Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships

Demystifying the process


http://www.mcgill.ca/gps/funding/students-postdocs/students/vanier
Outline

• Overview of the 2022 competition
  - selection of candidates by McGill University (GPS)

• Review process
  - what the reviewers are looking for; how they score the application

• Components of a winning application
  - how to assemble the pieces so that everything meshes together
  - leadership referees (2)
  - academic referee
  - proposal

• Writing help – Graphos/Skillsets/McGill Writing Centre
Overview of the 2022 Competition Process

• Applications are initiated in one of two ways. Either:

  – the candidate informs the academic unit at the selected university of their intent to apply to the Vanier CGS competition; or

  – the university initiates the nomination process by contacting the candidate.

    - Academic excellence - first class academic record
    - Leadership evidence of community involvement beyond academic excellence
    - Success in peer-reviewed competitions (NSERC, CIHR, SSHRC)
Overview of the 2022 Competition Process

- The nominating university sets its internal deadline.
- The nominating university performs its internal candidate-selection process and gives feedback (Sept – Oct.).
- The nominating university forwards recommended nominations to the appropriate granting agencies by November 1st, 2022
  ❖ GPS will notify nominated applicants of the outcome of internal review
- The granting agencies perform their peer review process.
- The granting agencies forward their nominations to the Vanier Selection Board.
- The Vanier Selection Board recommends Vanier CGS scholars to the three granting agency presidents.
- Successful candidates are notified of the competition results in Spring 2023.

Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship
Overview of the 2022 Competition Process

• Applications are prepared and submitted using the ResearchNet application system.
  - ResearchNet account
  - ResearchNet PIN
  - access to Common CV

• Therefore, it is a priority to obtain PINs, and start Common CV.
  – All supervisors know how to do this, use them as resource person

• The nominating university sets its internal deadline.
  - McGill GPS deadline: Sept 15, 2022, 20:00 (8:00PM) EST
    - Application must be complete on ResearchNet by this date (including all reference letters)
    - Departments/Units will have earlier internal deadlines
Quota

- Vanier Secretariat awards Up to 166 scholarships are awarded annually

- McGill University Quota for 2022 Competition
  - CIHR 24
  - NSERC 12
  - SSHRC 14

- Most departments can submit 2 - 4 applicants to GPS (quota)

**McGill awards for the past 3 years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>CIHR</th>
<th>NSERC</th>
<th>SSHRC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019-2020</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020-2021</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>2021-2022</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
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Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship
Review process

Selection criteria (weighted equally)

- **Academic excellence**, as demonstrated by past academic results and by transcripts, awards and distinctions.
- **Research potential**, as demonstrated by the candidates research history, his/her interest in discovery, the proposed research and its potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field, the potential benefit to Canadians, and any anticipated outcomes.
- **Leadership (potential and demonstrated ability)**, as defined by the following qualities:
  - Personal Achievement:
  - Involvement in Academic Life:
  - Volunteerism/community outreach:
  - Civic engagement:
  - Other
1. Academic excellence

Demonstrated by past academic results and by transcripts, awards and distinctions.

- Supporting evidence evaluated for this criterion:
  - Academic record (institution transcripts)
  - Choice of candidate (academic unit’s nomination letter)
  - Scholarships/awards (CCV)
  - Duration of previous studies (academic background, CCV, institution transcripts and special circumstances)
2. Research potential

Demonstrated by the candidate’s research history, his/her interest in discovery, the proposed research and its potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field, the potential benefit to Canadians, and any anticipated outcomes.

- Supporting evidence to be evaluated for this criterion:
  - Scholarships/awards (CCV)
  - Duration of previous studies – ability to complete project within an appropriate time period (academic background, CCV, institution transcripts, referee assessments and special circumstances)
  - Academic training and relevant work experience (CCV, description of leadership and communication skills attachment and the referee assessments)
  - Contribution to research and development – publications, patents, reports and posters (CCV, research contributions attachment and referee assessments)
  - Research proposal – feasibility, merit and significance (research proposal)
  - Critical thinking, application of knowledge, judgment, originality, initiative, autonomy and enthusiasm for research (description of leadership and communication skills attachment, referee assessments and nomination letter)
3. Leadership (potential and demonstrated ability)

- **Personal achievement:**
  - professional involvement in dance, arts, music, etc.;
  - significant artistic achievement;
  - recognized athletic achievement, especially in a leadership role;
  - entrepreneurial achievement (startup company); and/or
  - foreign travel and study.

