

Graduate school in psychology: Navigating the application components with confidence

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Section for Students in Psychology – Canadian Psychological Association

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CANADIAN
PSYCHOLOGICAL
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SOCIÉTÉ
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Today's Speakers

- Jean-Philippe Gagné, M.A. (Past-Chair)
 - PhD Candidate | Clinical Psychology | Concordia University
- Alexandra Richard, B.A. (Chair-Elect)
 - PhD Student | Clinical Psychology | McGill University
- Jérémie Richard, M.A. (Graduate Student Affairs Officer)
 - PhD Student | Counselling Psychology | McGill University
- Alisia Palermo, B.Sc. (Communications Officer)
 - MSc Student | Forensic Psychology | University of Ontario Institute of Technology

Workshop Outline

- Questions for the audience
- Overview of programs
- Application components
- Federal scholarships
- Finding a supervisor
- Preparing for interviews
- Application timeline
- Rejected: what to do?
- Questions (English and French)



Who are you?

The Big Question...

Why do you want to go to graduate school?

- Try to think beyond “this is the degree I need to practice”
- Think about the journey and the entire experience
- Answering this question is helpful...
 - while applying (e.g., personal statements)
 - while in graduate school (e.g., staying focused)

Overview of Programs



Subdisciplines of Psychology

- Applied Behaviour Analysis
- Clinical Psychology
- Forensic Psychology
- Counselling Psychology
- Educational Psychology
- Evolutionary Psychology
- Experimental Psychology
- Health Psychology
- Neuropsychology
- Positive Psychology
- Psychophysiology
- Sport Psychology
- Social Psychology
- Psycholinguistics

...and many more!

Program Types

Research (Experimental)



Clinical



Research & Clinical



+



Psychology Degree Types

MA/MSc/MEd

- ~2-3 years
- Emphasis on research
- Course work (research methods & statistics)
- Completion/defense of a thesis or other major research project
- Small program (~10)
- May be eligible to practice clinically (depends on province)

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

- ~5-7 years
- Emphasis on research training (with clinical training, if clinical program)
- Course work, completion of comprehensive exams & defense of a dissertation
- Small program (~10)
- Better clinical internships available
- Eligible to practice clinically
- More widely accepted than PsyD

Doctor of Psychology (PsyD)

- ~4-6 years
- Practitioner-scholar model, trained to be a clinician
- Greater emphasis on clinical work with little research
- Larger program
- More difficult to find internships
- Eligible to practice clinically upon completion

