Fellowships and Awards Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

GPA Calculation & Foreign Grade Conversion: NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR, Vanier

unit / department administrator use for Fellowships purposes

Ester Di Cori Fellowships Officer September 19, 2011



This information is here to help you use GPA Spreadsheet also used in the admissions process to help calculate GPA for Fellowships purposes. We'll also show you how to convert grades from foreign transcripts so that those degrees can be evaluated using the same GPA Spreadsheet.



You will need all of the transcripts in the application. If all not yet arrived in your office, you may need to wait.

Each competition has different GPA requirements. Please read the competition information before you begin. This information is available through the GPS website: http://www.mcgill.ca/gps/staff

The GPA spreadsheet is an Excel form which is linked to from the GPS website.

If your applicant has a transcript from an institution from outside Canada or the US, you will need to consult the International Degree Equivalency Fact Sheet for that country. This is also linked to from the GPS website.

GPA calculations: What do I need to DO?

"How to" GPA: 3 Easy Steps!

- 1. Figure out what grades are part of the GPA for relevant competition
 - NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR, Vanier = last two years of full-time study or equiv.
- 2. Enter this data on a single GPA Calculation sheet
 - What do I type on the GPA Calculation sheet?
 - How much information does GPS need to see?
 - How do I read this non-McGill/foreign transcript?
- 3. If the GPA does not meet minimum requirements, ensure that is it justified in the appropriate place in the application (if allowable)
 - What is an acceptable "justification"?

W McGill

Believe it or not, there are really only 2 or 3 main steps associated with calculating a GPA. Most of it is just data entry, but sometimes it's difficult to decide what data you ought to enter, and what to do when the outcome places an otherwise high achieving student out of the eligible range of GPA.

Defining Reference Periods: "Last two years of full-time study" or equivalent: (applies to NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR, Vanier)

When you have this situation	the Last Reference Period is:	and the Second Last Reference Period is:
Applicant has 2 or more terms of Graduate studies with grades	Graduate Record (CPGA with weighted courses) to date This means <u>ALL</u> Master's and Doctoral study combined, including multiple Master's degrees or previous attempts at PhD level	Last year of full-time undergraduate study or equivalent (min. 24 graded credits). Terms cannot be dissected.
Applicant has no graduate grades OR Applicant has only 1 term of graduate grades Examples: • graduate applicants with only research and no graded credits • applicants in first term of Graduate studies • direct-entry from undergraduate • applicant in final year of undergraduate studies	Last year of full-time undergraduate study or equivalent (min. 24 graded credits). Include any graduate grades in this reference period. Terms cannot be dissected	Second last year of full-time undergraduate study or equivalent (min. 24 graded credits). Terms cannot be dissected.

"Full time" = min. 24 credits in an academic year.



When applicant has no graduate grades OR only 1 term of graduate grades (applies to NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR, Vanier)

Finding the Last Year of Full-time Study, or equivalent:

- Find the last course on study record
- Start counting the credits, going backwards
- STOP counting when you reach 24 credits (or all graduate grades)
- IF you are in the middle of a term, you must finish counting the entire term (ie. credit count will exceed 24 credits)

Finding the <u>Second-Last Year</u> of Full-time Study, or equivalent:

- Start where you left off for Last Year of Full-time Study
- Start counting the credits, going backwards
- · STOP counting when you reach 24 credits
- IF you are in the middle of a term, you must finish counting the entire term (ie. credit count will exceed 24 credits)



So, what is a "full year" of study?

At McGill, a full-time year equals 24 credits, usually 12 credits per term. When a student has registered for exactly 12 credits per terms, it's pretty easy to identify.

However, when a student has not registered for 12 credits per term, the math will be less exact. For this reason, an application may have more than 24 credits in a reference period. Why will be there be more than 24? If a student earned 6 credits each term rather than 12 (perhaps because they were studying part-time), a "full year" will actually be composed of three terms of study at 9 credits each, which totals 27 credits. This may encompasses two academic years on the calendar, but is only considered of one full-time year, for these competitions.

Each undergraduate reference period should be determined in the same manner. Be sure not to miss a term between reference periods. Remember, Summer-term courses and transfer credits count, too!

