School of Graduate Studies
Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships
July 31, 2018
Overview

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 2019, September 2019 or January 2020
Overview continued

McMaster’s Agency Quotas for this competition
- CIHR 10
- NSERC 7
- SSHRC 4

McMaster Quotas and Results for last year’s competition
- CIHR quota 10 received 6
- NSERC quota 7 received 4
- SSHRC quota 5 received 0
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 Citizen, permanent residents of Canada and international students can apply
- First class average in EACH of the last two years of full-time studies completed or equivalent
  - First class average at McMaster is 11 or 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

• Intend to pursue, in the summer semester (May 2019) or the academic year following the announcement of results (September 2019 or January 2020), full-time doctoral studies and research at the nominating university

• Have completed no more than 20 months of doctoral studies as of May 1, 2019 (started doctoral studies no earlier than September 2017)
  • Doctoral months of study are calculated differently for students who are in a Master’s/PhD program, MD/Phd Program, direct entry to PhD, and transferred to PhD without obtaining Master’s. Please refer to Vanier website to confirm eligibility
Evaluation Criteria

• All three criteria carry equal weighting (33%) 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 (eg. leaves of absence, parental leave, etc.)

• Reviewers look at all your post-secondary grades

• Awards and distinction in your CCV

• Academic Excellence should also be displayed 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 displayed in the referees’ assessments

- In many fields, research excellence output is nearly exclusively reliant upon published first author papers

- Committee assesses candidates contribution to research and interest in discovery
Leadership

Leadership (potential and demonstrated ability)
As demonstrated by the following indicators: personal achievement, involvement in academic life, volunteerism and civic engagement

• 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 in the context of this point implies following tasks given by others
  • If you do have volunteer experience, indicate the leadership role you played

• Evidence of Leadership
  • In the CCV, use the sections extracurricular events or positions to show leadership
  • In the two leadership support letters and two referee assessments
Guidance on required documents

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

• Remember that the research proposal will be evaluated by a multi-disciplinary committee (non-specialist audience), and as such should be written in non-technical terms, avoiding 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 and it must link your leadership to your research.

• Please consider the following points when crafting the statement:
  - Use full two pages
  - Use strong action words and make sure the same words are used in your CCV
  - Be concise and never use the space given to write a biography
  - The first half of this statement should be dedicated to clearly outlining the activities in which you displayed leadership in your research.
  - This is not about presenting at a conference, nor is it about extra-curricular activities.
Personal Leadership Statement

• How did you translate your research knowledge into practice by delivery to your peers (for example, setting up a conference, mentoring junior researchers) or to the community (for example, blogs on the research, interviews, outreach events, clinics).

• The second half or less of this statement can be used to identify non-research related leadership. It does not have the same value in the review process but shows to the review committee that you are a well-rounded individual.

• Volunteering is not necessarily leadership

• It is necessary that you show to the reviewers that you were in charge of some aspect of the activities described.
CCV

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 awards and distinctions
CCV

Journals

• 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.
Journals (cont’d)

- CIHR and NSERC Candidates may have an average of 2-5 journal articles with a fair number as first author and competitive presentations
  - The above statement is dependent on the norm in your field and at what stage you are at in your graduate studies
- SSHRC researchers don’t normally have as many published journal articles
  - SSHRC candidates may have 1-2 published articles/book chapters and 2-3 conference presentations
  - The above statement is 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.
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
Leadership Reference Letters

• Two Leadership Reference Letters are required
• The Leadership Reference 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 these letter writers.

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)

• Because there is no opportunity for the committee to interview nominees, the 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.

• Be aware that high achievement, while admirable, does not necessarily constitute leadership.

• The referee should be sure therefore to provide context for the committee that illuminates how your participation in activities (volunteer, work, sport, art, or any other participation) goes above and beyond active participation and becomes leadership
General Tips

- Proofread your application for spelling, grammar, and formatting.
- Have someone else proofread your application.
Thank you

- Does anyone have any questions?
- graduatescholarships@mcmaster.ca
Our guest speakers

Elizabeth Culp, CIHR Vanier Scholar, 2017

Ryan LaRue, NSERC Vanier Scholar, 2018

Kaitlin Blanchard, SSHRC Vanier Scholar, 2017