

Tips for Completing a Scholarship Application

Welcome

This presentation will cover:

1. Creating an Individual Development Plan
2. Tips for writing a strong scholarship application
3. Point you to some useful online resources

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Creating an Individual Development Plan-Knowing Where You are Heading

<https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/50516.html>

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Individual Development Plans

Throughout your training, have you ever wondered about what is truly needed to be a research leader and thought about what are your career options after finishing your degree? Were the feelings associated with that question overwhelming? You are not alone. When we talk to graduate students and postdoctoral fellows (PDFs), there is a common struggle with identifying career options (within or outside of academia), and learning how to transition into those careers following training.

Studies have shown that active career management increases career success. In fact, it has been shown not just to help you identify and best prepare for your career(s) of choice, but also to help you in the immediate term as it has been linked to shorter time-to-degree completion and higher success in receiving external awards.

CIHR encourages you to create a well thought out plan that incorporates your personal values, strengths, skills, experiences and helps you identify any skill gaps that you may have.



[One-Pager: Learn more about IDP](#)

▾ What is an Individual Development Plan (IDP)?

An IDP is a tool that supports graduate students and PDFs in actively preparing for the career(s) of their choice by exploring career paths, establishing career goals, and identifying skill gaps, culminating in an action plan to achieve their career goal(s). The use of the IDP presents an opportunity for self-evaluation, and also allows graduate students and PDFs to map their progress over time. Finally, IDPs serve as a communication tool between trainees and mentors (supervisor or other mentor(s)) regarding the training outcomes and expectations of both parties.





Self-Assessment

Trainee

Questions for conducting a self-assessment:

- Where am I now?
- Am I developing a variety of competencies across research, communication and transferable skills?
 - Which activities have I performed in relation to developing each skill?
 - Which skills are important for me to develop?
- What are my passions and values?
- Regarding professional development and networking opportunities:
 - What activities am I interested in or do I already participate in?
 - Who do I already know who can assist me with my career goals?



Career Exploration

Trainee

Questions for exploring career opportunities:

- What careers are available to me, and which ones am I most interested in pursuing?
- What are the requirements for these careers? What skills do I have and which ones will I need to develop for pursuing my careers of interest? For each skill, do I show a “fit” or a “gap”?
- Are my passions and values aligned with each career and its activities?
- Could my networking activities be adjusted to pursue these careers?



Goal Determination

Trainee

Questions to help determine goals:

- Where do I want to go career-wise?
- What actions could I take to develop the skills necessary to pursue the career(s) I am interested in? How can I turn these into goals?
- How long will it take to accomplish these goals? In what order should they be completed? Should any be divided into smaller goals?
- Which networking activities should I prioritize?



Plan Development

Trainee

Questions to outline a plan of action:

- Does my action plan define how I will reach my goals (as well as the objectives within each goal)? Are the components of my action plan

SMART:

- Specific?
- Measurable?
- Achievable?
- Relevant?
- Time-bound?
- What will work best for me in my environment:
 - Explicit step-by-step plan?
 - A higher level plan?



Plan Refinement and Implementation

Trainee

Questions to help review, revise and implement your plan:

- What insights does my mentor(s) have?
- How can I leverage my mentor(s) to identify and facilitate opportunities to develop skills, acquire experiences and expand my network?
- How can I use my IDP and related discussions about it to support my progress toward my career goals, noting that the IDP is a living document and may evolve as I develop?
- How will my mentor(s) and I use my IDP to track my progress? How often will we meet?
- Do my mentor(s) and I both agree on my IDP?

Individual Development Plans Resources

From CIHR

<https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/50516.html>

<https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/51129.html>

<https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/50516.html>

From AAAS

<https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1>

From VITAE

<https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/career-management-for-researchers>

Scholarship opportunities

External

Federal Scholarships (Tricouncil)

- Natural Science and Engineering Research Council ([NSERC](#))
- Social Science and Engineering Research Council ([SSHRC](#))
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research ([CIHR](#))

Research Manitoba (<https://researchmanitoba.ca/funding/programs/>)

Internal

University of Manitoba Graduate Fellowship ([UMGF](#))

FGS Awards Search Engine (<http://webapps.cc.umanitoba.ca/gradawards/>)

Deadlines vary for all of these scholarships-you will have to look up the deadlines individually.