- **Involvement in academic life:**
  - mentoring/teaching;
  - supervisory experience;
  - involvement in student government and in the university community, including committees, teams, senate, boards, ethics committees, etc.;
  - project management;
  - roles in professional societies; and/or
  - organization of conferences and meetings.

- **Volunteerism/community outreach:**
  - community involvement in charity or not-for-profit organizations.

- **Civic engagement:**
  - parliamentary page positions and internships;
  - political activity; and/or
  - elected positions.

- **Other**
Application Documents Requirements

Personal Leadership Statement Document (English 2 pages max) (French 2.5 Pages Max)
This document should present to the committee a clear statement of what challenges and opportunities have shaped your doctoral research.

When crafting your Personal Leadership Statement, consider the following points:

• What led you to doctoral research? How has your relevant life experiences and personal circumstances (may include administrative responsibilities, maternity/parental leave, childrearing, illness, cultural or community responsibilities, socio-economic context, or health-related family responsibilities) shaped your academic, research, leadership choices, challenges, and successes.

• How has your personal life driven you to share and disseminate your research?

• How have you created opportunities to make change, and how have you overcome obstacles to your vision?
Personal Leadership Statement Document  (con’t)

- How have you fostered your ability to lead others, and how have you leveraged that skill?

- Why have you chosen to undertake your PhD at the nominating institution? How does your nominating institution provide an environment that nurtures both your academic and your leadership skills?

Leadership can take many forms. When crafting this statement, be sure to outline not just your accomplishments for the committee, but how those accomplishments required you to leverage your leadership skills to achieve your goals.

Your academic transcript, your CCV and your reference letters will provide details of your commitments and accomplishments, but this essay gives you the opportunity to present the overarching narrative about your life, leadership accomplishments and research goals for the selection committee.
Application Documents Requirements

Leadership Reference Letter

• The Vanier CGS application package requires two letters of reference for the Leadership criterion. Having two letters will allow the candidate to include a broader spectrum of referees, which will in turn provide the committee more information when assessing the Leadership selection criterion.

• The leadership letters are to be uploaded by the applicant in the via ResearchNet. Applicants upload one letter at a time under the same task. The letters are a maximum of two pages each. For more information on this task, please refer to the instructions page on Vanier website.
Evaluation of Leadership

• **Leadership activities/accomplishments** - impact (*CCV, description of leadership and communication skills, leadership reference letter, nomination letter, referee assessments and special circumstances attachment*)

• **Mobility**: this award provides opportunities for research trainees to study, conduct research, and engage in knowledge mobilization in a national and international context. Candidates should explain the rationale behind their proposed research institution with this in mind. (*nomination letter, research proposal and Personal Leadership Statement*)

• **Participation in publication writing** (*CCV, research contributions attachment and referee assessments*)

• **Professional and extracurricular interactions and collaborations** with supervisors, colleagues and peers (*CCV, description of leadership and communication skills, leadership reference letter and referee assessments*)

• Those who have volunteer/professional experience outside of their domain of study should provide context that demonstrates how their contribution went beyond the expectations of the work/volunteer position.

• **Overall quality and presentation of the nominating institution**
Evaluation of Leadership Potential

There are four opportunities in the nomination package for a Vanier CGS candidate to highlight their leadership potential:

- Students must list their previous leadership activities/accomplishments according to the categories listed under Selection Criteria in the program description. Students are also asked to write a self-assessment detailing the impact of their activities and accomplishments, and how they judge themselves to be a potential Vanier CGS recipient and a leader in their research community. [2 pages]

- The student’s referees are asked to comment on the student’s leadership potential and to elaborate on the impact of the activities and accomplishments mentioned in the self-assessment.

