



MEMORANDUM

TO: Deans and Associate Deans of Graduate Studies
Vice-Presidents and Associate Vice-Presidents (Research)

C.C.: Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships Institution Contacts
Institution Scholarships Liaison Officers
Institution Research Grants Officers
Kelly Taylor, Executive Director, Vanier-Banting Secretariat
Serge Villemure, Director, Scholarships and Fellowships Programs, NSERC
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FROM: Julie Conrad, Manager, Vanier-Banting Programs and CIHR Awards

DATE: June 15, 2017

SUBJECT: 2017-2018 Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships (Vanier CGS) and competition update

Please distribute to all parties at your institution who would benefit from this information.

The 2017-2018 Vanier CGS competition has been launched! This memo is to inform you of program news for this competition.

I) 2017-2018 Vanier CGS Competition Timelines

The timelines are similar to the last competition. Please find some important competition timelines below:

	2017-18 Vanier CGS Competition Timelines
Competition Launch	June 15, 2017: Posting of updated program literature on program website, including application guide and activation of ResearchNet (electronic application system)
Application Deadline	November 1, 2017 (8:00 pm EDT)
Funding Decision Release	End of March 2018

II) Vanier CGS program news

NEW – Additional Leadership Reference Letter

The Vanier CGS application package now requires **two** letters of reference for the Leadership criterion. This additional letter 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 students in the same fashion as in the past via ResearchNet. However, they will have to, upload one letter at a time under the same task. The letters are a maximum of two pages each. For more information on this task, please refer to our instructions page on our [website](#).

NEW – Personal Leadership Statement Document

Previously, the VBS required a maximum one page document entitled *Description of leadership and communication skills*. This document has been combined with the maximum half page *Special Circumstances* document to create a 2-page *Personal Leadership Statement*. The goal of this change is to eliminate systemic barriers to applying for the Vanier CGS, encourage the committee to understand career interruptions as potentially beneficial to a nominee's career path, and better align the Vanier CGS with other prestigious international scholarships.

Below, please find the intended language that will be used for the nomination package:

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?*
- *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.

NEW - Special Circumstances

In the past, nominees who were staying in the same institutions were encouraged to use the *Special Circumstances* document to justify the lack of mobility. Now, all nominees will draft a *Personal Leadership Statement* which includes reasons for choosing to undertake their PhD at the nominating institution. The *Special Circumstances* document must **only** be used to outline the calculation of the number of months completed for combined undergraduate and doctoral program for VBS staff.

NEW – Instructions for Referees Page on Vanier CGS Website

All Vanier nominations must have two referees. We have now added a new page to our 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.

NEW – Implicit/Unconscious Bias in the Selection Process

Equity and diversity must be considered at all levels. The selection process for Vanier scholars can be impacted by implicit bias at any level. When selecting students to nominate for the Vanier competition, the Vanier-Banting Secretariat requests that institutions consider the possibility of implicit (or unconscious) bias at every level: departmental recommendation, institutional selection and recruitment, and the review and endorsement process. The Vanier-Banting Secretariat is actively engaged in increasing

awareness of implicit (or unconscious) bias with our selection committees, and recommend the following links as very useful for reviewers for all three funding agencies:

- 1) [Overview on unconscious bias that was developed by Westcoast Women in Engineering, Science and Technology \(WWest\)](#)
- 2) Harvard Test on [Implicit Bias: Gender – Science test, and/or the Gender – Career test](#)
- 3) [CIHR’s Training Module for Reviewers on Implicit Bias](#)
- 4) [Tips for Vanier Selection Committee Members on reducing gender bias in the review process](#)

REMINDER - Institutional nomination: selectivity and diversity

With the competitive nature of the program in mind, we would like to remind you to continue to be highly selective in your endorsement of nominations. In this way we can work together to control the quality of candidates to help ensure that the program is indeed supporting world-class doctoral scholars who will become the research leaders of tomorrow and without adding undue strain on the review system.

In the nomination process, institutions are reminded that proposals from all research areas and in both official languages are encouraged. In addition, careful consideration must be given to ensure equity and diversity in the nomination process.

REMINDER – Eligibility: Calculating months of doctoral studies

All prior doctoral-level studies, regardless of discipline, are considered in the evaluation of eligibility, and are considered to be continuous, full-time, and uninterrupted unless otherwise confirmed by the institution (including the summer months, unless on official leave). Students who studied on a part-time basis, or who interrupted their studies with their university’s official approval, must outline the dates of interruption or part-time study in the Special Circumstances document.

