

**Report on Applicant: Instructions for Faculty**

Guidelines taken from review of tri-council sites, with links provided below.

Scholarship opportunities within the research-funding ecosystem are guided by a commitment to promoting equity, diversity and inclusion to ensure equitable access. Tri-council has curated [a list of resources for selection committee members regarding equity, diversity and inclusion consideration](https://vanier.gc.ca/en/equity_diversity_inclusion-equite_diversite_inclusion.html#details-panel4)

Suggestions for best practices when drafting the report:

* Be accurate, fair, clear and balanced
* Avoid being unduly personal in submission or addressing the contact for the scholarship
* Letters should, ideally, be between one and two pages.
* Support your points by providing specific examples of accomplishments where possible
* Use superlative descriptors (for example, excellent, outstanding) judiciously and support them with evidence
* Include only information that is relevant to the selection criteria (for example, do not include information related to ethnicity, age, hobbies, marital status, religion, disability status, financial need, etc.)
* Use caution when sharing personal information about the applicant, the applicant must have given their permission, and if providing personal detail, make sure it is relevant to the application
* Confirm with applicant if sharing personal information, which may be helpful in explaining academic delays or interruptions.
* Avoid words or sentences that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped or discriminatory language of particular people or groups or their institution

Referees are encouraged to use inclusive language (for example, “the applicant” or “they” instead of “he/she”). Use of inclusive language has been shown to decrease unconscious bias during the evaluation process.

According to a [report](http://www.aauw.org/research/why-so-few/) issued by the [American Association of University Women](http://www.aauw.org/), implicit biases operate at an unconscious level, are influenced by our cultural environment and can impact our decision-making. A [study](http://diversity.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/exploring-the-color-of-glass.pdf) out of Wayne State University, which systematically compared letters of recommendation written for female applicants with those written for male applicants, found that, compared to the letters written for men, those written for women were more likely to:

* be shorter in length and incomplete;
* include gendered terms (e.g., woman, lady, mother, wife);
* include fewer ‘standout’ adjectives (e.g., excellent, outstanding etc.);
* include ‘doubt raisers’ (negative language, hedges, unexplained comments, faint praise and irrelevancies);
* focus on interpersonal attributes versus research skills/achievements (e.g., kindness, compassionate etc.); and
* include personal information that was not relevant to the position.

It is important to avoid unconscious bias within letters of recommendation as it can potentially have an unintended negative impact on the overall success/career of individuals—especially in the case of women. Research shows that social and environmental factors (including unconscious bias) contribute to the under-representation of women in science.

**How to Limit Unconscious Bias**

In order to limit the influence of unconscious bias within your letter, consider the following:

* Avoid using stereotypical adjectives when describing character and skills, especially when providing a letter for a woman (e.g., avoid words like nice, kind, agreeable, sympathetic, compassionate, selfless, giving, caring, warm, nurturing, maternal, etc.).
* Consider using ‘stand-out’ adjectives for both men and women, where appropriate (e.g., superb, excellent, outstanding, confident, successful, ambitious, knowledgeable, intellectual etc.).
* Use the nominee’s formal title and surname instead of their first name.

Consider whether your letter unintentionally includes gaps, or doubt-raising, negative or unexplained statements (e.g., ‘might make an excellent leader’ versus ‘is an established leader’).

For further information on unconscious bias, please consult the Department of Women and Gender Equality’s (formerly Status of Women Canada)  [Unconscious bias – Additional resources web page](https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-analysis-plus/resources/unconscious-bias.html). For more information, refer to the  [Canada Research Chairs guidelines for letter writers on limiting unconscious bias](https://www.chairs-chaires.gc.ca/program-programme/referees-repondants-eng.aspx#bias).

Applicants have been advised to provide their references with a deadline that is well before the application deadline, to allow applicants to submit their completed application on time. NSERC will not consider the application as complete without your report.

**Graduate Scholarship Funding Opportunities**

**Typical criteria:** Academic Excellence, Research Potential, Leadership (Potential and Demonstrated Ability)

| **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:* Transcripts
* Duration of previous studies
* Program requirements and courses pursued
* Course load
* Relative standing in program (if available)
 | Academic transcriptsAcademic Background section—Common CV, if applicablePersonal Leadership Statement |
| Institutions comments | Reference letters |
|  Scholarships/award (competitiveness, amount, duration and prestige) |  Common CV |
| Consider individual workstyles, contributions, commitments, and variations in disciplinary, community and cultural standards, collaboration, teamwork and mentoring are important and valid contributions to research and to training highly qualified personnel. The gender of the applicant should not have an impact on how these contributions are valued.Similar expectations apply to single-authored and multi-authored publications.If applicable, consideration of the merit of non-academic contributions for research respectfully involving Indigenous peoples must be taken into consideration.Evaluate excellence/productivity commensurate with the career stage of the candidate, taking into consideration the life and career trajectory. Evaluators should guard against placing too much value on the number of contributions; focus must be on the impact and significance of the contributions. Impact factor and citation rates vary between disciplines and contexts; members must be mindful of this when considering them as part of their evaluation. |

| **Criterion** | **Indicators** | **Sources** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Research potential**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. Reviewers should consider the sphere of influence of candidates relative to others along the following continuum of expanding impact:* 1. Research program
	2. Canadian university
	3. Research community
	4. International research community
	5. Society at large