Clinical vs. Counselling Psychology

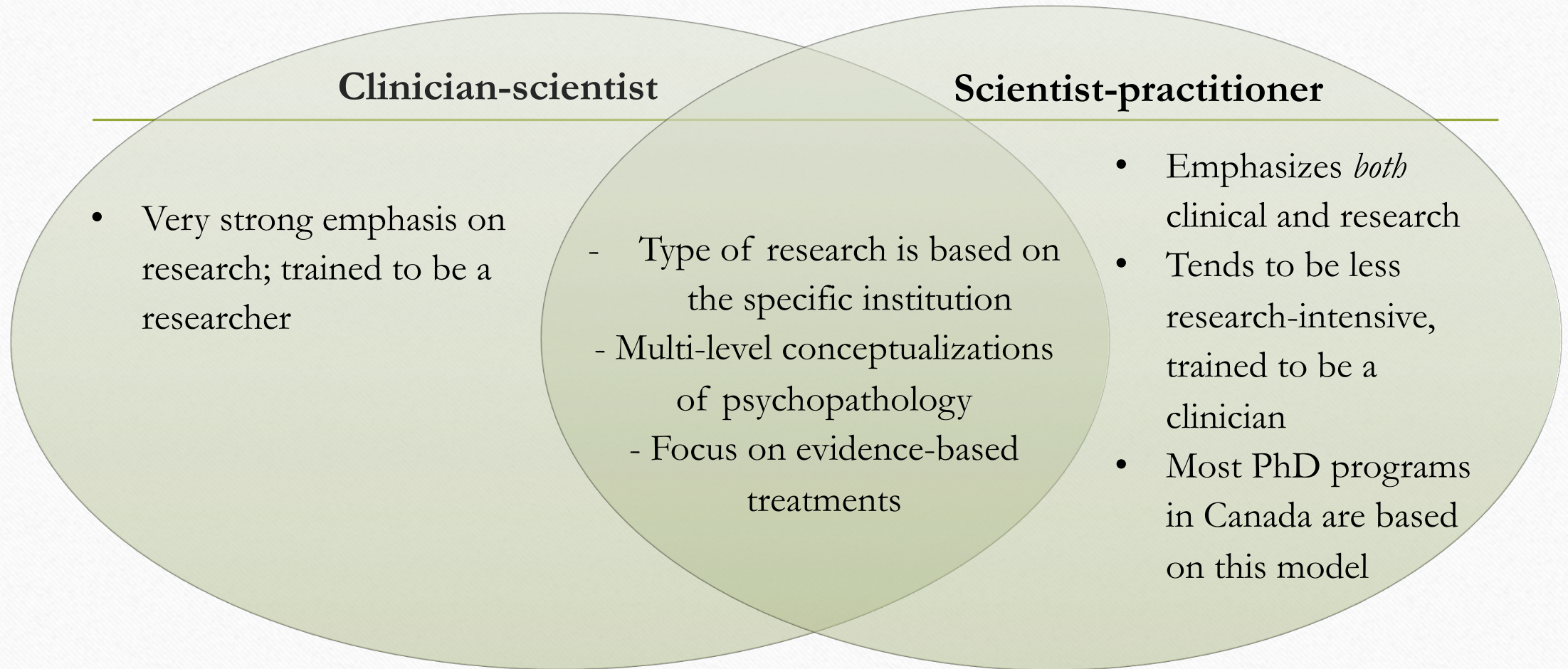
Clinical Psychology

- Care, diagnosis, and treatment of clients
- Focus on serious mental illnesses (e.g., bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, MDD, OCD, personality disorders)
- Psychodynamic and cognitive-behavioural theories, although this varies widely
- Training emphasizes psychopathology
- Can work in private practice, hospitals, prisons

Counselling Psychology

- Consult, deliberate, and advise clients
- Focus on emotional and/or social issues that arise from life stressors (i.e., family, school, work), including substance abuse
- Client-centric, wellness, and prevention strategies
- Can work in university settings, family services, rehabilitation centres

Clinical Psychology Models



A stylized illustration on a dark background featuring a central clipboard with a teal clip and a light gray sheet of paper. The paper has orange horizontal lines and three checkboxes, the first two of which are checked with orange marks. To the top left is a teal-bordered square containing an orange silhouette of a person's head and shoulders with a small orange checkmark in a circle at the bottom right. To the bottom left is a teal-bordered parallelogram with orange horizontal lines. To the right is a teal-bordered diamond shape containing orange diagonal lines and a small teal circle with a checkmark. A large orange arrow points from the bottom right towards the center.

Application Components

Transcripts

- “A grade point average (GPA) of 3.6/4.0 begins to be competitive; however a GPA of 3.8/4.0 or higher is more typical.” - University of Calgary
 - Not the only factor!
 - Think about research experience, conference presentations, publications, etc.
- Order (many) transcripts early
 - Usually need to be mailed directly to each institution
 - CEGEP?
- \$7-12 (but sometimes free if still enrolled)

CV

- Emphasis on **academic** experiences
- Elements to include
 - Education
 - Research experience (e.g., volunteering, research assistantships, summer NSERC scholarships)
 - Publications
 - Conference presentations (including institutional and local)
 - Awards and scholarships
 - Teaching experience
 - *Relevant* practical experience (e.g., clinical work)

