

Office of the Dean
Faculty of Graduate Studies

Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship Guide

FOR STUDENTS

2021-2022

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INTRODUCTION TO THE GUIDE

The Vanier CGS program aims to attract and retain world-class doctoral students by supporting students who demonstrate both leadership skills and a high standard of scholarly achievement. The Vanier CGS is valued at \$50,000 per year for three years.

This guide has been designed to assist graduate students and programs with the preparation and submission of Vanier Scholarship applications. This guide is primarily concerned with the York-specific procedures for the internal nomination process and application development. No information in this guide is intended to replace the official information as published by the Vanier-Banting Secretariat (www.vanier.gc.ca), and in any place where the information in this guide and on the Vanier, CCV, or ResearchNet sites differ, the information published on those sites shall be taken as accurate.

QUOTAS

Each University is assigned a quota by the respective agencies of the Tri-Council. This quota is the number of applications York University may nominate, not the number of awards we will receive. Although the selection process is extremely competitive, York University has had a good record of support for students, and success with Vanier applications ranging from 4 to 6 award(s) in the last three years. The application quotas granted to York for the 2020-21 competition, are as follows:

SSHRC	10
NSERC	3
CIHR	1

ELIGIBILITY

Please review the technical eligibility at: <https://vanier.gc.ca/en/eligibility-admissibilite.html> and subject matter eligibility criteria at: https://vanier.gc.ca/en/nomination_process-processus_de_mise_en_candidature.html#e6. All applicants to the Vanier program must carefully review their eligibility before preparing an application. In particular, please note:

- if you have received a doctoral-level scholarship or fellowship from the Tri-Council Agencies (CIHR, NSERC or SSHRC) at the doctoral level, **you are not eligible to apply to the Vanier CGS.**
- an applicant must not have completed more than 20 months of doctoral studies as of May 1, 2021, **including doctoral studies undertaken at another university.**

KEY SITES

Vanier Nomination Process on the FGS website: <http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/current-students/student-finances/funding-awards/vcgs/>

Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship: www.vanier.gc.ca

ResearchNet: <https://www.researchnet-recherchenet.ca>

The online system in which you will construct your application, and via which FGS will submit your application to the Vanier Secretariat for the national level of adjudication.

CCV: <https://ccv-cvc.ca>

The Canada Common CV site, in which you will construct your Curriculum Vitae for inclusion in your ResearchNet application. Please choose the “Vanier-Banting” CV type.

Doctoral Studies Timeline: https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/documents/doctoral_studies_timelines_fillable-en.pdf

NEW 2021-22 Cycle: Must be submitted to FGS along with official, up-to-date transcripts for all post-secondary studies.

KEY TIMELINES AND DEADLINES

Please note that the dates are tentative and subject to change.

Steps, events, tasks	Deadline
Vanier competition announcement by FGS	Third week of June
Deadline for students to submit preliminary documents to FGS	July 13, 2020, 4pm
Students notified of the result of the first round of nomination process. Successful applicants will be invited to submit a full application.	By August 7, 2020
Deadline to submit full Vanier applications via ResearchNet	August 31, 2020
Students and programs notified of the results of this round of nomination process. Final nominees will receive comments for revisions.	Early October 2020
Students and program directors work to revise applications	Until October 23, 2020
Students submit revised applications via ResearchNet	By October 23, 2020 by 4pm
Final review for completeness, communication of any final revision requests (if any) to students	By October 29, 2020
Final deadline for students to submit final applications in ResearchNet	October 30, 2020 by 8pm
Deadline for FGS to submit nominated Vanier applications to the Vanier Secretariat via ResearchNet	November 3, 2020 by 8pm

NOMINATION AND APPLICATION PROCESS

FOR STUDENTS

Step 1: Preparing Preliminary Documents

Action Item	Timeline
Read application and process information on the Vanier site and in this guide	Immediately
<p>Prepare and submit preliminary application documents (2 page research statement, 2 page personal leadership statement, 1 page research contributions statement, transcripts and CV) to FGS</p> <p>* See more information on how to submit preliminary documents at: http://gradstudies.yorku.ca/current-students/student-finances/funding-awards/vcgs/</p> <p>* At this stage, the transcripts do not need to be official as long as they include your full academic records.</p>	July 13, 2020, 4pm
Students notified of the result of the first round of nomination process	By August 7, 2020

Step 2: Developing Full Applications (Invited Applicants Only)