- The leadership reference letters should be written by someone who knows the student in a non-academic capacity. It should describe how the student has demonstrated, and will potentially continue to demonstrate, leadership. [2 pages]

- The Vanier nomination letter submitted by the university (unit) should also highlight the student’s leadership qualities—especially if the nominee is an international student, as some context may be required. The university must also address how it will support the nominee to help them fully develop their leadership potential.
Reference Letters (Academic)

Instructions for Referees Page on Vanier CGS Website

All Vanier nominations must have two referees. Vanier has information on their website that is intended to provide instructions for referees. The page outlines the assessment criteria for the Vanier program and other information useful for the referee.

• Solicit referees
• Choose referees judiciously
• Referees use the format given to them by ResearchNet
• Provide them at the very least with a leadership CV so that they can comment on your accomplishments
• If possible, provide them with a completed application so that they are aware of the significance of the project and can comment knowledgeably on your research environment
• **Please inform referee they may be contacted by GPS if there is a need to have the letter revised i.e. spelling, grammatical etc.**
Reference Letters (Leadership)

How to choose the person -
• Someone who has not been involved with you academically (but can be an academic)
• Someone who knows you very well, and can comment on multiple aspects of your life
• Someone who has credibility and stature in the community

The letter –
• Two-pages in length, original signature
• If possible, on letterhead
• Not confidential
• Applicant uploads it on ResearchNet
Research Proposal

- Provide a detailed description of your proposed research project for the period during which you are to hold the award.

- Be as specific as possible (without using jargon)

- Provide background information to position your proposed research within the context of the current knowledge in the field (use a cartoon or figure if necessary)

- State the objectives, hypothesis and research question.

- Outline the experimental or theoretical approach to be taken (citing literature pertinent to the proposal), the methods and procedures to be used, and the contribution of the project to the advancement of knowledge.

- Your research proposal should be readable by someone with a background in the discipline but no specialized knowledge of the particular field of research.

- It has to have a WOW factor for the Vanier Selection Board and be understandable
# Academic Excellence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The candidate's research history and the impact of their activities to</td>
<td>Past Academic Results and Transcripts</td>
<td>• University transcripts</td>
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<tr>
<td>date in their area(s) of expertise to date and in the communities</td>
<td>Institutions comments</td>
<td>• Institutional Nomination letter</td>
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<tr>
<td>associated with their research are important indicators of their potential</td>
<td>Scholarships/award (competitiveness, amount, duration</td>
<td>• Common CV</td>
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<td>as research leaders of tomorrow. Reviewers should consider the sphere</td>
<td>and prestige)</td>
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<td>of influence of candidates relative to others along the following</td>
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<td>continuum of expanding impact:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Research program</td>
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<td>• Canadian university</td>
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<td>• Research community</td>
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<td>• International research community</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Society at large</td>
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<tr>
<td>In the case of those with non-traditional academic paths, consideration</td>
<td>Duration of previous studies</td>
<td>• Academic Background section—Common CV • University transcripts Research Program • Personal Leadership Statement</td>
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<td>should be given to standards of research productivity, etc. for their</td>
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<td>level of experience/qualifications relative to a PhD student.</td>
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# Research Potential

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<th>Criterion</th>
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| **Research Potential**<br>Demonstrated by the candidate’s research history, his/her interest in discovery, the proposed research and its potential contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field, and any anticipated outcomes. | Academic training and relevant work experience (co-op included) | • Work Experience section – Common CV  
• Personal Leadership Statement  
• Referee assessments |
| | Contribution to research and development | • Research contributions  
• Referee assessments  
• Common CV |
| | Research Proposal (feasibility, merit and significance) | • Research Proposal |
| | Critical thinking, application of knowledge, judgment, originality, initiative, autonomy, enthusiasm for research | • Personal Leadership Statement  
• Referee Assessments  
• Institutional Nomination letter |
# Leadership

