3.1.4. Review and pre-scoring of nominations

Selection committee members review and pre-score their assigned nominations using ResearchNet.

a. Introduction

Using ResearchNet, selection committee members are to pre-score all nominations assigned to them and are to submit their pre-scores electronically to the Secretariat prior to the selection committee meeting. A specific deadline date will be communicated to committee members in due course.

Is the application eligible for support?

The Secretariat is responsible for screening all nominations against eligibility requirements to ensure that the candidate is eligible to apply to the Vanier CGS program. Selection committee members are invited to bring any concerns or questions regarding the eligibility of a candidate to the attention of the Secretariat staff, but should proceed with the review of the nomination while the situation is assessed.

Is the proposed research contrary to the Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research?

If you judge that the proposed research may be contrary to the Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research or if you have any ethical concerns with respect to the nomination, proceed with the review as usual and inform the Secretariat of your concerns as soon as possible.

b. Selection criteria

When scoring nominations, provide scores that establish the rank of the nomination relative to the other nominations in the cohort, keeping in mind the stage and nature of the candidate’s academic career. Nominations must receive a score of 3.1 or higher for each of the three criteria in order to be considered for funding.

Candidates are evaluated and selected on the basis of the following three criteria, which are weighted equally by the selection committees:

1. academic excellence;
2. research potential; and
3. leadership (potential and demonstrated ability).

1. Academic excellence, as demonstrated by past academic results and by transcripts, awards and distinctions.
The candidate's research history and the impact of their activities in their area of expertise to date are important indicators of their potential as research leaders of tomorrow. Reviewers should consider the sphere of influence of candidates relative to others along the following continuum of expanding impact:

- Research program
- Canadian institution
- Research community
- International research community
- Society at large

In evaluating this criterion, both the prestige of the Vanier CGS and the stage and nature of the candidate's academic career should be considered. In the case of health professionals, consideration should be given to standards of research productivity, etc. for their level of experience/qualifications relative to a PhD student. For applicants who have relevant work experience, scientific productivity prior to graduate school should be considered.

Supporting evidence to be evaluated for this criterion:

- Academic record (institution transcripts)
- Choice of candidate (nomination letter)
- Scholarships/awards (CCV)
- Duration of previous studies (academic background, CCV, institution transcripts and special circumstances)

2. **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.

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)
Mobility: Students are instructed to include a strong and compelling justification as to why they have chosen the same/nominating institution to undertake their PhD, and are told that this will be assessed as part of the review process. In an effort to support students in broadening their research horizons and seeking new challenges, the Vanier CGS program strongly encourages candidates to pursue their studies beyond the institution that granted their undergraduate and/or previous graduate degrees.

3. 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.

Leadership could include the following:

- **Personal achievement:**
  - impactful involvement and achievement in professional programs/associations such as sports, arts, science, business etc.
  - entrepreneurial achievement (start-up company); and/or
  - foreign travel and 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 management;
  - roles in academic/professional societies; and/or
  - organization of conferences, meetings, courses etc.
- **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**

*This list is not intended to include all possible categories and is provided for guidance only.*

**Assessment of leadership**

Leadership could be assessed with the following personal and/or social skills:

- **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; and
- 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.

- **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.

More information on leadership is available in the SSHRC-funded study, *Leadership at the Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Levels* [PDF (260 KB)].

Supporting evidence to be evaluated for this criterion:

- 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 special circumstances)
- 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.

Pre-scoring

Selection committee members assign a score between 0.1 and 9.0 (in increments of 0.1, with 9.0 being the highest and 0.1 being lowest) to their assigned nominations for each of the three criteria. **ResearchNet** will automatically calculate the nomination's overall score by averaging the score assigned to each criterion.

In order to encourage selection committee members to differentiate between highly promising candidates and to ensure that the full range of the scale is used, a **forced binning system has been implemented**. The binning is done on the overall score and not on each criterion. The nominations assigned to a selection committee member must fall within each of the three following bins according to the proportion indicated in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding recommendation</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommended</td>
<td>6.1 – 9.0</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could be recommended</td>
<td>3.1 – 6.0</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not recommended</td>
<td>0.1 – 3.0</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remaining 25% may be distributed between the three bins as selection committee members deem appropriate, in order to compensate for a relatively strong or a relatively weak subset of nominations. We recommend that selection committee members review a number of nominations before entering scores, to establish a frame of reference for selection committee members to score all of their assigned nominations. An electronic worksheet is provided to members to assist with the task of scoring and binning.

In order for this system to work effectively, it is essential that the entire range within a bin be used. Therefore, every effort should be made to delineate nominations within a bin. For example, if 3 nominations are placed within the top bin then one should be ranked highest and one lowest with the remaining nomination ranked in between, if appropriate.

As nomination volumes for this program are difficult to predict, reviewers are encouraged to scale the level of effort for reviews of lower quality nominations to the number of nomination assigned (the higher the nomination volume, the lower the time spent on nominations deemed to be in the "not recommended" range). Depending on the nomination volume received, variations on the forced binning system and/or triage of lower quality nominations may be implemented.
Note: Selection committee members are required to bring their personal notes on their assigned nominations to the selection committee meeting. All notes will be securely destroyed after the selection committee meeting.

Reviewers' pre-scores must be submitted electronically to the Secretariat using ResearchNet prior to the selection committee meeting. Selection committee members are encouraged to contact the Secretariat staff at any time if they need assistance during the pre-scoring process.