

Vanier Doctoral Canada Graduate Scholarships

Information Session

July 21, 2021





**McMaster University
recognizes and acknowledges
that it is located on the
traditional territories of the
Mississauga and
Haudenosaunee nations, and
within the lands protected by
the “Dish with One Spoon”
wampum agreement.**

Overview of Vanier Scholarship

Background

- Tri-Agency program designed to attract and retain world-class doctoral students to a Canadian University

Value

- \$50,000 per year for up to 3 years

Duration and Start Date

- Up to 3 years depending on how many months of doctoral studies completed.
- Start date of May 2022, September 2022 or January 2023

McMaster Internal Deadline

- Stage 1 – Letter of Intent Package due Tuesday, September 7, 2021

Overview Cont'd

McMaster's Agency Quotas* for the 2022-2023 competition

- CIHR = 10 applicants
- NSERC = 7 applicants
- SSHRC = 4 applicants

***NEW – Indigenous applicants** - Institutions may recommend applications from self-identified Indigenous applicants to the Vanier CGS competition above and beyond their institutional quota.

McMaster Quotas and Results for the last 5 years

Agency	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/2022	
	Quota	Received	Quota	Received	Quota	Received	Quota	Received	Quota	Received
CIHR	10	2	10	6	10	4	10	1	10	2
NSERC	7	0	7	4	7	1	7	2	7	3
SSHRC	5	2	5	0	4	1	4	2	4	2

Overview (cont'd)

- Applicant does not have to be registered or admitted to a graduate program at the time of application
- There is a two-stage internal process at McMaster
- Students **must** have received departmental endorsement to submit a stage one Vanier letter of intent package at McMaster
- If students are endorsed to stage two of the internal competition, they will have to submit a full application through **ResearchNet**

Eligibility

- Canadian Citizens, permanent residents of Canada and international students can apply
- First class average in **EACH** of the last two years of full-time studies completed (2019-20 and 2020-21) or equivalent
 - First class average for Vanier at McMaster is **10 (A-)**
 - Be seeking financial support to pursue your **FIRST** doctoral degree (or combined MA/PhD or MD/PhD)
- Cannot have previously held or currently hold a Tri-Agency doctoral award
- Be nominated by only one Canadian University, which must have received a Vanier CGS allocation

Eligibility (cont'd)

- Intend to pursue, in the summer semester (May 2022) or the academic year following the announcement of results (September 2022 or January 2023), full-time doctoral studies and research at the nominating university
- Have completed no more than 20 months of doctoral studies as of May 1, 2022 (started full-time doctoral studies no earlier than September 2020)
- Have completed no more than 32 months of full-time study in their doctoral program by May 1, 2022 if accelerated directly from a Bachelor's to a PhD (no time spent in a Master's program)
- Have completed no more than 32 months of full-time study in their doctoral program by May 1, 2022 if accelerated from a Master's degree into a Doctoral program without obtaining the Master's degree

Research respectfully involving and engaging Indigenous communities

- Research respectfully involving and engaging Indigenous communities is defined as research in any field or discipline that is:
 - conducted by, grounded in, or engages with First Nations, Inuit, Métis and/or Urban Indigenous communities, societies, and/or individuals, and their wisdom, cultures, experiences, and/or knowledge systems, as expressed in their dynamic forms, past and present.
- If your proposed research respectfully involved Indigenous communities, please include **“This research respectfully involves and engages Indigenous communities”** at the beginning of your lay abstract
- For nominations in which the proposed research respectfully involves and engages Indigenous communities, applicants and nominating institutions should be aware of and refer to relevant principles and protocols established for this type of research
- More details available on the Vanier website

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

- The Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship (Vanier CGS) program strives to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the application, review, and selection processes. To better equip all those participating in the Vanier CGS competition (applicants, nominating institutions, referees, reviewers), the Tri-Agencies have curated an important list of the resources to help guide each group.
- The EDI page of the Vanier CGS website provides guidelines and resources geared towards applicants, host institutions, referees, and **reviewers** and readers (e.g., CIHR Vanier committee underwent unconscious/EDI training)
- The EDI page addresses the following topics:
 - promoting equity, diversity and inclusion in research
 - research respectfully involving and engaging Indigenous communities
 - limiting unconscious bias

Welcome

Our faculty presenters

- **Nancy Carter**, Assistant Dean
Nursing Graduate Program
- **Brenda Vrkljan**, Professor
School of Rehabilitation Science

Our student presenters

- **Sophie Ngana**, CIHR Vanier Scholar, 2021
- **Ahmed Badr**, NSERC Vanier Scholar, 2021
- **Elise Desjardins**, SSHRC Vanier Scholar, 2021

Acknowledgement: Thank you to Antonella (Toni) Masciantonio and Diane Potvin for drafting this presentation. As well, corresponding information on some of the slides that follow was originally developed by: Drs. Nancy Carter & Ryan Van Lieshout (with additions/edits by Dr. Brenda Vrkljan).

