

## Strategic Training in Transdisciplinary Radiation Science for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (STARS21)

### LETTER OF INTENT REQUIREMENTS 2026-2027

**Submission Deadline: Tuesday June 30, 2026, 5PM EST**

**\*\*\*New this year: To ensure fairness and support a more efficient workflow in assessing applications, each Principal Investigator may submit only ONE trainee applicant for the competition. Interested trainees are asked to first consult with their supervisor to determine lab support and eligibility prior to submitting an LOI. For trainees with co-supervisors, the same policy applies- only one trainee submission per Principal Investigator will be permitted.\*\*\***

Please submit the following to the STARS21 Program Coordinator, Gregory Ashman ([Gregory.Ashman@uhn.ca](mailto:Gregory.Ashman@uhn.ca)):

1. Applicant Name
2. Applicant CV
3. Name of Applicant Supervisor(s)
4. Name of Institution
5. Applicant Category (MSc, PhD, PostDoc Fellow, Clinical Fellow or Resident)
6. Applicant Project Title
7. Summary of Proposed Research (please see below for further details)
8. Citizenship and Residency Status:
  - a. Are you a Canadian Citizen? Yes/No
  - b. Are you a resident of Ontario based on the criteria below? Yes/No
    - i. You have always lived in Ontario; or
    - ii. Ontario is the last province you lived in for 12 months in a row without being a full-time postsecondary student; or
    - iii. You live in Ontario now AND have lived in Canada for less than 12 months in a row

#### **Summary of Proposed Research:**

Please provide an overview of your research project. Be sure to highlight your project's relevance to the field of **radiation medicine** as well as the **transdisciplinary nature** of the project.

#### Details:

1. Include title of project and 10 key words to describe it.
2. Not to exceed 250 words (strict)
  - a. Excluding title, authors, and references
3. Must be single-spaced, Arial font, 12 point font size, normal margin spacing (1 inch from the top, bottom, left and right margins)
4. Submitted as a separate **word** document

<b>Important Program Dates 2026-2027</b>	
Competition Announcement	June 8, 2026
LOI Due*	June 30, 2026, 5pm
Notification of Full Applications*	Week of July 13-17, 2026
Full Application Due*	August 7, 2026, 5pm
Notice of Awards Status	Mid-September 2026
Program Start	Early October 2026
Program End	May 2027

*\*Given that the start date for some clinical fellows and residents may be July 1<sup>st</sup>, there will be alternative deadlines for clinical fellows and residents to submit their LOI by August 7<sup>th</sup>, with Full Application due August 27<sup>th</sup>. Please contact Gregory Ashman ([gregory.ashman@uhn.ca](mailto:gregory.ashman@uhn.ca)) if you have any questions.*



## Strategic Training in Transdisciplinary Radiation Science for the 21st Century (STARS21)

### PROGRAM INFORMATION 2026-2027

The overarching goal of STARS21 is to build international research capacity in the realm of radiation medicine. We aim to address an unmet need for education in translational and transdisciplinary cancer research. To this end, STARS21 has been designed to provide graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, residents and clinical fellows the skills essential to conduct innovative translational and transdisciplinary research in Radiation Medicine, as well as the leadership, communication and collaboration proficiencies necessary to define them as the future leaders of our scientific community. We aim to create a learning community that resembles the multidisciplinary nature of today's team-based science.

The STARS21 curriculum includes workshops, group projects, a career development day and a research day. Approximately 30-35 trainees participate in the program yearly. For the 2026-2027 academic year, we are planning for in-person workshops. Evaluations show that 100% of STARS21 alumni would recommend the program to colleagues, and believe the program had been invaluable to their learning;

***"I think this program offers an important and very interesting 360 degree overview of cancer treatment, focusing on radiation science... The opportunity to learn about transdisciplinary research and work with scientists from wide variety of fields was invaluable." – STARS21 Scholar.***

The STARS21 program is co-Directed by Drs. Jennifer Kwan (Radiation Oncologist and Clinician-Scientist, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre) and Shane Harding (Senior Scientist, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre), and invites both clinical and research experts to lead workshops.