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<th>Source</th>
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| **Leadership (Potential and Demonstrated Ability):** Given the prestige of the Vanier CGS program, this is an important criterion that has to be assessed in an indirect manner, since there is no opportunity for the selection committee to interview candidates. When assessing the leadership criterion, consider how the nominee has gone above and beyond the expected norms in order to overcome obstacles, foster others, spearhead change, or otherwise demonstrate Leadership. | Personal achievement | • Impactful involvement and achievement in professional programs/association such as sports, arts, science, business etc  
• Entrepreneurial achievement (start-up company, establishing an NGO or charitable initiative, establishing arts/sports based festivals/competitions);  
• Foreign study |
| | Involvement in academic life | • Mentoring/teaching;  
• Supervisory experience;  
• Involvement in student government and in the institution community, including committees, teams, senate, boards, ethics committees, etc.;  
• Project/lab management;  
• Roles in academic/professional societies;  
• Organization of conferences, meetings, courses etc. |
| | Volunteerism/community outreach | • Involvement in charity or not-for-profit organizations. |
## Leadership cont’d

| Civic engagement | • parliamentary page positions and internships;  
|                  | • political activity;  
|                  | • elected positions  
| Goal achievement | • a clear vision of what they want to accomplish;  
|                  | • a developed personal vision for the future that defines a impactful/meaningful change for the community or a group, cause or organization;  
|                  | • strategizes on how to achieve desired outcomes and has specific, realistic and timely goals.  
| Self-management  | • knows how to prioritize and complete tasks to reach the desired outcome and is confident of success;  
|                  | • establishes learning goals and tasks;  
|                  | • reaches goals in an efficient, organized and innovative way; and  
|                  | • is constantly working on self-improvement  
| Integrity        | • acts consistently with core ethical and personal values and convictions; and  
|                  | • accepts personal accountability for the consequences of their actions/decisions.  
| Other characteristics | • is creative and takes initiative;  
|                  | • is curious;  
|                  | • deals well with complexity;  
|                  | • has a strong sense of reality;  
|                  | • is courageous;  
|                  | • is strategic, a big-picture thinker;  
|                  | • focuses on solutions, not problems;  
|                  | • is capable of producing extraordinary results; and  
|                  | • is able to solve real problems and create real products.  

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Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship
Leadership cont’d

| Social skills | • knows how to develop positive relationships with a diverse range of people;  
|              | • cares about and listens to what others say and gives feedback;  
|              | • knows how to motivate individuals;  
|              | • is persuasive;  
|              | • is supportive of peers;  
|              | • is able to negotiate;  
|              | • is viewed as trustworthy, ethical and dependable;  
|              | • is well-respected; and  
|              | • displays mastery of presentation skills and public communications. |

**Notes:**
The evaluation on this criterion should not be based on only the nominating letter but also on the referee assessment and the leadership reference letters:
• Look for well-rounded individuals that went above and beyond then the expect norms.
When evaluating this criterion, reference the instructions provided to candidates.
More information on leadership is available in the SSHRC-funded study, Leadership at the Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Levels [PDF (260 KB)].

*This list is not intended to include all possible categories and is provided for guidance only.*
NEW: French Applications: Personal Leadership Statement and Research Proposal

Page Limit

• In order to ensure an equitable amount of space for the personal leadership statement and the research proposal written in either official language, the Personal Leadership Statement and the Research Proposal attachments for nominations submitted in French are now permitted to be a maximum of 2.5 pages. This is due to evidence demonstrating that documents written in French require approximately 20% more space than similar documents in English.

• **NOTE**: Any pages over the allotted page limit for the Personal Leadership Statement and the Research Proposal (maximum of 2 pages for English applications and maximum of 2.5 pages for French applications) will be removed with **no further notification** to the App.

NEW: Lay Abstract: To help the selection committee members identify the supervisor, nominee will be asked to indicate the supervisor’s name and Institution at the beginning of the lay abstract.
NEW – International Transcripts

• If a nominee has international transcripts: Institutions (academic units) must attach a 250-word summary to describe the variations in the grading system from the country of the transcript and the Canadian level equivalents, and/or explain international credentials and equivalencies. The summary should be a PDF document attached at the beginning of their transcripts. This information is being requested by the selection committee.

