How Department Research Awards are Decided for Current Students

The department sometimes has money available that it can allocate to current students as research award ‘top ups’. Because these cannot be given to all students, the decision process for allocating these awards is roughly as follows.

Who Does the Work

The Director, Graduate Affairs assigns a member of the Graduate Affairs Committee to do take on this task. This is usually the member responsible for current students.

Who is Considered in Each Round

Students are considered in the term they have enrolled in the program i.e., September students are considered prior to September, January students prior to January, etc. As well, only students who had recently submitted their annual progress reports are considered (annual report due dates depend on a student’s enrollment cycle, which means that a current annual progress report should have been submitted for each student under consideration).

Process

1. An initial pile is created containing all student annual progress reports. If a student did not submit an annual progress report, that student is not considered for the award.
2. Progress reports are sorted to a narrower subset of eligible candidates where the supervisor had checked one of the ‘recommended award boxes’ (i.e., recommend or strongly recommend).
3. This subset is further filtered to remove students who don’t qualify for an award:
   - MSc students: more than 2 years in the Program
   - PhD students: more than 3 years in the program
   - not full time
   - not thesis based
   - already have $28K for MSc and $32K for PhD students in scholarship funding (Students holding scholarships under these limits will be topped up to the 28K and 32K ceilings.)
4. Of the remaining students, award recipients were picked based on the following (consideration is taken for the program they are in, the time in the program, any reported leaves, etc)
   - marks (if any),
   - research progress (supervisor's comments, students description),
   - publications (student's listing),
   - service (students description, supervisor's comments).
   - performance as a Teaching Assistant in our dept. over the past year
**Rationale**

We often have to make these decisions fairly quickly. Given that the award is not considerable, the filtering process mentioned is done by a single person using fairly simple selection criteria. A huge amount of weight is placed on the Annual Progress Report. This is because it is one of the few documents that details how the student is currently doing.

**Caveats**

There could be a temptation for supervisors to ‘exaggerate’ a student’s progress in order to increase that student’s chances of receiving an award. This would be a bad idea indeed, for the progress report is the only standard record of a student’s progress over the term that is signed by both the student and the supervisor. If things go wrong, this report would be used as the official record, so it is important that the report reflects the actual situation. As well, exaggeration likely would not help that much as the reviewer will be considering concrete deliverables that back up the claims made.

Thus this decision process suggests that the student and supervisor should

a. take annual progress reports very seriously

b. clearly indicate in this progress report a simple to read list of the student’s concrete milestones achieved in the last year, e.g., courses/grades, publications, etc., as well as exceptional abilities