Co-funded by Princess Margaret Research (PMR), the Radiation Medicine Program (RMP), and the University of Toronto Department of Radiation Oncology (UTDRO; Gifford Fund), STARS21 provides partial stipend support to accepted trainees for 1 year (funding levels outlined below).

#### **Eligibility:**

- Any trainee affiliated with the sponsoring institutions (PMR and RMP), or sponsored by another UT-DRO institution.
- Graduate students who meet specific eligibility criteria\* may be offered funding through the endowed Gifford fund administered at the Department of Radiation Oncology,

University of Toronto (\*Canadian Graduate students supervised by graduate faculty appointed to the Department of Radiation Oncology, University of Toronto).

- Other\*\*

\*\* The STARS21 Program accepts applications from all institutions. Trainees from other institutions (i.e. not PMR or RMP) are welcome to participate in the program as invited scholars. **Invited scholars do not receive stipend support from the program.**

#### **Anticipated Funding levels\*:**

MSc student – \$12,500

PhD – \$15,100

Clinical Fellow – \$15,000

Post Doc Fellow –\$20,000

Radiation Oncology or Medical Physics Residents are also eligible to apply, and they will be awarded up to \$2,000 for reimbursement of costs relating to online/in-person conferences, provided they present their research (oral or poster presentations). Funded STARS21 trainees may also apply for travel awards of up to \$1,000.

\*Funding levels are subject to change based on budgetary status heading into the 2026-27 program year.

#### **Full Application Requirements:**

Candidates invited to progress to the application phase will be required to submit the following:

1. STARS21 Application Forms – Completed scholar and supervisor general information forms.
2. Academic Transcripts – Unofficial undergraduate and graduate transcripts (must be in English or officially translated).
3. Two Reference Letters – One must be from the scholar's primary supervisor.
4. Research Proposal – Description of the rationale, objective, experimental approach, timeline, and the scholar's specific role within the proposed collaborative project (not to exceed 2 pages in length- single-spaced, Arial font, 12 point font size, normal margin spacing- 1" from top, bottom, left and right)
5. Statement of Interest – explain how the STARS21 program will support your long-term goals (single-spaced, Arial font, 12 point font size, normal margin spacing- 1" from top, bottom, left and right).

#### **Time Commitment- STARS21 program:**

Trainees should expect to dedicate approximately 30 hours over the academic year (October–May), distributed as follows:

- **~18 hours:** Attendance at up to 13 bi-weekly training sessions (Thursdays, 5:30–7:00 PM ET, with occasional Thursday morning sessions, 9:00–10:30 AM ET) Note: Session timing may

change prior to the start of the program.

- **1 full day:** Participation in the UTDRO/STARS21 Research Day (9:00 AM–5:00 PM, May 2027 – exact date TBA)
- **~3 hours:** Group meetings and collaborative project work with fellow trainees (outside of official training sessions)

### Selection Process:

Candidates are selected through a competitive process, adjudicated by a review panel based on the following criteria:

- Academic excellence
- Leadership potential
- Research excellence
- Scientific merit of the research proposal
- Relevance of the research for radiation medicine
- Transdisciplinary aspects of the research
- Excellence of the research environment and its contribution to training in radiation medicine/science

Supervisors of accepted trainees will be granted status as STARS21 mentors for 3 years. Mentors are expected to contribute to the STARS21 program through invited presentations and review panels.

The Letter of Intent for applications to the 2026-2027 academic year will be due **Tuesday June 30th , 2026 by 5 pm EST**. Please submit this letter by e-mail to the STARS21 Program Coordinator, Gregory Ashman (Gregory.Ashman@uhn.ca). **Late LOI submissions will NOT be accepted or considered for application to the program.** Please refer to the LOI Requirements Document for elements that need to be included.

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