CV (Cont'd)

- Describe your accomplishments
 - Specific award/scholarship
- Describe your research experience
 - What role did you play in the laboratory?
- Cite publications and presentations APA style
- Organize your CV professionally and logically
- Proof read

Graduate Record Examination (GRE)

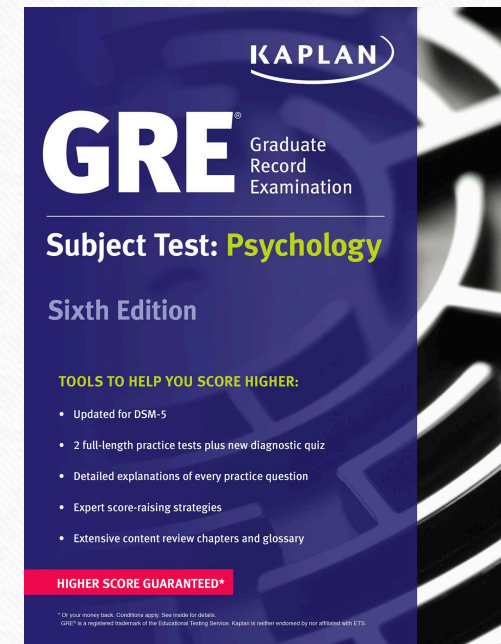
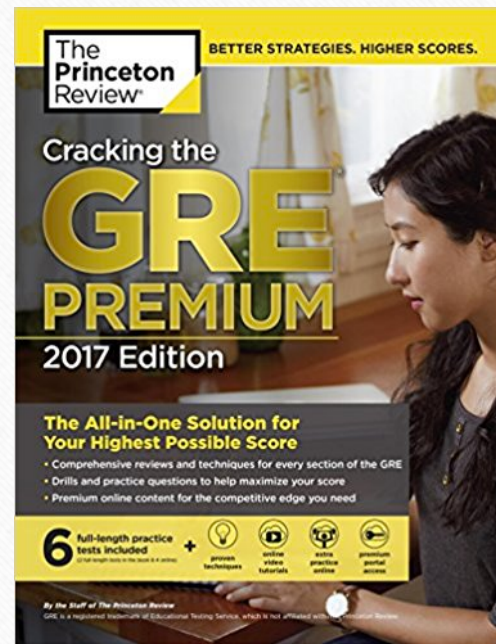
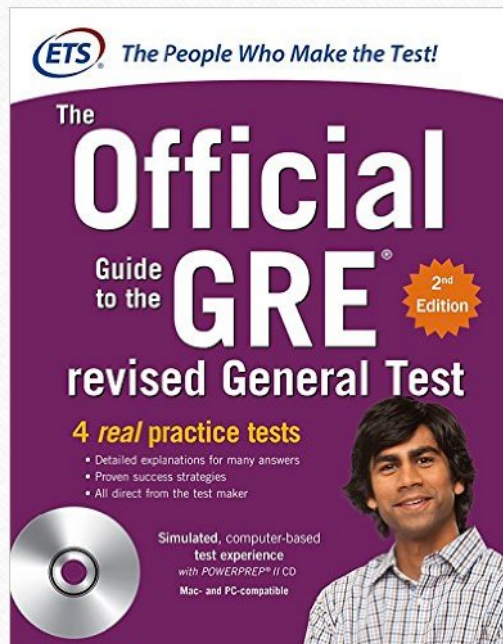
- Standardized test often used as an admission requirement for graduate school
- Administered by *Educational Testing Service (ETS)*
- General (computerized)
 - Analytical writing
 - Quantitative reasoning
 - Verbal reasoning
- Subject – Psychology (paper-based)
 - Learning, language, memory, thinking, sensation, perception, behavioural neuroscience, psychopathology, development, personality, social, methodology, etc.

