Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships

Demystifying the process

http://www.vanier.gc.ca/en/home-accueil.html

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

Outline

Overview of the 2023 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 2023 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 2023 Competition Process

The nominating university (McGill) sets its internal deadline. (10-September-2023)

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 1nd, 2023

> ❖**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 2024.

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Overview of the 2023 Competition Process

Applications are prepared and submitted using the <u>ResearchNet</u> appplication 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 for applicant deadline: <u>10 Sept 2023, 20:00 (8:00PM) EST</u>***

- Application ***<u>must be complete</u>*** on ResearchNet by this date

(including all reference letters)

- ***Departments/Units will have earlier internal deadlines – speak with them***

Quota

Vanier Secretariat annually awards up to 166 scholarships

McGill University quota for 2023 Competition
> ➤CIHR 24
> ➤NSERC 12
> ➤SSHRC 14

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

McGill awards for the past 3 years

Year	CIHR	NSERC	SSHRC
2020-2021	9	10	7
2021-2022	10	6	6
2022-2023	10	5	4

Review process

Selection criteria (weighted equally)

- **Academic excellence**, as demonstrated by past academic results and by **transcripts**, awards and distinctions.(**CCV**)

- **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

  More details are later in slides.

Application Documents Requirements

Nomination Letter - Submitted by department in support of applicant.

ALL post secondary institution transcripts - (scanned and submitted by department for each supported applicant)

Applicants are responsible for submitting ALL official transcripts to their respective department by the deadline set by department.

Application Documents Requirements

Personal Leadership Statement Document (English applications 2 pages max) (French applications 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?

Application Documents Requirements

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 Letters (2)

- 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**. If possible, on letterhead, not confidential, and uploaded on ResearchNet by applicant

- For more information on this task, please refer to the instructions page on Vanier website.

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 wherever possible

Application Documents Requirements

Project references - maximum five pages (written by the student)

Research contributions - maximum one page (written by the student)

Special circumstances - (optional) – maximum one page (written by the student)

Applicants are responsible for uploading these documents to their respective ResearchNet application.

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.

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Research Proposal

Research Proposal (English applications 2 pages max) (French applications 2.5 Pages Max)

- 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 in order 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.

- **MUST have a <u>WOW FACTOR</u> for the Vanier Selection Board and be understandable**

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.

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Evaluation Criteria-Academic Excellence

Criterion	Indicator	Source
Academic Excellence The candidate's academic history and their demonstrated excellence in academic achievement throughout the course of their scholarly career. Members should consider the entire academic record when assessing academic excellence. Members should favourably consider situations where an applicant has demonstrated an improving trend or provided an appropriate explanation for their academic record in the Personal Leadership Statement document of the application	Academic records, such as: •Transcripts •Duration of previous studies •Program requirements and courses pursued •Course load •Relative standing in program (if available)	•Academic transcripts •Academic Background section—Common CV •Personal Leadership Statement
	Institution's comments	•Institutional Nomination letter
	Scholarships and awards (competitiveness, amount, duration and prestige)	•Common CV

The three federal granting councils have signed the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), which recognizes that scholarly outputs are not limited to published journal articles but can include a broader range of outputs. Reviewers must assess productivity broadly (i.e., not just based on publications) and consider the applicant's context (e.g., career stage, leave history).

Reviewers must consider:
• the context of the applicant (e.g., leave history, career stage, area(s) of research, experiential knowledge, diverse career paths, family responsibilities, pandemic impact) and how it may have affected their progress outlined under the Special Circumstance document.

Evaluation Criteria-Research Potential

Criterion	Indicator	Source
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, and any anticipated outcomes. Reviewers should consider the sphere of influence of candidates relative to others along the following continuum of expanding impact: • Research program • University • Research community • International research community • Society at large Consideration should be given to the candidate's standards of research productivity, etc. for their level of experience/qualifications relative to their personal circumstances (applicant's stage of study, lived experience and knowledge systems).	Academic training and relevant work experience (co-op included) Lived experience and traditional teaching	•Work Experience section – Common CV •Personal Leadership Statement •Referee assessments
	Quality of contributions and extent to which they advance the field of research – contributions may include research publications, patents, reports, posters, abstracts, monographs, books, guidelines, datasets, code, tools, standards, software and commercialized products, protocols, knowledge mobilization outputs, community outputs, etc.	•Research contributions •Referee assessments •Common CV
	Research Proposal (feasibility of research, merit, significance and expected contributions to research)	•Research Proposal

Evaluation Criteria-Research Potential cont'd.