Evaluation Criteria

All three criteria carry equal weighting (33.3%) for evaluation by the committee:

- Academic Excellence
- Research Potential
- Leadership

Academic Excellence

- First Class average for the last two completed years (transcripts)
- Ensure any discrepancies in the timeline to degree completion are explained (e.g. leaves of absence, parental leave, etc.)
- Reviewers will look at all your post-secondary grades
- Awards and distinction in your CCV
- Academic Excellence should be integrated in your referees' assessments

Research Potential

- Research proposal and its contribution to the advancement of knowledge in the field, the potential benefit to Canadians and society and any anticipated outcome
- Evidence of research excellence such as journal articles, conference papers, abstracts
- Research potential should be explicit in the referees' assessments
- In many fields, research excellence output is nearly exclusively reliant upon published first author papers
- Committees assess candidate's contribution to research and interest in discovery

Leadership

Leadership (Potential & Demonstrated ability)

As demonstrated by the following indicators: **personal achievement, involvement in academic life, volunteerism/community outreach, civic engagement, goal achievement, self-management, integrity and social skills**

- Leadership can take many forms. Be sure to outline not just your accomplishments, but how those accomplishments involved leveraging your leadership skills to achieve your stated goals
- The selection committee does not consider simply participating in sports, arts, volunteering and employment in leadership positions as demonstrating Leadership in and of themselves

Leadership (cont'd)

- The difference between leadership and volunteering is determined based on the role you had in the extra-curricular activity
 - **Leadership** implies developing a strategic goal by one's self to the benefit of a larger body and delegating tasks to others.
 - **Volunteering** implies following tasks that have been given by others; if you lead the task then that is leadership!
 - Going above and beyond what might be expected

Use this section to position yourself and role in extracurricular events that demonstrate leadership!

Examples of Leadership

- Scientific Organization Student Leadership
- Scientific Meeting Organization Tasks
- University committees
- Position Papers, Clinical Practice Guidelines
- Invited talks
- KT Exercises (especially coordination roles)
 - Community outreach with students, public health, etc
- Awards, Scholarships
- Volunteerism (if you actually led something)
- Recurring newsletter contributions
- Patents

Examples of Leadership (cont'd)

- Assessment/Review Activities
 - Journal reviews
 - Conference reviews
 - Grant reviews
 - Organizational reviews
- Teaching
 - Programs developed and taught
 - Courses developed and taught
- Supervisory Activity
 - Student Supervision
 - Staff Supervision
 - Mentoring

Let's share tips

Putting together the application

- Research Proposal
- Personal Leadership Statement
- CCV
- Two Referee Assessments
- Two Leadership Reference Letters

Remember reviewers of your application come from variety of disciplines and backgrounds!!

You need to write in a way that is accessible (understandable), meaningful and impactful

Tips for the Research proposal

- Reviewers are mostly a (non-specialist audience), and as such your proposal should be written in non-technical terms, avoid jargon!
- Use graphs and images only if reviewers will understand them (they take space away from presenting your proposal)
- Be clear
- Formulate around a well understood hypothesis
- Use full two pages and headings

Personal leadership statement

- This document should present to the committee a clear statement of what challenges and opportunities have shaped your doctoral research
- Please consider the following points when crafting the statement:
 - **Read the Vanier website carefully** and follow instructions
 - Use full two pages
 - Use strong action words and use same words in your CCV
 - Be succinct, concise, and avoid a ‘autobiographical’ approach

Tips for Leadership Statement

‘Engaging’ & ‘Impactful’

- Two page statement highlighting activities as they relate to your future as a leader in your field of research
- Be deliberate when describing activities in which you participated that support your future leadership abilities in your area of research
 - Link your activities to your goals and research program
 - Consider how academic researchers ‘tell their story’
- Clear writing and formatting (spacing, paragraphs, headings)
- Describe what you are doing/have done above and beyond your research and coursework

Tips for Leadership Statement

Objective: To show how you've started on your way to become a future leader and have that potential

- Try to tell a compelling story that links to your research accomplishments and future goals/trajectory
- Where to start
 - List out all of your potential leadership activities
 - Pick the top three
 - Consider how to present for maximum impact

Tips for Leadership Statement Cont'd

- Your leadership statement should be as compelling as your research proposal!
- Modesty is not a virtue here
- When selecting activities, support them by:
 - Describe their significance in terms of your leadership and sphere of influence;
 - Discuss their impact and importance in terms of your career objectives (press interviews, blogs, other coverage can be highlighted)