GRE (Cont'd)

- Take the test early
 - Opportunity to take it again
- General: offered frequently
- Psychology: September, October, April
 - Visit ets.org
 - Limited spots: check the registration date

GRE (Cont'd)

- Books, courses, flashcards, and practice tests



Reference Letters

- Usually two or three letters
- Academic- and research-oriented
 - Sometimes ask for a clinically-oriented letter
- Who should I ask?
 - Honours/undergraduate/master's thesis supervisor(s)
 - PI of laboratory in which you volunteered/worked
 - Professor (e.g., from a seminar, excellent relationship)
 - Maintain contact
- Ask **early** (i.e., minimum 1 month) and provide **specific** instructions

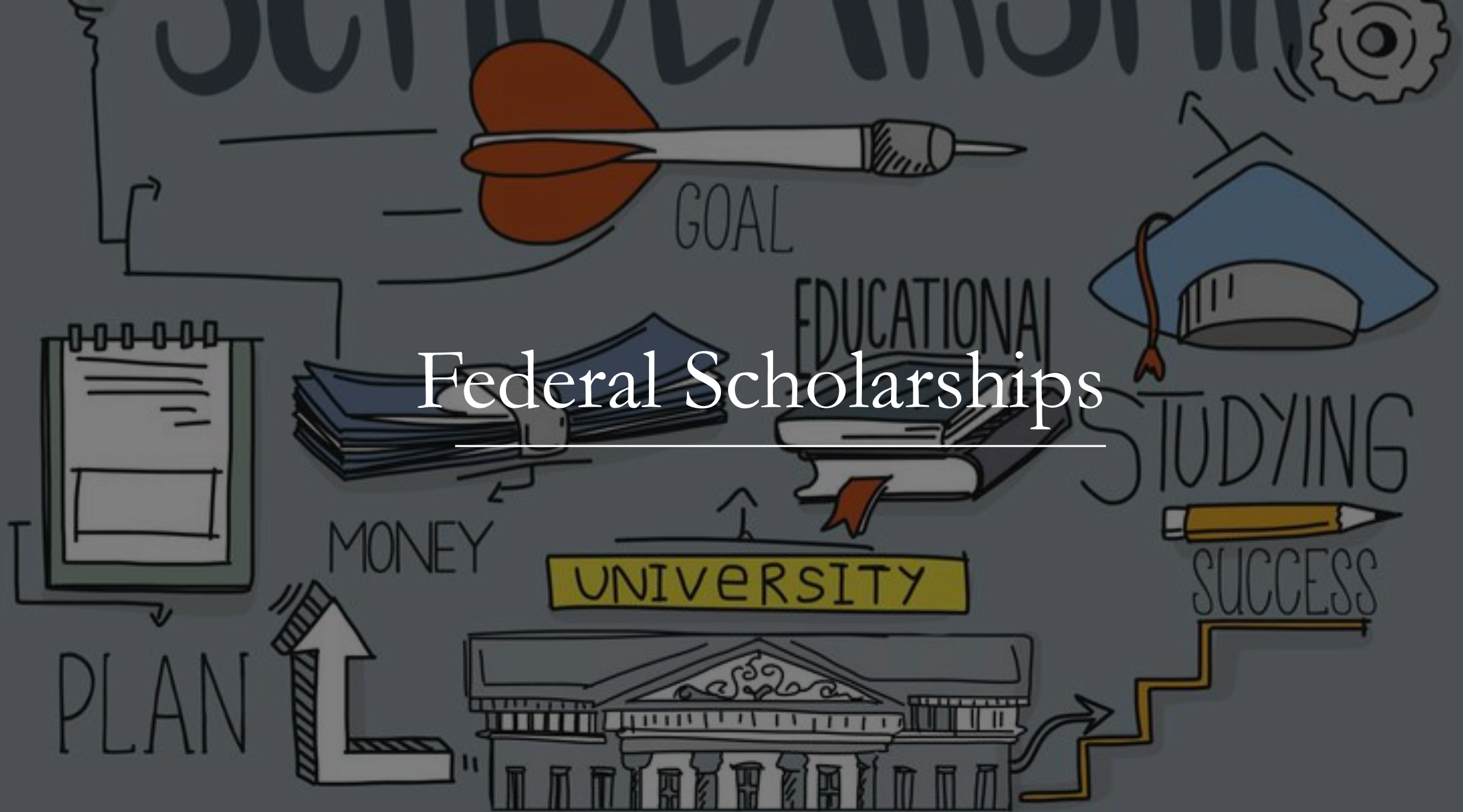
Statement of Interest

- Length varies (e.g., 1500 words at Concordia University)
- Tell a (professional) story
 - Not a creative contest
 - Stand out because of your experiences and excellent writing skills
- Discuss your **research interests** and why graduate school is essential for you to achieve your **career goals**
- Have your thesis advisor or laboratory supervisor read it over

Statement of Interest (Cont'd)

- State with whom you want to work (i.e., potential supervisor)
 - Clearly indicate how your research interests match your supervisor's interests – be concrete
 - How will your previous research experiences be beneficial for that specific laboratory and how will they help you navigate that laboratory?
- Tailor your statement of interest to each institution
 - Why is *this* supervisor + institution the optimal situation for *you*?
 - Why is it a good fit for *you* and for *them*?
 - What can you get from this institution/supervisor that you cannot get elsewhere?

Federal Scholarships



Federal Agencies



Canada Graduate Scholarships-Master's Program

Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) – Frederick Banting and Charles Best Canada Graduate Scholarships

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) – Alexander Graham Bell Canada Graduate Scholarships

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) – Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarships

- Master's

- Canada

Overview

Value	\$17,500 for 12 months, non-renewable
Application deadline	December 1
Application procedures	See below
How to apply	To view instructions and other resources, select Canada Graduate Scholarships - Master's Program Resources . To create or access an application, select Research Portal . To create a Canadian Common CV, select Canadian Common CV .