The Vanier-Banting Secretariat will start all calculation of the number of months completed at the beginning of the first term of PhD with the following exception

If the Candidate	...then the secretariat will:
Is registered in a combined Master’s/PhD program	Remove 12 months from the original PhD enrolment date
Is registered in a direct-entry doctoral program (ie has not ever enrolled in, or earned, an Master’s degree)	Remove 12 months from the original PhD enrolment date
Has been accelerated from a Master’s degree into a Doctoral program without obtaining the Master’s degree	Remove 12 months from the original Master’s enrolment date
Is enrolled in a joint undergraduate/graduate research degree program	Only count time spent undertaking PhD work (see notes).

Notes:

- 1) The Vanier-Banting Secretariat (the Secretariat) will count two months of part-time study as one month of full-time study.
- 2) The secretariat considers each of these programs to be mutually exclusive. No more than one of the above exceptions can be applied to each nomination.
- 3) All interruptions, delays, part-time studies and undergraduate studies undertaken **as part of a joint undergraduate/graduate degree program** must be outlined in the [special circumstances](#) attachment.
 - a. Note: No other information included in this document will be forwarded to the committee. All information about interruptions to your academic career, choice of nominating institution, and mobility should be included either in the Personal Leadership Statement or the Research Proposal.

Example: If you were completing full-time doctoral studies as of January 1, 2017, with no interruptions during this period, the Secretariat will consider you as having completed 16 months of doctoral studies as of May 1, 2018. If, during this period, you were on leave from your program for four months, the Secretariat will consider you as having completed 12 months of doctoral studies. If, in addition to having taken one semester off, you had been registered part-time for one semester (i.e., four months), the Secretariat will consider you as having completed 10 months of doctoral studies.

REMINDER – Transcripts

All post-secondary transcripts must be transferred to your nominating institution as part of your nomination package. If your transcripts include credits earned at a college or CEGEP (college of general and professional education) that have been transferred for credit, please include the college or CEGEP transcript **only if** the grade earned does not appear on the university transcript.

For students including foreign transcripts, please visit <https://www.wes.org/gradeconversionguide/> and include the Grading scale for the country from which your international transcript comes from. If the international transcripts are not presented in one of Canada's two official languages (English or French), please include a certified translation, separated from the original transcripts by a blank page.

REMINDER - Internal deadline at institution

It is strongly recommended that institutions adjust the internal deadline date in ResearchNet for the Vanier CGS competition in order to allow enough time for the internal review of nominations. Currently, the internal deadline date is the same as the final submission deadline for the Vanier CGS competition.

Instructions can be found in the Electronic Approval for Research Institutions- Administrator's Guide, attached. Institutions are also reminded to update the ResearchNet Electronic Approval Tool Users to avoid any further delays to the submission of nominations. If the

Access Administrator (AA) of the Vanier CGS program on ResearchNet has changed since the last competition (2016-2017), please send an email to vanier@cihr-irsc.gc.ca so that we can update our system with the new AA.

For more information on user roles and responsibilities, please refer to the updated Electronic Approval Guide.

REMINDER - International recruitment

In keeping with the aim of attracting doctoral students to Canada, we encourage you to continue to strengthen your efforts to recruit new foreign doctoral students to your respective institutions. Your collaboration is essential in achieving the goal of building strong brand recognition for the Vanier CGS program as Canada's most valuable, prestigious and sought-after doctoral scholarship. By attracting international candidates to Canadian institutions, we will enrich our campuses now and into the future.

REMINDER — Subject matter eligibility (research area)

The candidate and their supervisor must carefully consider which selection committee should review the application. For more details, please see the application/nomination instructions - Task 6: Identify area of research.

REMINDER – Applications to agency specific doctoral programs

Since eligibility, evaluation criteria and competition deadlines are different, applications submitted to Vanier CGS are not considered in agency-specific doctoral award competitions. Nominees must apply to agency-specific funding opportunities individually.

UPDATE – Electronic Approval for Research Institutions – Admin guide Quota

We have updated the E-Approval guide to better serve our institutional partners. Please find attached the revised document as version 1.3.

NOTE – Accessing Updated Webpage

If you have not cleared your cache since the last time you accessed the Vanier CGS webpage, your browser may display a cached version of the page. In order to see the updated webpage, simply hit the “refresh” logo in your browser (or hit the F5 key)

For any questions, please contact the Vanier-Banting Secretariat at Vanier@cihr-irsc.gc.ca