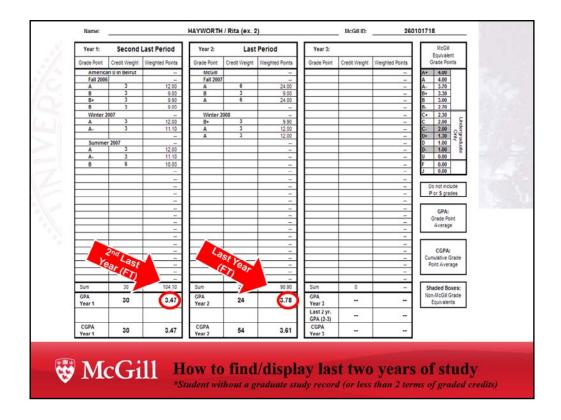
Year 1:	Under	graduate Year 2: Graduate		Year 3:			McGill			
Grade Point	Credit Weight	Weighted Points	Grade Point	Credit Weight	Weighted Points	Grade Point	Credit Weight	Weighted Points	Equivalent Grade Points	
									A+ 4.00	
Winter 2				2006-2008				-	A 4.00	
Α-	6	11,10	Α	3	12.00		_		A- 3.70	
B+	3	19.80	A-	6	22.20				B+ 3.30	
Α-	3	11.10	A		24.00	-	_		B 3.00 B- 2.70	
Fall 2005		-	PhD to de		-	_	_	-		
A Pail 2005	3	12.00			-		_		C+ 2.30 C 2.00 S	
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B+	3	9.90				_	_		D+ 1.30 2.9	
B+	3	9.00			-		_	-	C 2.00 C- 2.00 D+ 1.30 D 1.00 D- 1.00	
D	,	9.00						-	D- 1.00	
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		-	7		-		_	-	P or S grades	
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			_	_	-	_	_			
	-	-			-	-	_	-	GPA:	
		-			-		_	-	Grade Point	
		-			-				Average	
		-	_		-		_	-		
		-			-		_	-		
					-			-	CGPA:	
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					- 14					
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2	nd Last		rear z	st Year			_			
	(FT)		La			Last 2 yr.				
Y	eal			(FI)			_	-		
	24	3.53		39	3.66					
Year 1	7.72		Year 2	273	200	Year 3	55	200		
Year 1	##/	Gill	CGI Year 2	(FT) 39		GPA (2-3) CGPA Year 3	-	-	rs of study	y

Here is an example of how you would display the grades for a student with a graduate record of study.

Please note that in the Undergraduate column, we have entered text to make it clear where the grades came from on a transcript. This information is exceptionally useful to GPS because, as you know, some transcripts display information in a manner that is not very user-friendly or intuitive. When we review the file, it takes us less time to verify the accuracy of the calculation. If we think we see a discrepancy, it will be faster for the department to identify.

In the Graduate column, you see that the sub-heading of "Masters 2006-08" identify that these grades were earned over multiple terms. This identifies that the student has an ample graduate record, enough upon which to base the Last Reference Period. We also see an acknowledgement that there is Doctoral work showing on the transcript. Either this student is in their first term of the PhD, or all the work to date has been something other than graded coursework. Either way, it's good to show us you saw that was on the transcript (like entering "not applicable" on a line on a form, instead of leaving it blank).

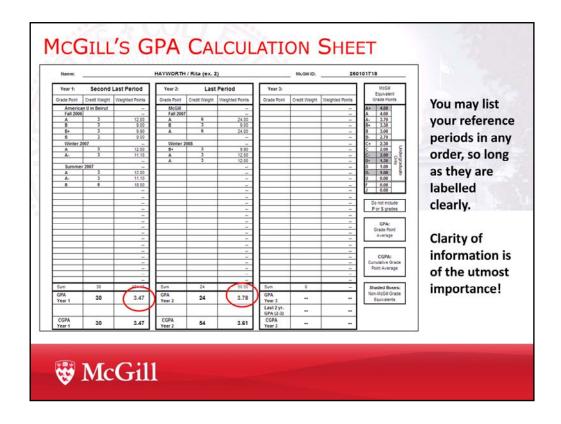
These columns are called "Undergraduate" or "Graduate", but they could also be called "Second Last Reference Period" and "Last Reference Period". In the case of displaying your information in only two columns, the information could also have appeared in the reverse order. The GPA spreadsheet will calculate all of that for you if you display it on one page, without leaving blank columns. If you assessed these exact periods of study during admissions process and have those GPA sheets on file, you could submit this information on two different pages **ONLY** because we do not need to carry over information from one column to another.