Crafting your Leadership Statement (cont'd)

- Put strongest roles and proof up front, then add more minor roles, then volunteering (if necessary)
- Provide actual proof of change
 - Explain the role you played in improving/changing things
 - Don't just list changes
 - Indicate change that has occurred since you assumed leadership (how was it before and after you led)
- Never expect the reviewer will understand the extent of the accomplishment;
 - Stress the value of the work, give them insights into how the reviewer should value the contribution
 - Highlight how you have gone above and beyond expected norms to overcome obstacles, foster others, spearhead change

Crafting your Leadership Statement (cont'd)

- Be up front, honest, and authentic
- Use numbers to back up your claims (increase in membership, readership, funding, etc.)
- Use strong action words that convey leadership (don't overuse led, lead, etc.)
- State what the end impact is anticipated to be
- Avoid unrelated fluff:
 - Too often, content is too focused on biographical elements on why they wanted to become a researcher
 - Insufficient evidence of leadership can put off reviewers because it doesn't come to the point quickly enough

CCV

An ‘activity/award/accomplishment’ list that links everything together

Your CCV is more than a list of academic and work experiences. It is evidence of excellence in all categories. Make sure you are taking full advantage of the CCV

Leadership

- Use action words and clearly indicate how you conceived the event/goal and how you got others to implement it
- Give examples, do not just state “I led”. (If there is no evidence of leadership, no credit will be given)

Research Potential

- Make sure journals and articles are up to date

Academic Excellence

- Include all awards and distinctions

Journals/Publications/Proceedings/Knowledge translation

- State the impact factor of the journal if you want recognition
 - The committee will not know this information unless you include it
- If papers are not the norm for the field than indicate that, but be prepared to rank the value of the contribution
- Reviewers will not work to put a value to a contribution, but will check a stated value
- Few papers with very high impact factors are often considered equivalent to several papers of lesser impact

CCV (cont'd)

Journals (cont'd)

- CIHR & NSERC Candidates may have an average of 2-5 journal articles with a fair number as first author and competitive presentations**
- SSHRC researchers don't have as many published journal articles
 - SSHRC candidates may have 1-2 published articles/book chapters and 2-3 conference presentations**

**The above statements are dependent on the norm in your field and at what stage you are at in your graduate studies

Referee assessments

- Two Referee assessments are required
- Applicants should contact their selected referees to seek their agreement to provide an assessment **well in advance** of the application deadline date
- You are responsible for supplying your referees with the documents necessary for them to write their respective letters
- SGS has provided a Referee Reference Document in the Vanier package emailed out at the end of June to departments. Students must forward this document to their referees. This document provide pertinent information required for writing a reference, as well as a link to the **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion** page, which **must** be reviewed by the referee prior to writing the reference letter

Referee assessments (cont'd)

- Applicants are encouraged to consider the full range of potential referees, including experts who could best provide relevant evidence, perspectives, and insight to support the review of the applicant's application in light of the selection criteria (i.e., Academic Excellence, Research Potential and Leadership)
- Referees should make sure every trait of the applicant being described has meaningful evidence provided
- SGS has included a Major Scholarship Support Letter Guide on our Vanier information website. It is in your best interest to download and forward this PowerPoint presentation to your referees.

Leadership reference letters for Vanier

- Two Leadership reference letters are required
- These letters should ideally be written by references who know you in a non-academic capacity and can speak to how your personal trajectory reflects the Leadership evaluation criterion
- In order to facilitate this, you may wish to share your Personal Leadership Statement with them

Ask your leadership reference letter writers to respond to the following:

- Referencing your life and research trajectory, provide an assessment of demonstrated and potential leadership ability and check your application for spelling, grammar, and formatting

Leadership reference letters (cont'd)

- Referee should elaborate on how you have gone above and beyond the opportunities presented in order to achieve a goal, contribute to your community, or how you have taken on responsibility for others
- Referee should provide context for the committee that illuminates how your participation in activities (volunteer, work, sport, art, or any other participation) that goes above and beyond active participation and becomes leadership
- Be aware that high achievement, while admirable, does not necessarily constitute leadership

FINAL TIPS

- Seek past applications from other students, particularly those that have been successful in some way
- Discuss your statement with a supervisor, department chair, past winner or Vanier Committee Member
- Expect to write, review, edit, re-write
- Preparing this application provides an opportunity to really know yourself and continue to build on your strengths!

Thank
you
to our
speakers

*Let's break a McMaster record in 2022
for most Vanier Scholarships!*

Thank you!

Questions?

graduatescholarships@mcmaster.ca



[McMaster 2021 Vanier Competition](#)