SSHRC  CRSH



General Proposal Writing Advice

Write to a general audience

Points you should cover

- Purpose and objectives
- Context and rationale
- Methods
- Feasibility
- Anticipated contribution

Always refer to the guidelines for each award to ensure you have included necessary sections

Writing well

- Write directly
- Be organized
- Find a ~~victim~~ helpful ear



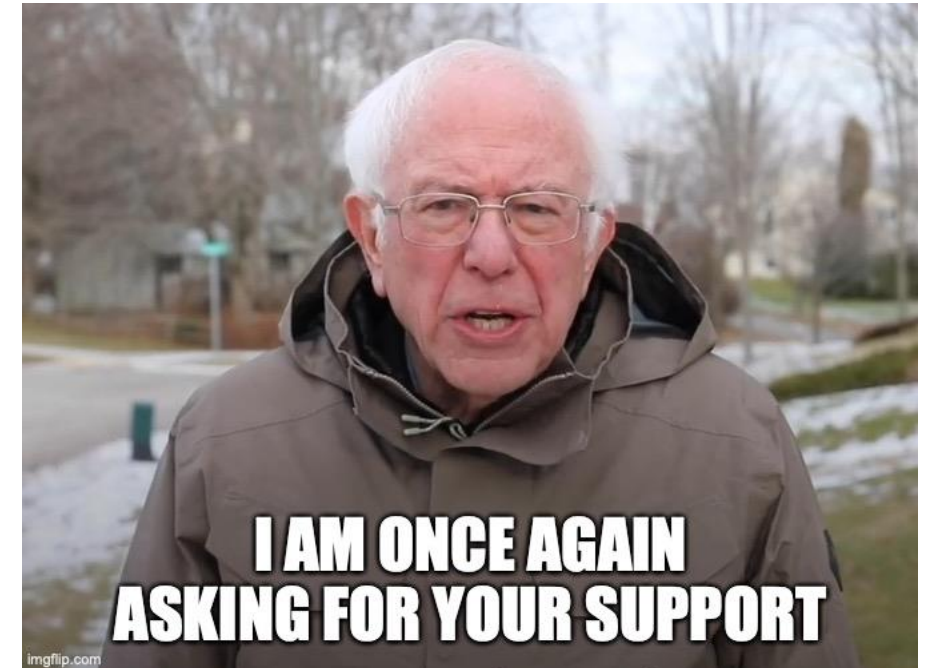
Reference Letters

Pick academics

- Ideally, pick academics who can comment on your academic work and potential
- Ask if they can write you a strong letter (and listen)

Help your references write a strong letter

- Give them information (e.g terms of reference of the scholarship, CV, letters of accomplishment)
- Highlight your accomplishments and strengths they could write about
- Ask them early (It takes time to write a good letter)



Other components

Contributions

- Explain your research contributions (completed and ongoing)
- Do not rely on journal impact factors and the like

Research experience

- Techniques and methods
- Course based and practical
- Highlight your skill set

Relevant activities

- Opportunities, Leadership
- Connections to research



If I knew what a reviewer was looking for when grading applications, I would be better able to create a strong application.

How to reverse engineer an application to make it stronger.

Step 1: Read the instructions

Step 2: Read the Selection Committee Criteria to find what criteria reviewers will be looking for

- Read the selection criteria
- Determine if there is a rubric

Step 3: Ask colleagues and mentors to read your draft application early and ask them to provide feedback about clarity of how your ideas are being expressed. Ask them to provide a lot of feedback if possible.

Be ready to receive their feedback. It might hurt your ego, but your colleague is helping to strengthen your application by being critical.