Here is another example of a fairly average application, displaying *clearly labelled* reference periods.

Notice the slightly different titles on the columns, and the identification of the school in the columns. While not entirely necessary, identifying the school is helpful to align the spreadsheet entry to the different transcripts that will be in the application.

It is important to ensure correct chronology. Often, panelists may be forgiving to a lower GPA at an early stage of study, especially when they see improvement as the applicant has specialized in his/her studies.



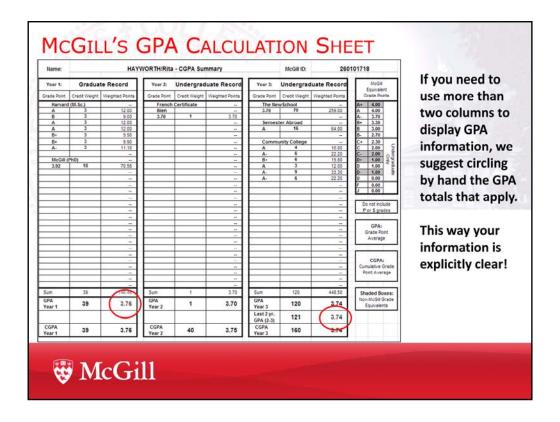
Please type the applicant's name on the top of the spreadsheet in case it gets separated from the rest of the application. McGill ID numbers are useful, too.

Each column should be clearly identified. If your grades in any reference period exceed the length of one column, feel free to continue in the next column. The spreadsheet accommodates some carry-over of data from one column to the next (we'll show this in the next example).

In the sub-column called "Grade Point", you can enter either an alphabetical value (A, A-, B+, etc) or numeric value (0.0-4.0). This information is indicated in the box on the upper right called "McGill Equivalent Grade Points". From there, you will see that both the letter "A" and the grade point of "4.0" will be treated the same, mathematically. You may choose whether you prefer using letters or numbers. Note that percentage grades cannot be entered.

In the sub-column called "Credit Weight", you must enter a numeric value. In the case of a McGill transcript, these numbers are like to be multiples of three. If you have a transcript from a school where regular, one-term courses seem to have individual credit weights that are less than 3 or more than 4, you may need to consult the section on recording information from non-McGill transcripts. We try to equalize the credit weights to give an accurate picture of the student's academic achievement.

Finally, notice that text can be entered in the "Grade Point" sub-column, and most folks find it very useful to do so. You may also leave blank lines in any given column without affecting the GPA formulas.



This is just a quick example of how the GPA sheet carries-over details from two consecutive columns. This is especially useful when a student has many grades or has attended several schools and you wish to leave space to easily identify the differences.

The Graduate Record (in this case, the Last Reference Period) is plainly shown at the bottom of the column as "GPA Year 1".

The total of the Undergraduate Record (or in this case, the Second-Last Reference Period) can be determined at the bottom of the third column as "Last 2 yr GPA (years 2-3)".

For this student, the Last Reference Period GPA is 3.76 and the Second-Last Reference Period is 3.74. There is no harm in circling these numbers on your hard copy, if you are using many columns and you think it would be helpful. Likewise, if you have already calculated an entire degree during the admission process and which to use those separate pages, you may do so provided that the correct terms of study are added up in the right order.

If you wanted to determine the totals of all three columns together, you would look at the bottom of column three for "CGPA Year 3".

Calculating GPA's that combine different credit weight systems (non-McGill, foreign transcript)

Calculating GPA's that combine different **credit weight** systems.

Convert them to a McGill equivalent credit weight

U of Toronto, University of Western Ontario, etc.

2-term Course (1.0) = 6 cr. in McGill system

1-term Course (0.5) = 3 cr. in McGill system

What about.....

