Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships

Demystifying the process

http://www.vanier.gc.ca/eng/home'accueil.html

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

Vanier Canada 2016
Outline

• Overview of the 2016 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 referee
  - academic referee
  - proposal

• Writing help – Graphos/Skillsets/McGill Writing Centre
Overview of the 2016 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.

    - High marks – GPA >3.7 in each of the last 2 yrs
    - Evidence of community involvement beyond academic excellence
    - Success in peer-reviewed competitions (NSERC, CIHR, SSHRC)
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  – 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.

• 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
Overview of the 2016 Competition Process

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  – the candidate informs the faculty of graduate studies 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.

• Applications are prepared and submitted using the ResearchNet application system.

• The nominating university sets its internal deadline.
  - McGill GPS deadline: Sept 21, 2016, 8:00PM
  - Application must be complete on ResearchNet by this date (including all reference letters)
  - Departments/Units will have earlier internal deadlines
  - Most departments can submit 2 - 4 applicants to GPS (quota)
Overview of the 2016 Competition Process

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  – the candidate informs the faculty of graduate studies 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.
• Applications are prepared and submitted using the ResearchNet application system.
• The nominating university sets its internal deadline.
• The nominating university performs its internal candidate-selection process and gives feedback (Sept – Nov 2016).
• The nominating university forwards recommended nominations to the appropriate granting agencies by November 2nd, 2016
  ❖ 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 2017.
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 (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)
  - 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.
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**
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 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**

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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. [1 page]

- 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 letter** 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)

• 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
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
Help with Writing

Graphos
Vainer CIHR, SSHRC and NSERC Fellowship Writing Groups:

• Vanier Writing Workshop "Writing Your Vanier Fellowship Application":
  
  July 13, 12pm-2pm (eastern time)
  
  – 2-hour workshop led by an experienced writing facilitator and current Vanier recipient. Workshop participants will review sample funded applications and identify ways to structure their writing with the non-specialist review panel in mind.
  – It is helpful to have a solid draft of your application to benefit from the workshop. Even if you are not in Montreal, you can participate remotely.
  – Email graphos@mcgill.ca to reserve a space.

• Vanier Application Review Groups:
  
  Between June 20-August 15. Exact dates to be scheduled with each group (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC)
  
  – Review group will consist of 5-7 Vanier applicants who will meet and exchange their fellowship application for feedback.
  – Review group facilitated by a McGill postdoc and a Vanier recipient.
  – Participants are expected to submit their documents in advance of the meeting provide constructive criticism to improve the written documents of the group.
  – Depending on group size, members may meet in-person or remotely via Skype for about 3-5 hours (not counting the time to read and comment on the other applications).
  – The review groups are currently full. If you want to join the waiting list, send an email to graphos@mcgill.ca.
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**
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
• If selected by your department, by **Sept 21**\textsuperscript{st}, you have to upload a **pristine** application on ResearchNet

Good Luck!
Questions?

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