Action Item	Timeline
Start your application in ResearchNet and required CCV through the CCV site	Early August 2020
Request reference letters, both academic and leadership, via ResearchNet, to be submitted by August 31, 2020	Early August 2020
Leadership referees provide applicants with their reference letters. Student upload the letters via ResearchNet	August 31, 2020, 8pm
Complete the full application in ResearchNet, including all required attachments, letters and the CCV, and submit for FGS review.	August 31, 2020, 8pm
Students notified of the result of this round of nomination process. Successful students receive feedback for revisions.	Early October 2020

Step 3: Final Revisions and Submission (Final Nominees Only)

Students request a full set of up-to-date and official transcripts (all post-secondary studies, including York University) and submit to FGS * New 2021-22 cycle: Include submission of Doctoral Studies Timeline .	Early October
Based on the feedback received, revise and improve your application, with the assistance of your graduate program director and/or supervisor	Until October 23, 2020
Revised applications and letters of reference (if needed) due in ResearchNet, including the leadership reference	October 23, 2020 by 4pm
Final completeness/technical eligibility review, any final revision requests communicated to students by FGS	By October 29, 2020
Final submission of all revised documents in ResearchNet by students	October 30, 2020 by 8pm
Final submission of all applications in ResearchNet to Tri-Council by FGS	November 3, 2020 at 8pm EDT
Vanier CGS results notified to students and universities	Early April 2020

PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR APPLICATION

REVIEW EVALUATION CRITERIA

Before preparing any application materials, it is essential that you review the evaluation criteria to ensure that your application is strong in each of the categories. For the Vanier competition, the national adjudication committee reviews and ranks nomination files put forward by universities against the three equally weighted selection criteria, as below.

- **Academic excellence**, as demonstrated by past academic results and by transcripts, awards and distinctions.
- **Research potential**, as 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.
- **Leadership** (potential and demonstrated ability), as defined by the following qualities:
 - Personal Achievement:
 - Involvement in Academic Life:
 - Volunteerism/community outreach:
 - Civic engagement:
 - Other



WHAT YOU NEED

See the instructions on the Vanier website (http://www.vanier.gc.ca/en/nomination_process-processus_de_mise_en_candidature.html#d3) for details. The application documents for the Vanier competition consist of the following:

1. **Application details**, including the title of your research and abstract – via ResearchNet
2. **Research proposal** (max. 2 pages) – upload via ResearchNet
3. **Project references** (max. 5 pages) – upload via ResearchNet
4. **Personal leadership statement** (max. 2 pages) – upload via ResearchNet
5. **Research contributions** (max. 1 page) – upload via ResearchNet
6. **Special circumstances** (if applicable, max. 1 page) – upload via ResearchNet
7. **Two academic letters of reference** – via ResearchNet
* Referees will be sent a link and asked to provide their assessment of candidate's academic excellence, research potential, and demonstrated and potential leadership ability directly via ResearchNet.
8. **Two leadership reference letters** (max. 2 pages per letter) – student will upload the files via ResearchNet
9. **Canada Common CV (CCV)** - to be completed via CCV website
10. **Official, up-to-date transcripts of all post-secondary studies and Doctoral Studies Timeline Form** – to be submitted to FGS at Step 3, when nominees are confirmed (Mindi Chiu, Scholarships and Awards Coordinator, fgssac@yorku.ca)
11. **Graduate Program Director nomination letter** – FGS to arrange submission with GPDs

HOW TO WRITE A RESEARCH PROPOSAL FOR VANIER

The research statement must be clear, concise, and interest the adjudicating reader right away. Remember that the Vanier adjudication committee is multidisciplinary, so your research must be intelligible and engaging to non-specialists. In many instances students fail to declare their actual research question until the third paragraph, which is far too late for this purpose. Research statements must address the following in an active voice:

1. **Research Topic and Specific Question:** Be specific and avoid vague/huge questions. Articulate your research question early in the statement.
2. **Development and Justification:** Why is your proposed study important? What gap in current knowledge does it aim to address? Why does the gap need to be filled? What impact will answering this research question have on the field, on the community, on the world?
3. **Literature/Research Context:** Reference the most important scholarly literature on the topic in order to set your topic, question, and justification in its proper context. The trick, however, is to be brief and to state points succinctly. The context demonstrates that you know the terrain of your field and the place in which you seek to make an original contribution, and also provides non-specialist adjudicators with necessary background and context.