- ▶ A term away at a University that has no credit value for courses, but McGill granted 12 credits for 4 courses in a term? 12 credits ÷ 4 courses=3 credits each.
- ➤ One term away in University that has given 45 hours per course for 5 courses? Also 3 credits each. 45 hrs ÷ 13 weeks/term = ~3 hrs/week.



So far, the scenarios presented have addressed about 70-90% of what you'll receive from applicants, especially for students with a mostly Canadian record of study.

Some North American universities show grades in percentages, on a GPA system based on 4.3 rather than 4.0, or use an alternate credit weighting system. In most of those cases, the transcript key will provide

With overseas transcripts there can be great variation on grading and credits, not to mention that they are not always written in English or French. Please remember that we require an official translation in either English or French if that is not the language of the original transcript. BOTH the original language document and the translation should be included in the application.

If the credit weighting seems unusual against the McGill system, please convert them to the nearest McGill equivalent. First, consult the transcript key. Secondly, take a moment to read the transcript and see what passes for a regular, full-time term (ie. 12 credits at McGill) and see if you can find the best pattern. If in doubt, please contact GPS. We'll try to help find a reasonable equivalent.

For example, a one-term course with 3 lecture hours per week is a half-credit at UofT, whereas it would be 3 credits at McGill. Therefore, 1 credit would equal 6 at McGill, etc. It is important that you complete these process, as it will take several years of study to add up to a full-year of 24 credits, if you do not!!

International Degree Equivalency

Examples of Variations on Grading

(more at: http://www.mcgill.ca/gps/staff/)

China, Mexico, Iran, and others:

Grade by grade letter conversion

Sometimes credit weight is in hours

France, UK, Germany, India, and others:

Use annual or overall standings, not grade by grade conversion.

If no credit weight, assume equal weight

Unknown system:

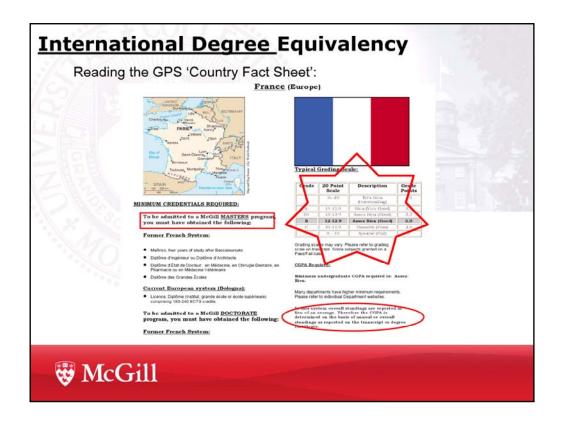
Qualitative information provided (back of transcript)

Contact GPS!



The moment you encounter a transcript that is not from Canada or the USA, please immediately look for both a transcript key and a country guide on the International Degree Equivalency pages. You may also search the website of the issuing institution for information on their grading system. If the student was assessed for admission to your department, you should have this information already in the student record.

If you have consulted all of these resources and still have difficulties deciding how to recording information, contact GPS.



Here's an example of the information you'll find on the International Degree Equivalency fact sheet.

The information in the red, square box helps explain the differences between undergraduate work and graduate work, according to McGill. This should help you determine if certain grades or transcripts should be regarded as part of a graduate or undergraduate record.

The grid highlighted by the red star shows a grade-by-grade equivalency. There are alpha grades, numeric, grades, verbal descriptions, and grade points. This grid will show you how to assign an alpha grade or grade point to the type of information that is typically shown on that country's transcript.

Finally, and very importantly, the red oval shows a paragraph that exists for some countries (examples include France, UK, Germany, India, Hong Kong). If this paragraph exists, it says: "In this system overall standings are reported in lieu of an average. Therefore the CGPA is determined on the basis of annual or overall standings as reported on the transcript or degree certificate." This means that you do not convert the transcript grade-by-grade. You should look for an overall standing of the year, or in the case of overall CGPAs, the overall standing of the degree certificate. It's actually a very nice short-cut to finding the grade! Please refer to earlier examples of how this can be clearly shown on the GPA sheet.

