MEMORANDUM

TO:  
Vice-Deans, Graduate Studies  
Vice-Deans, Research  
Academic Administrators, Graduate Studies

DATE:  
June 26, 2017

FROM:  
Terry Campbell, Executive Director, Research Management Services

SUBJECT:  
Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships Program (Vanier CGS)
DEADLINES AND INSTRUCTIONS, 2017-2018 Competition
www.vanier.gc.ca

C.C:  
Sylvain Charbonneau, Associate Vice-President, Research,  
Claire Turenne Sjolander, Interim Vice-provost, Office of Vice-Provost, Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
Research Facilitators

The Tri-Council granting agencies have announced the launch of the 2017-2018 Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships (CGS) competition.

The Vanier CGS program allows Canadian institutions to attract and retain world-class doctoral students and establish Canada as a global centre of excellence in research and higher learning. Vanier scholars are expected to demonstrate leadership skills and a high standard of scholarly achievement in graduate studies in their field. It is of the utmost importance that the University of Ottawa nominates top candidates for this very prestigious award. The success rate of Vanier scholarships at UOttawa from 2009-10 to 2016-17 has been as follows: SSHRC: 18 awards/67 nominations (26.9%); NSERC: 16 awards/49 nominations (37.2%); CIHR: 24 awards/79 nominations (30.4%), for an average success rate of 29.7% among nominated files.

The scholarship has a value of $50,000 per year for 3 years and is the only scholarship from the Tri-Agencies that is open to Canadian, permanent residents, and international students. The Vanier competition is based on the following three selection criteria:

a) Academic Excellence;  
b) Research Potential; and  
c) Leadership.

The Tri-Council agencies are encouraging universities to strengthen their efforts to stimulate mobility by recruiting candidates who want to pursue Ph.D. studies at an institution different than those where they completed a previous degree, and by recruiting new foreign doctoral students, in order to achieve the goal of building strong brand recognition for the Vanier CGS as one of the world’s most valuable, prestigious and sought-after doctoral scholarship. This is in line with our Destination 2020 objectives. As such, Canadian and permanent resident Ph.D. candidates coming from other institutions and international candidates should be given special consideration in the selection process.

For students opting to remain at the same institution, it is important to note the following Vanier guidelines:

- “Applicants who choose a nominating institution which is the same as the institution where they completed their previous degree(s) must provide a strong justification for this exceptional circumstance (as part of their application) under the new “Personal Leadership Statement” section. The more similar the proposed research environment is to that of the previous degree environment, the stronger the required justification.”
- “The nomination letter to be signed by “the Department Head is required to provide justification for the lack of mobility and an explanation as to why it is in the candidate’s best interest to stay at the same institution.”
INSTITUTIONAL QUOTAS:

The 2017-18 institutional quotas, shown below, were established in 2015-16, for a three-year period. Each institution is provided a fixed yearly quota of nominations. Unused annual quotas cannot be carried forward for future years, except for a very small number of “floating quotas” that may be used in any of the three years. The quotas are calculated based on the amount of research grant funding an institution receives from the Tri-Councils, the Networks of Centres of Excellence, and Tri-Council funding for doctoral and Vanier scholarships programs, over a previous three-year (2011/12 to 2013/14).

The total uOttawa quota for 2015-16 to 2017-18 Vanier competitions is 76 nominations, distributed as follows:

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This means that the number of candidates that we will nominate for the 2017-18 competition is:

- SSHRC: 8 (perhaps + 2)
- NSERC: 6
- CIHR: 10 (perhaps +1)

Given this is the third year of these fixed quotas, the University can use two “floating quotas” under SSHRC and one “floating quota” under CIHR respectively (NSERC has none), in addition to the regular agency quotas, provided that there is a sufficient number of excellent applications to fill those spots.

NOMINATION LETTERS:

As in the two previous years, nomination letters must be prepared and signed by the Department Head of the unit proposing the candidate, and be printed on institutional letterhead. Based on an advice received from the Vanier-Banting Secretariat, it is expected that “all students from the same department should have their letters written by the same person, as that person will be best positioned to provide the (national) committee with an understanding of the student’s merits relative to the others in the cohort.”

Also, similar to last year, in order to reduce the load on faculties and departments, nomination letters will not need to be submitted to Research Management Services (RMS) along with the faculty’s list of pre-selected candidates. Instead, RMS will seek nomination letters only for those candidates who will be selected at the institutional level (see the Deadlines section at the end of this document). However, faculties should make their department heads aware of the requirement ahead of time, as they will be given a shorter period of time to prepare the letters.

NOTES:

1) Students wishing to apply for a Vanier CGS must apply through ResearchNet and must be nominated to the agency by the Canadian university to which they have applied for doctoral studies or by the Canadian university at which they are currently pursuing their doctoral studies. Once a university has nominated a student for the Vanier CGS, the student can take up the scholarship only at that institution. Multiple applications are not permitted.

2) (NEW) The application package must now include a Personal Leadership Statement (2 pages) which is the combination of the former Description of leadership and communication skills and the Special Circumstances documents. The goal of this change is to eliminate systemic barriers to applying for the Vanier CGS, to encourage the committee to understand career interruptions as potentially beneficial to a nominee’s career path, and to better align the Vanier CGS with other prestigious international scholarships. Career interruptions and mobility issues should be justified in this attachment.
3) The “Special Circumstances” attachment should be used for the calculation of the number of months completed for combined undergraduate and doctoral program.