Criterion	Indicator	Source
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, and any anticipated outcomes. Reviewers should consider the sphere of influence of candidates relative to others along the following continuum of expanding impact: • Research program • University • Research community • International research community • Society at large Consideration should be given to the candidate's standards of research productivity, etc. for their level of experience/qualifications relative to their personal circumstances (applicant's stage of study, lived experience and knowledge systems).	Demonstration of sound judgment and ability to think critically Demonstration of responsible and ethical research conduct, including honest and thoughtful inquiry, rigorous analysis, commitment to safety and to the dissemination of research results and adherence to the use of professional standards Enthusiasm for research, originality, initiative, autonomy, relevant community involvement and outreach Ability or potential to communicate theoretical, technical and/or scientific concepts clearly and logically in written and oral formats Research experience and achievements relative to expectations of someone with your academic experience	•Personal Leadership Statement •Referee Assessments •Institutional Nomination letter •Research Proposal

Evaluation Criteria-Research Potential cont'd.

Note

Sex- and Gender-Based Analysis Plus (SGBA+): In assessing the quality of the applicant's research proposal, consideration of sex, gender and diversity in the research design must be considered, if applicable:

- rationale and methodology for including SGBA+ in the research (from its design to the analysis of research findings) are clearly described;
- should be evaluated in terms of scientific rigour and usefulness of the proposed research.

The agencies have signed the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#) (DORA), which recognizes that scholarly outputs are not limited to published journal articles but can include a broader range of outputs. Reviewers must assess productivity broadly (i.e., not just based on publications) and consider the applicant's context (e.g., career stage, leave history). Reviewers must consider:

- A range of contributions (e.g., research publications, patents, reports, posters, abstracts, monographs, presentations, creative outputs, books, guidelines, standards, software and commercialized products, article preprints, protocols, knowledge mobilization outputs, community outputs, etc.) and impacts (e.g., influence on policy and practice, societal outcomes, distinctions-based, meaningful and culturally safe research).
    - Consider individual workstyles, contributions, commitments, variations in disciplines, and community and cultural standards. Collaboration, teamwork and mentoring are important and valid contributions to research and to training highly qualified personnel.
        - The identity (e.g., sex, gender, race, disability, socio-economic status, etc.) of the applicant should not have an impact on how these contributions are valued.
        - Similar expectations apply to single-authored and multi-authored publications.
        - If applicable, consideration of the merit of non-academic contributions for research respectfully involving Indigenous Peoples must be taken into consideration.

Metrics such as number of publications and citations, and size/number of research grants should not be used in isolation to assess productivity and progress. Reviewers should not use journal-based metrics (e.g., Journal Impact Factors) as surrogate measures of quality and impact of individual research publications. As stated in DORA, the "scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the identity of the journal in which it was published".

Nominations involving Indigenous communities must be assessed by its academic merit as usual, with additional review on the Indigenous research component. In order to be funded, these applications must fulfill the pillars for respectful research engaging with Indigenous Peoples. See the [Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#) page for more information.

Evaluation Criteria-Leadership

Criterion	Indicator	Source
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 to overcome obstacles, foster others, spearhead change, or otherwise demonstrate Leadership. Weigh achievements according to the opportunities presented (lack of opportunities due to socio-economic status, culturally different academic settings for students with foreign academic backgrounds, etc.).	Personal achievement • Excellence in professional programs/association such as sports, arts, science, business etc. (look for impactful involvement; mere participation is not enough) • Entrepreneurial achievement (start-up company, establishing an NGO or charitable initiative, establishing arts/sports-based festivals/competitions) • Foreign study • Ability to overcome personal obstacles and commit to research excellence despite numerous challenges (ex. socio-economic reasons, familial or parental responsibilities, trauma or loss, etc.)	• Common CV • Personal Leadership Statement • Referee Letters • Institutional nomination letters

Evaluation Criteria-Leadership cont'd.