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	Vu le code de l'éducation et notame	nent son article L.613-1,	AUG 2 0 2008				
	Vu le décret 2002-481 du 8 avril 20	DEPARTMENT OF MCCHANICAL ENGINEERING					
	Vu l'arrété du 25 avril 2002 relatif au dipôtme national de master,						
		e 2005 relatif aux habilitations de l'École nationale supérieure de l'ENSICA, l'ENSTIMAC à délivrer les diplômes nationaux,	l'aéronautique et de l'espace,				
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Here is an example of a French degree certificate. The overall standing is "Assez bien". By referring back to the country fact sheet, we see that "Assez bien" is equivalent to a McGill grade of B, or 3.0. Either the letter "B" or the number "3.0" on the GPA sheet and add an appropriate credit weight.

At the undergraduate level, credit values of 12 or 24 can be assigned to terms or full years that appear to be full-time study. In a Graduate Study Period, credit numbers are not a determinate of inclusion, but a Master's degree of approximately 3-6 terms can be assigned a weight of 45 credits, since that is the average weight of a masters degree at McGill.

If you have difficulty assessing an appropriate credit weight to a degree such as this, please contact GPS.

International Degree Equivalency

- Q: In Germany, the grade scale is whole numbers (1-6, 1=highest). The student has a grade of 2.5. Can I round up the German grade to a 1?
 - A: No, <u>do not</u> round up. If your Dept Evaluation Committee feels the student has been penalized through grade conversion, they may address this point in a justification (on appraisal form or separate letter, if allowed).
- Q: This transcript from Iran is not in English or French. I have a translation as required, but must include the original-language transcript?
 - A: Yes. If a transcript/degree/certificate is not in French or English, we require both the original-language transcript AND a translation into either English or French.



Please follow the country guide instructions exactly. If you have a strong disagreement with the way in which the student grades are being interpreted, you may consult with GPS. However, in most cases we will ask for this point to be addressed in the departmental recommendation remarks.

Please ensure you include all the information about the transcript that can be used for a professor on the review panel to be able to understand the student's achievement. Some academics will have an excellent understanding of the original-languages transcript, others will require the French or English translation.

GPA Conversion - HELP!

Sources of Information:

- Transcript key. Gives specific institution information
- GPS website: http://www.mcgill.ca/gradapplicants/apply/prepare/requirements/internationaldegree/
- Your department's Admission file, if available

This is what Fellowships will use if you contact us.

Please first use these resources and if you are having trouble, we will try to help.



GPA conversion sometimes resembles an art, rather than a science. If you have consulted all the information made available to you and still feel unable to decide on an appropriate equivalency, please contact GPS.

If you're unsure, it's better to contact us early while the file is in your hands and changes can be made to FAD and for your departmental ranking/review process, rather than us discovering a problem later. We'll work through it on the phone or by email before you have to submit the file to GPS.

Justification of low GPA

What are admissible "compelling" circumstances?

- Illness of student or immediate family member: Student was a primary care-giver
- Foreign GPA conversion: Converted grade does not reflect student achievement
- Courses completed in an unrelated field of study
- Significant field experience gained since studies earlier in academic career: A significant gap between earlier studies and current program

These circumstances should be addressed in the Departmental assessment or a separate letter, as applicable to the competition.

In some competitions, there will be no exceptions made to GPA requirement.



Explanations of the inclusion of this student in the competition should be address through comments on recommendations already allowed by the competitions. That is, on required forms. Extra documents are not acceptable. A recommending supervisor and/or the departmental nomination is the most appropriate place to address a low GPA.

In some cases, this justification will guarantee the inclusion of the student, in some cases it will not. Again, if in doubt, contact GPS.

Remember:

- ▶ Please ensure you consult transcript keys that accompany transcripts (often printed on reverse).
- Please ensure you include transcript keys and country guides in your application
- ▶ You may consult the website of the issuing institution



While we wish for you to consult all available resources on your own, we are also available to help!

I hope this has demystified the GPA calculation process to a certain extent. Contact GPS-Fellowships if the resources available don't seem to answer your questions.

Happy calculating!