4) (NEW) The application package must now include two separate reference letters describing the candidate’s leadership skills instead of only one. These letters will be written by people who know the candidate in a non-academic capacity, who can comment on the candidate’s leadership skills, and preferably have not already provided another assessment of the nomination. Proof of leadership must be demonstrated in these letters. The candidate will be responsible for attaching these letters to his/her application package.

5) The application package must include two referee assessments, in addition to the two leadership reference letters, who will comment on the candidate’s academic excellence, his/her research potential, and his/her demonstrated and potential leadership ability. Applicants are responsible for seeking those letters from referees, who must produce their letters on ResearchNet. It is also the applicant’s sole responsibility to follow up with referees to ensure that assessments are submitted prior to the internal institutional deadline. Applications with a missing referee assessment, or any other missing component, will be deemed incomplete and disqualified.

6) All Canadian citizens and permanent residents who apply for the Vanier CGS must also submit a separate doctoral scholarship application to the Tri-council (SSHRC, NSERC or CIHR) appropriate to their research for their regular competition.

The complete and updated program description is available at: http://www.vanier.gc.ca.

DEADLINES:

June 2017 – Activation of ResearchNet

July 10th, 2017, 1:30PM to 3:00PM – Vanier Canada graduate studies scholarship information session (FSS-4004)

September 6, 2017 – Last day for candidates and referees to submit their application and letters through ResearchNet. No late or incomplete applications will be accepted.

September 8, 2017 – Applications received will be forwarded to vice-deans (grad studies and research) of each faculty in PDF format so they can execute the first stage of the preselection.

September 11-25, 2017 – Faculties will validate eligibility of their applications and proceed to the evaluation and ranking with their internal selection committee.

September 25, 2017 – Faculties must submit to RMS their list of recommended applications with their ranking.

September 27-October 11, 2017 – The internal Vanier-Banting Scholarships Evaluation Committee evaluates the applications and validates the rankings submitted by the faculties.

October 11-17, 2017 - RMS will finalize the internal selection with the Vanier-Banting Scholarships Evaluation Committee and determine the applications to be nominated to each Tri-agency (as per our quotas).

October 18, 2017 – RMS will inform the candidates of the internal selection committee decisions, and will provide to selected candidates feedback to further improve their applications. The selected candidates will be given until October 27th at 12:00PM (noon) to revise their application on ResearchNet. RMS also reserves the right to confidentially ask referees to revise their letter of recommendation if they have not addressed all the criteria required by the Vanier competition.
October 18, 2017 – RMS will also inform the vice-deans (grad studies and research) about the selected files for nomination and invite them to solicit letters of nomination from the Department Heads to support these applications that have been selected through the institutional competition. Faculties and Department Heads will be given until October 27th at 12:00PM (noon) to submit their signed nomination letters to RMS, which will append them to the applications.

October 27, 2017 (12:00PM, noon) – Hard deadline for the applicants and referees to revise their application or assessment and resubmit them through ResearchNet, and for Faculties / Department Heads to submit their signed nomination letters to RMS.

October 28-31, 2017 – Applications and letters of nomination will be reviewed by RMS to ensure that the suggestions and comments made by the Committees were taken into account, that the applications continue to meet the Vanier CGS eligibility and that the nomination letters are complete and adequate.

November 1, 2017 – RMS will submit the selected applications electronically through ResearchNet for the national competition.

March 31, 2018 – Funding decisions expected to be released.

PROCEDURE:

Each Faculty, Department/School or Program must:
1. Establish a Selection Committee of at least 3 professors;
2. Receive and verify the completeness, legibility of documentation, and eligibility of the applicants and their proposed research (see Eligibility section on the Vanier website http://www.vanier.gc.ca/en/eligibility-admissibilite.html);
3. Ensure that the application is submitted to the appropriate Council. This is very important. If in doubt, please consult the Banting-Vanier coordinator in RMS. If an applicant has chosen an incorrect Council, the student will immediately be notified by the RMS and will be given the opportunity to resubmit his or her application to the appropriate Council.
4. Calculate the GPA for all university courses taken in each of the last two years of full-time studies or equivalent; the GPA must be at least 8.0/10 in each of the last two years.
5. Rank applications according to merit. The ranking must be submitted by email to banting-vanier@uottawa.ca at the latest on September 25, 2017.
6. Upon announcement of the institutional selection, prepare a letter of nomination for each selected candidate. The letter of nomination must be prepared on letterhead paper and signed by the Head of the Department that supports the application. Good quality scans are required. The signed letters must be submitted to RMS at banting-vanier@uottawa.ca no later than October 27th, 2017 at 12:00PM (noon). For more details about nomination letters, please consult http://www.vanier.gc.ca/en/information_for_institutions-information_pour_etablissements.html. Department Heads who would require assistance with the preparation of nomination letters may send a draft version to RMS at least two weeks prior to the deadline, or consult with their Vice-Dean Graduate Studies or Vice-Dean, Research.

Additional information
For more information, please contact banting-vanier@uottawa.ca
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