Natural Sciences and Engineering
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences
naturelles et en génie du Canada

125 Zaida Eddy Private
Ottawa, Canada
K1R 0E3

125, privé Zaida-Eddy
Ottawa, Canada
K1R 0E3

PROTECTED B

Message from the Evaluation Group

Name	Bar-Natan, Dror
Institution	University of Toronto
Application ID	RGPIN-2025-06718
Application title	Knot Theory as an Excuse
Type of grant	Discovery Grant
Evaluation group	1508 Mathematics and Statistics

The evaluation group (EG) rated your application as follows, and in some cases has included additional feedback on certain criteria.

Excellence of the researcher	Very Strong

The evaluation group assessed your contributions to the natural sciences and engineering (NSE) based on a number of elements, including knowledge, expertise and experience, stature in the field as well as the quality, impact, and importance of the research accomplishments over the active research period evaluated.

Merit of the proposal	Very Strong

The evaluation group assessed a number of components such as (i) originality and innovation of the proposed research; (ii) significance and expected contributions to research; (iii) clarity and scope of objectives; (iv) clarity and appropriateness of methodology; (v) feasibility of the research plan; (vi) extent to which the scope of the proposal addresses all relevant issues; (vii) consideration of equity, diversity and inclusion in the research process, if applicable; and (viii) appropriateness of, and justification for, the budget.

Training of highly qualified personnel	Strong

The evaluation group assessed a number of components such as (i) the quality and impact of past training of highly qualified personnel (HQP) over the active research period evaluated; (ii) the quality, suitability and clarity of the planned training of HQP; and (iii) the consideration of equity, diversity and inclusion in past and future training.

Details of the HQP training plan, including how HQP would be integrated into the research program were not sufficiently described. A more detailed explanation of the projects that HQP will be involved in, and the associated learning outcomes, would have been useful. NSERC rules do not allow

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences naturelles et en génie du Canada

125 Zaida Eddy Private
Ottawa, Canada
K1R 0E3

125, privé Zaida-Eddy
Ottawa, Canada
K1R 0E3

PROTECTED B

evaluation committee members to consult hyperlinks in applications. This meant that the evaluation committee had limited information about past HQPs, their training, and their career trajectories.

Additional comments:

The committee had a hard time evaluating the proposal, due to the unconventional structure. For example the Knot Atlas and the associated software was not mentioned anywhere in the CCV, and the methodology was not easily extracted from the proposal.

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada

125 Zaida Eddy Private
Ottawa, Canada
K1R 0E3

Conseil de recherches en sciences naturelles et en génie du Canada

125, privé Zaida-Eddy
Ottawa, Canada
K1R 0E3

PROTECTED B

A message from NSERC

The following comments are intended to provide you with information about the context of the competition and the comments from the external reviews.

In this year's competition, the evaluation groups (EGs) evaluated over 3,300 Discovery Grant (DG) applications. These applications were assessed according to the guidelines found in NSERC's Peer Review Manual (PRM). EG members provide quality assessment on applications assigned to them. When the peer review process is complete, NSERC takes into consideration the merit of applications and the available budget. Due to budget limitations, not all meritorious applications were funded.

The 2025 DG competition meetings were held by videoconference again this year. NSERC continues to make every effort to maintain a peer review process of the highest quality, including fairness and consistency between EGs and across competition years.

Since the 2020 competition, the assessment of contributions to training HQP has included the requirement to consider equity, diversity and inclusion in the HQP training plan. The assessment of equity, diversity and inclusion focuses on the description of the existing challenges or barriers to inclusion and advancement of underrepresented groups in the NSE. In addition, the assessment includes the planned approach to promoting participation of a diverse group of HQP, taking into account equity and inclusion in recruitment practices, mentorship approaches and initiatives aimed at ensuring an inclusive research and training environment and trainee growth.

For each application, NSERC invites individuals with expertise to carry out an external review and submit a report. Those selected include a mix of individuals suggested by you and others selected by EG members. This selection process is described in section 3.1.5 of the PRM. While NSERC requests several reviews for each application, the number of reports received (normally 1–3) depends on the participation of these individuals. Instructions for the external review of applications can be found on NSERC's website.

NSERC includes the external review reports as part of your feedback package because they may contain information that will help in developing future research plans. These reports are considered your personal information as defined by section 3 of the *Privacy Act*. As such, NSERC shares them proactively, while protecting the names of the individuals providing external reviews.

You might find inconsistencies between external review reports and the feedback and/or ratings of the EG. Please keep in mind that external review reports are only one of the elements that contribute to the EG's assessment. Individuals providing external reviews do not have the same comparative view as EG members who participate in a variety of calibration activities in preparation for the assessment process and review on average up to 40 applications per year.