Consideration should be given to the candidate’s standards of research productivity, etc. for their level of experience/qualifications relative to their personal circumstances (applicant’s stage of study, lived experience and knowledge systems). | Academic training and relevant work experience (co-op included)Lived experience and traditional teaching | Work Experience section – Common CVPersonal Leadership StatementReferee assessments |
| Quality of contributions and extent to which they advance the field of research – contributions may include publications, patents, reports, posters, abstracts, monographs, presentations, creative outputs, knowledge translation outputs, community products, etc.  | Research contributionsReferee assessmentsCommon CV |
| Research Proposal (feasibility of research, merit, significance and expected contributions to research) | Research Proposal |
| Demonstration of sound judgment and ability to think critically Demonstration of responsible and ethical research conduct, including honest and thoughtful inquiry, rigorous analysis, commitment to safety and to the dissemination of research results and adherence to the use of professional standardsEnthusiasm for research, originality, initiative, autonomy, relevant community involvement and outreach Ability or potential to communicate theoretical, technical and/or scientific concepts clearly and logically in written and oral formats | Personal Leadership StatementReferee AssessmentsResearch Proposal |
|  |  |  |

When evaluating it is important to consider the stage and nature of the candidate's academic career.

**Leadership (Potential and Demonstrated Ability)**:

When assessing the leadership criterion, consider how the nominee has gone above and beyond the expected norms in order to overcome obstacles, foster others, spearhead change, or otherwise demonstrate Leadership.

Weigh achievements according to the opportunities presented (lack of opportunities due to socio-economic status, culturally different academic settings for students with foreign academic backgrounds, etc.).

Note: consider that for foreign candidates, these opportunities may not always present themselves due to culturally different academic settings.

Personal achievement

* + Excellence in professional programs/association such as sports, arts, science, business etc. (look for impactful involvement; mere participation is not enough)
	+ Entrepreneurial achievement (start-up company, establishing an NGO or  charitable initiative, establishing arts/sports based festivals/competitions)
	+ Foreign study

Ability to overcome personal obstacles and commit to research excellence despite numerous challenges (ex. socio-economic reasons, familial or parental responsibilities, trauma or loss, etc.)

Involvement in academic life

* + mentoring/teaching;
	+ supervisory experience;
	+ involvement in student government and in the institution community, including committees, teams, senate, boards, ethics committees, etc.;
	+ project/lab management;
	+ roles in academic/professional societies;

organization of conferences, meetings, courses, etc

Volunteerism/community outreach: involvement in charity or not-for-profit organizations.

Goal achievement

* + a clear vision of what they want to accomplish;
	+ a developed personal vision for the future that defines a impactful/meaningful change for the community or a group, cause or organization;
	+ strategizes on how to achieve desired outcomes and has specific, realistic and timely goals.

Self-management

* knows how to prioritize and complete tasks to reach the desired outcome and is confident of success;
* establishes learning goals and tasks; reaches goals in an efficient, organized and innovative way; and is constantly working on self-improvement

Integrity

* + acts consistently with core ethical and personal values and convictions; and
	+ accepts personal accountability for the consequences of their actions/decisions.

Other characteristics

* + is creative and takes initiative;
	+ is curious;
	+ deals well with complexity;
	+ has a strong sense of reality;
	+ is courageous;
	+ is strategic, a big-picture thinker;
	+ focuses on solutions, not problems;
	+ is capable of producing extraordinary results; and is able to solve real problems and create real products.

Social skills

* + knows how to develop positive relationships with a diverse range of people;
	+ cares about and listens to what others say and gives feedback;
	+ knows how to motivate individuals;
	+ is persuasive;
	+ is supportive of peers;
	+ is able to negotiate;
	+ is viewed as trustworthy, ethical and dependable;
	+ is well-respected; and displays mastery of presentation skills and public communications.





<https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServices-ServicesEnLigne/instructions/201/pgs-pdf_eng.asp>

<https://vanier.gc.ca/en/nomination_process-processus_de_mise_en_candidature.html#att1>

<https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/instructions/doctoral/doctoral-eng.aspx#prop>

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