4. **Research Method (and/or Theoretical Perspective):** It is critical that the research method and theoretical perspective you have selected demonstrate your superior research ability, potential and vision. Both must be appropriate to your field and project, and they must come across to adjudicators as realistic and doable in your proposed study. Adjudicators are looking to see if your research method/theory suits your research question, promises to allow you to effectively answer that question within the scope of a dissertation, and makes an original contribution to methodology or theory.
5. **Contributions/Goals:** Indicate the significance and/or implications of the research. In essence, “so what”? Why are you pursuing answers to this research question, and why do those answers matter? To what or to whom do they matter, and what will change—in the field, in the community, in the world—once you’ve answered this question?
6. **Why York?** The fit between student and university is very important to the Vanier adjudication committee, and you should take the opportunity, toward the end of your research statement, to articulate your fit with York. Why have you chosen to pursue your PhD here, and why is York the best place to pursue your research question? What York faculty members, physical resources (i.e. equipment, archives, libraries), courses, joint programs, research groups/units, or other opportunities makes York the ideal university to pursue your research and your PhD studies?

Sex- And Gender-Based Analysis Plus (SGBA+)

* **New** in the 2021-22 cycle, applicants are now encouraged to take SGBA+ principles into account in their proposed research. For details, please see: https://vanier.gc.ca/en/nomination_process-processus_de_mise_en_candidature.html#p2. For some types of research, the integration of this analysis will positively impact the feasibility, scientific rigour, and usefulness of the proposed research.

A Guide For Developing Successful Grant Proposals

FGS developed **A Guide for Developing Successful Grant Proposals** accessible here (Passport York protected): https://gradstudies.yorku.ca/py_protected/successful-grant-proposals-guide/

HOW TO WRITE A PERSONAL LEADERSHIP STATEMENT

Starting in the 18-19 year Vanier competition, the application requires a maximum of 2 page personal leadership statement. The personal leadership statement should explain the challenges and opportunities that have shaped your doctoral research. Specifically, the following points should be considered:

- *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.

It is important to note that **the leadership statement and leadership qualities of the applicant are weighted equally with academic excellence and research potential** in the evaluation of your application. Spend as much time, therefore, on the leadership statement as on the research statement.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THE RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS DOCUMENT

The Research Contributions document asks you to expand upon the five most significant and relevant research contributions listed in your CCV. A detailed description of what to include in this document can be found here: http://www.vanier.gc.ca/en/nomination_process-processus_de_mise_en_candidature.html#d3 .

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES DOCUMENT

The Special Circumstances document is optional and should only be used if you are registered in part-time during your PhD studies. More information can be found here: http://www.vanier.gc.ca/en/nomination_process-processus_de_mise_en_candidature.html#d4.

NOTE ABOUT THE CANADA COMMON CV

The Vanier application requires that the Canada Common CV (CCV) be created and attached to the application. The process of creating a CCV is lengthy and it is important that you start this part of the application early in the process. Once your CCV is created and validated for the Vanier scholarship through the CCV website (<https://ccv-cvc.ca/indexresearcher-eng.frm>), you will receive a confirmation number which you will need to enter on ResearchNet to link your application and CCV.

LETTERS OF REFERENCE

UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF A REFERENCE LETTER

Reference letters are used to:

- Distinguish between first class applicants—every applicant for the Vanier has excellent grades, a strong research track record, and leadership skills, so the letters become crucial in setting you apart
- Gain a sense of the applicant as a person
- Ensure that you meet the selection criteria of the scholarship
- Confirm whether the applicant excels in all aspects of the selection criteria
- Confirm what you've indicated in your application—don't get caught in a lie! Applications that fail immediately are those in which an applicant has indicated X and the referee mentions something that leads a committee to believe that X is untrue



HOW TO FIND ACADEMIC REFEREES

Reference letters form one of the most critical components of any scholarship application. But students rarely spend much time considering how to find a strong referee and when/how to ask for help. You need to explain to your referee the criteria of the scholarship award, the type of reference required by the adjudicating committee, and your suitability for the scholarship. One reason for explaining the scholarship, the type of reference required, and suitability is to allow potential referees to determine whether they will be able to write a strong and compelling letter on your behalf. Their honest response should be most important to you, since the ultimate goal is to obtain the strongest letters of reference possible. The following is meant to guide the process of finding a good referee and ensuring you attain the strongest reference possible.