• REMINDER: College or CEGEP (college of general and professional education) transcripts should be submitted only if credits earned at a college or CEGEP have been transferred and the grade does not appear on the university transcripts.
REMINDER – Self-Identified Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit and/or Métis) applicants

- Academic units may recommend applications from self-identified Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit, and/or Métis) to the Vanier CGS competition above and beyond their departmental quota.

- Indigenous applicants must agree to their personal information being used for this purpose by making the appropriate selection in the application form by attaching the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship (Vanier CGS): Voluntary Self-Identification Form to their Applications in ResearchNet.

- For those who choose to self-identify as Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit, and/or Métis) they have been instructed to complete the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship (Vanier CGS): Voluntary Self-Identification Form for Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit and/or Métis) Applicants and upload it within their application. This form may be used by Research Administrators to identify self-declared Indigenous applicants.

- Should the institution wish to request a quota above and beyond the institutional quota, it is the responsibility of the Research Administrators to submit the list identifying Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit, and/or Métis) applications and send it via email to the Vanier-Banting Secretariat (vanier@cihr-irsc.gc.ca).
REMINDER- Format of documents

- Candidate must use either Arial, Calibri or Time New Roman font size of 12-point black type. Maximum of six lines per inch. Do not use condensed/narrow font sizes, type density, or line spacing. Smaller text in tables, charts, figures, and graphs and references (format at discretion of candidates) is acceptable as long as it is legible when the page is viewed at 100%. Note: failure to comply with these requirements can negatively impact the status and evaluation of your nomination in a competition.

REMINDER – Equity, diversity and inclusion

- The Vanier CGS program encourages equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), as part of the Tri-Agency’s broader commitment to excellence in research and research training in Canada.
- EDI considerations must be taken into account throughout the Vanier CGS competition, including during the selection committee member recruitment process and during the selection, endorsement and review processes of an application.
- The EDI page of the Vanier CGS website provides guidelines and resources geared towards applicants, host institutions, referees, and reviewers and readers, and addressing the following topics: research respectfully involving Indigenous communities; reducing unconscious bias, and promoting equity, diversity and inclusion.

Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship
Graphos Writing Support for Vanier Scholarship Nominees

Graphos Vanier Writing Workshop "Writing Your Vanier Fellowship Application" 
Wednesday, July 27, 2022, 12:30pm-2:00 pm (EDT, UTC – 04:00) via Zoom.

• 1.5-hour workshop led by a Vanier recipient. Workshop participants will review sample funded applications and identify ways to structure their writing with the non-specialist review panel in mind.

Graphos Vanier Review Groups between August 4-19, 2022. First come, first served. Exact dates/times to be scheduled with each group (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC)

• A review group consists of 5-6 Vanier applicants who exchange their fellowship applications for feedback and then gather for a remote meeting. The review group will be facilitated by a McGill Vanier recipient, who will also provide feedback on everyone’s applications.

• In the week before the group meeting, participants are expected to share their documents and provide constructive criticism on one another’s work.

• Finally, the group will meet remotely via Zoom for about 3 hours to discuss everyone’s documents.

The deadline to register is 8:00 am, Monday, July 25, 2022 here: https://forms.office.com/r/B6GLfEkbE5
Next steps

• Get PINs for Common CV, ResearchNet
• Contact academic referees through ResearchNet
• Contact Leadership referee
• Get writing advice
• Convince your Department/Unit to help with editing
• By **Sept 15**th, you have to upload a *pristine* application on ResearchNet

Good Luck!
Help with Writing

McGill Writing Centre
• **Tutorial Service:**
  – Can book up to 7 hours/semester. Appointments fill quickly so book in advance!

Skillsets
• **Would You Fund It? Fellowship Consultation Session TBA**
Resources

Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies contact – graduatefunding.gps@mcgill.ca

ResearchNet Support - support@cihr-irsc.gc.ca


Questions?

Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship