the general public). **Think of it as a road map for the rest of your proposal.** Write it well and make it different from the introductory section of your proposal.
Small Undergraduate University Context

- Regarding HQP in the small undergraduate university context, keep in mind that NSERC is very open to the kind of training we do at Acadia but you need to provide some context.
  - Educate the committee. Be clear about what supervision at Acadia University actually entails. Talk about your training philosophy/environment, including broad skills development. Highlight how your students are doing real research and publishing/presenting.
- Don’t make excuses for being at a small university. The tone of your application should always be excellence! Celebrate your research and record, while still providing a bit of context about the place you work.