Think Before You Ask

Most individuals seeking a reference believe that “title” is everything. They think that a reference letter from a “President” or “Distinguished Research Professor” or a “CEO” is the best thing to have in a reference. This couldn't be further from the truth, although it is not recommended to seek reference letters from teaching assistants or, unless in exceptional circumstances, contract academic faculty. The most important thing in a reference letter is substance—a letter that shows that the referee knows you well, has plenty of experience working with, teaching, or supervising you, and can place your strengths and accomplishments in context. The best referee, therefore, is the professor, or supervisor who can provide a letter of substance. Ask yourself these questions when thinking about whom to ask for a letter of reference:

Provide Information

Adjudication committees want to see letters that speak to the specifics found in your application. They assess how your qualities and experience align with the scholarship and look for a convergence in what you bring as an applicant and what they are looking for in the selection criteria. Vague letters, no matter how praiseworthy, are generally useless and can hinder a committee's ability to judge the applicant.

It is important to provide your referees with all of the information they need to write a strong letter. You aren't looking for a good letter; you're looking for a strong letter that helps set you apart from the other applicants. Provide your referee with the following:

- Your CV
- Any statements you've been required to write (e.g., Research Statement, Leadership Statement, Research Contributions, Special Circumstances Statement, etc.)
- Selection criteria of the scholarship and applicable weightings, if available
- List of activities included under the Leadership category

What Should You Ask for From Your Referee?

It is critical that your referee demonstrate an alignment between your academic excellence, research ability and potential, leadership experience and potential, and the selection criteria. Ask them to highlight your strengths, especially with context. Are you the best student they've supervised in a 20 year career? Did you achieve the top grade in their course? Did you write one of the best Master's theses they've read? You should also ask them to explain any weaknesses or missing components in your application. See below for more information on writing strong reference letters, which will give you a sense of what you should be asking for.

Mechanics of Submitting Academic Reference Letters

You will send your Vanier academic referees an electronic invitation to write a reference from within the ResearchNet system. This will generate an email to your referee which includes a link to the electronic reference form in ResearchNet. Once your referee has submitted his/her letter, the system will indicate that your reference has been submitted. Your letters will be assessed by the Vanier Nomination committee and your referees may be asked to revise their letters prior to the final deadline.

Guide for Writing Reference Letters for Scholarship Applications

Applicants are encouraged to share this guide with their referees:

<https://gradstudies.yorku.ca/faculty-staff/student-finances/successful-reference-letters-guide/>



HOW TO FIND LEADERSHIP REFEREES

All of the advice on finding a good referee in the above section also applies to finding a referee to write the Vanier leadership reference letter. The leadership reference letter should be written by someone who knows you in a **non-academic capacity** and should describe how you have demonstrated and will potentially continue to demonstrate leadership. Faculty members may provide this letter, as long as they know you in a non-academic capacity and are addressing your leadership in a non-academic environment. You should choose a referee who has direct experience of your leadership work, can speak to that work in one or more contexts, and who you know thinks highly of you and your leadership. It is better to choose someone in a supervisory or management role rather than a colleague as your referee. Try to secure a referee who can speak to and has experience of your most significant leadership activities, the ones that are at the heart of your leadership statement. Leadership reference letters should respond to the following:

Referencing the student’s life and research trajectory, provide an assessment of demonstrated and potential leadership ability. Because there is no opportunity for the committee to interview nominees, elaborate on how the candidate has gone above and beyond the opportunities presented in order to achieve a goal, contribute to their community, or how they have taken on responsibility for others. Note that high achievement, while admirable, does not necessarily constitute leadership. Be sure therefore to provide context for the committee that illuminates how the candidate’s participation in activities (be they volunteer, work, sport, art, or any other participation) goes above and beyond active participation and becomes leadership.

CONTACT US

Contact Name or Position	Type of Support Available
Judy Tse Research Officer Faculty of Graduate Studies 416-736-2100 x44168 fgsro@yorku.ca	Substantive and technical queries from nominees, referees, Graduate Program Assistants, Directors and faculty supervisors
Mindi Chiu Scholarships & Awards Coordinator Faculty of Graduate Studies 416-736-2100 x33954 fgssac@yorku.ca	Technical questions regarding eligibility, process and timelines from students, questions about document submission
Graduate Program Directors	Substantive application review and development assistance, program nomination letter
Graduate Program Assistants	Technical questions regarding eligibility, process, and timelines