Example



The screenshot shows the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships website. The header features the text 'Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships' on the left and the 'Canada' logo on the right. A search bar is located in the top right corner. Below the header is a navigation menu with four items: 'Application/ Nomination process', 'Review process', 'Results', and 'Information for Vanier Scholar'. The 'Review process' item is selected. Below the navigation menu is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home' → 'Review process' → 'Selection committee guide'. The main content area has a large heading 'Selection committee guide' and a sub-heading 'Foreword'. The foreword text describes the document as a guide for members of the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships (Vanier CGS) selection committees of the three federal granting agencies: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). It describes the review process for members and chairs of these selection committees, as well as the policies, guidelines and deliverables that define each stage of the review process. The text also mentions that members of the Vanier CGS selection committees are appointed from the Canadian and international academic communities, and are familiar with the mandate, structures and programs of the federal granting agencies. New members and those appointed from other sectors, should refer to [Selecting the Appropriate Federal Granting Agency](#) for more detailed information regarding federal granting agency mandates. Finally, it states that although this Selection committee guide strives to be comprehensive, committee members may still have questions after reading it. Members are asked to direct all questions to the program administrator responsible for their selection committee. Below the foreword is a section titled 'Table of contents' with a list of items: 1. [Overview of the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship program](#), 2. [Roles and responsibilities](#), 2.1 [Selection committee](#), and 2.1.1 [Chair](#).

https://vanier.gc.ca/en/selection_committee_guide-comite_selection_lignes.html#b3.1

▼ 3.1. Selection Criteria

Nominations are evaluated and selected based on the following three criteria, weighted equally:

1. Academic Excellence
2. Research Potential
3. Leadership (Potential and Demonstrated Ability)

When evaluating nominations, both the prestige of the Vanier CGS and the stage and nature of the candidate's academic career should be considered.

The Tri-Agencies are actively engaged in promoting equity and diversity, as well as in decreasing unconscious bias in their review processes. To this end, the Secretariat has curated [a list of resources for selection committee members regarding equity, diversity and inclusion consideration](#).

Members should base their reviews solely on the information included in the nomination.

Reviewers must assess productivity broadly (i.e., not just based on publications) and consider the applicant's context (e.g., career stage, leave history). The Tri-Agencies have signed the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#), which recognizes that scholarly outputs are not limited to published journal articles but can include a broader range of outputs. Reviewers are encouraged to include these in their assessments.

Criterion	Indicators	Sources
Academic Excellence The candidate's academic history and their demonstrated excellence in academic achievement throughout the course of their scholarly career.	Academic Record, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Transcripts ◦ Duration of previous studies ◦ Program requirements and courses pursued ◦ Course load ◦ Relative standing in program (if available) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Academic transcripts ◦ Academic Background section—Common CV ◦ Personal Leadership Statement
	Institutions comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Institutional Nomination letter
	Scholarships/award (competitiveness, amount, duration and prestige)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Common CV
1. Consider individual workstyles, contributions, commitments, and variations in disciplinary, community and cultural standards, ex. collaboration, teamwork and mentoring are important and valid contributions to research and to training highly qualified personnel.		

https://vanier.gc.ca/en/selection_committee_guide-comite_selection_lignes.html#b3.1

Other tips for grant writing

Universities want their students to succeed, and many have information and advice for writing compelling applications.

University of Manitoba, McGill and Dalhousie all have such resources.

Some of the advice is mechanical (how to navigate the submission site, reminder to check your spelling) but there also tips/sources on improving your writing.

The information will also be useful for preparing grant applications, which some of you will undertake going forward.

What does success look like?

NSERC Awards Database

SSHRC Awards Search Engine

CIHR Funding Decisions Database

Research Manitoba Funding Decisions Database

All of these have titles, amounts, of successful scholarship applications. Searchable by institution and other parameters.

The CIHR Database also includes abstracts.