Criterion	Indicator	Source
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 to overcome obstacles, foster others, spearhead change, or otherwise demonstrate Leadership. Weigh achievements according to the opportunities presented (lack of opportunities due to socio-economic status, culturally different academic settings for students with foreign academic backgrounds, etc.).	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.	• Common CV • Personal Leadership Statement • Referee Letters • Institutional nomination letters

Evaluation Criteria-Leadership cont'd.

Criterion	Indicator	Source
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 to overcome obstacles, foster others, spearhead change, or otherwise demonstrate Leadership.	Goal achievement • a clear vision of what they want to accomplish; • a developed personal vision for the future that defines an 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.	• Common CV • Personal Leadership Statement • Referee Letters • Institutional nomination letters
Weigh achievements according to the opportunities presented (lack of opportunities due to socio-economic status, culturally different academic settings for students with foreign academic backgrounds, etc.).	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	

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Evaluation Criteria-Leadership

Criterion	Indicator	Source
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.	Integrity • acts consistently with core ethical and personal values and convictions; and • accepts personal accountability for the consequences of their actions/decisions.	• Common CV • Personal Leadership Statement • Referee Letters • Institutional nomination letters
When assessing the leadership criterion, consider how the nominee has gone above and beyond the expected norms to overcome obstacles, foster others, spearhead change, or otherwise demonstrate Leadership. Weigh achievements according to the opportunities presented (lack of opportunities due to socio-economic status, culturally different academic settings for students with foreign academic backgrounds, etc.).	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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Evaluation Criteria-Leadership cont'd.

Criterion	Indicator	Source
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 to overcome obstacles, foster others, spearhead change, or otherwise demonstrate Leadership. Weigh achievements according to the opportunities presented (lack of opportunities due to socio-economic status, culturally different academic settings for students with foreign academic backgrounds, etc.)	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.	• Common CV • Personal Leadership Statement • Referee Letters • Institutional nomination letters

Evaluation Criteria-Leadership cont'd.

Notes:

The evaluation on this criterion should be based on the institutional nomination letter, the referee assessment letters and the leadership reference letters:

- Look for well-rounded individuals that are above and beyond the expected norms. Also take into consideration the opportunities presented (lack of opportunities due to socio-economic status, culturally different academic settings for students with foreign academic backgrounds, etc.) to nominee.

- 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)]](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.

Evaluation Criteria-Leadership cont'd.

Notes:

The evaluation on this criterion should be based on the institutional nomination letter, the referee assessment letters and the leadership reference letters:

- Look for well-rounded individuals that are above and beyond the expected norms. Also take into consideration the opportunities presented (lack of opportunities due to socio-economic status, culturally different academic settings for students with foreign academic backgrounds, etc.) to nominee.

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Program News & Reminders 2023

IMPORTANT

News and Reminders for Fall 2023 - https://www.mcgill.ca/gps/funding/opportunities/students/vanier
- **NEW - Special Circumstance document [REVISED]**
- **NEW - Personal Leadership Statement [REVISED]**
- **NEW - Attach Other applications materials (Option)**
- **NEW - San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)**

- Reminder - International Transcripts
- Reminder - French Applications: Personal Leadership Statement and Research Proposal Page Limit
- Reminder - Lay Abstract:
- Reminder - College or CEGEP (college of general and professional education) transcripts
- Reminder - Self-Identified Indigenous (First Nation, Inuit et/or Métis) applicants
- Reminder - Sex- and Gender-based Analysis Plus (SGBA+)
- Reminder - Equity, diversity and inclusion
- Reminder - Format of documents
- Reminder - Research respectfully involving and engaging Indigenous communities

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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 **10 September**, you have to submit a *pristine* application on ResearchNet with **ALL** required documents

Resources

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

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

Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship - http://www.vanier.gc.ca/en/home-accueil.html

Instruction to Applicants - http://www.vanier.gc.ca/en/nomination_process-processus_de_mise_en_candidature.html

Information for referees - http://www.vanier.gc.ca/en/information_for_referees-information_a_l_intention_des_repondants.html

Questions