I know where I want to get to - how do I get there?

MITACS is a non-profit research organization that partners with academia/industry/government on training programs for industrial & social innovation.

MITACS offers training courses on:

Networking skills

Project and time management

Reconciliation and EDI

Communication skills

Career planning

R&D management

Leadership skills

Writing and presentation skills

Links (from NSERC)

NSERC advice & tips videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=St7LWVYA5tQ&list=PL6ox0GB7vXYlhaAY7mEqwmMqYK9TGCp1E&index=9>

Other NSERC videos

https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/Videos-Videos/SFTips_eng.asp

NSERC incorporation of EDI

https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/Policies-Politiques/EDI_guidance-Conseils_EDI_eng.asp

Links² (NSERC, SSHRC, Universities)

NSERC review process

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ftx9fg4h3mY>

SSHRC application journey

<https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/apply-demande/journey-cheminement-eng.aspx>

From U of M

https://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/media/Grant_writing_May_Days_2015.pdf

From McGill

https://www.mcgill.ca/mecheng/files/mecheng/NSERC_Fellowship_Applications.pdf

From Dalhousie

<https://www.dal.ca/faculty/arts/research/external/Grant-WritingTips.html>

Links³ (Awards databases)

NSERC AWARDS DATABASE

https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/ase-oro/index_eng.asp?new

SSHRC AWARDS SEARCH ENGINE

<http://www.outil.ost.uqam.ca/CRSH/RechProj.aspx?vLangue=Anglais>

SSHRC AWARDS RECIPIENTS

<https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/results-resultats/recipients-recipientaires/index-eng.aspx>

CIHR FUNDING DECISIONS DATABASE (includes abstracts!)

<https://webapps.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/decisions/p/main.html?lang=en#sort=namesort%20asc&start=0&rows=20>

RESEARCH MANITOBA FUNDING DECISIONS DATABASE

<https://gms.researchmanitoba.ca/funding-search/>

Links⁵ (MITACS)

MITACS training courses

<https://www.mitacs.ca/en/programs/training/training-courses>

MITACS workshop bundles (same content as above, links to register)

<https://umanitoba.ca/graduate-studies/student-experience/graduate-student-workshops#mitacs-workshops>

Getting help

- Information about scholarship opportunities available on the FGS Website (see [FGS Funding, Awards, and Financial Aid](#))
- Check out the [FGS Awards Engine](#)

Funding, awards and financial aid

We want you to succeed as a graduate student. Find out how you can access funding so you can focus on your studies.

[Go directly to...](#)

[Browse all graduate awards](#)

Award winners

Banting Fellows and Vanier Scholars awarded to UM

UM welcomes two Banting Postdoctoral Fellows to its ranks and congratulates four doctoral students on receiving Vanier Scholarships. Banting postdoctoral fellows are the best postdocs in the world. The recipients are top-tier postdoctoral talent, nationally and internationally. This award positions Banting Fellows to succeed as research leaders. Only seventy fellowships are awarded across Canada annually, valued at \$140,000 over two years.

[Learn more about each PhD student](#) →

[Learn more about the Vanier Scholarships](#) ↗

[Learn more about Banting Postdoctoral Fellows](#) ↗



PhD student Joshua Okyere named Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation Scholar

Joshua Okyere, a PhD student in the Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) program, qualified as a finalist for the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation Scholarship and Engaged Leadership program. After a rigorous selection process and competing with 102 semi-finalists, he has now been named one of this year's 15 Scholars across Canada.

[Read Joshua's story](#) →

[Learn more about Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation Scholarships](#) ↗

Award opportunities

These are a sampling of the many awards available to UM graduate students.

Getting help

- Information about scholarship opportunities available on the FGS Website (see [FGS Funding, Awards, and Financial Aid](#))
- Check out the [FGS Awards Engine](#)
- If you have specific questions about a particular scholarship or award, you can contact the appropriate person in the FGS Awards Team ([PDF](#))

Questions?