For more information	See below

Doctoral Scholarships

- CIHR
 - Frederick Banting & Charles Best Canada Graduate Scholarships (\$35,000/year; 3 max)
- NSERC
 - NSERC Postgraduate Scholarships—Doctoral Program (\$21,000/year; 3 max)
 - Alexander Graham Bell Canada Graduate Scholarships (\$35,000/year; 3 max)
- SSHRC
 - SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships (\$20,000/year; 4 max)
 - Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarships (\$35,000/year; 3 max)
- CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC
 - Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships (\$50,000/year; 3 max)

Application Components

- Application form
- Canadian Common CV
- Transcripts
- Reference letters (two or three)
- Research proposal
- Additional materials (e.g., statements: program of study; leadership; activities and contributions; interruptions and delays; space and facilities)



Finding a Supervisor

Finding a Supervisor

- What is the role of a supervisor?
 - Academic and research/clinical guidance
 - Setting of work expectations
 - Feedback and evaluations
 - General support
- Finding a supervisor prior versus after admission
 - Consult departmental website

Identifying Potential Supervisors

What to look for?

- Similar research/clinical interests
- Currently accepting students?
- Supervision style
- Personality

Where to find this information?

- Program / faculty websites
- Laboratory / personal webpages
- Research publications
- Current graduate students
- The potential supervisor

Making Initial Contact

- Professional greeting
- Introduce yourself
- State why you are contacting them
- Express your interest in working with them
- Relevant research experience or skills
- Attach your C.V. and unofficial transcript
- Offer opportunity for further discussion



Finding a Supervisor: Additional Resources

- Many guidelines, tips, and templates can be found online
 - Posted by universities
- Speak to other graduate students!

Activity

- What are some qualities you feel would be important to find in a supervisor given your own personality, learning style, or work ethic?

OR

- If you are already in a supervisory relationship, what qualities do you currently value in this relationship?

Interviews, Application Timeline, and Rejections

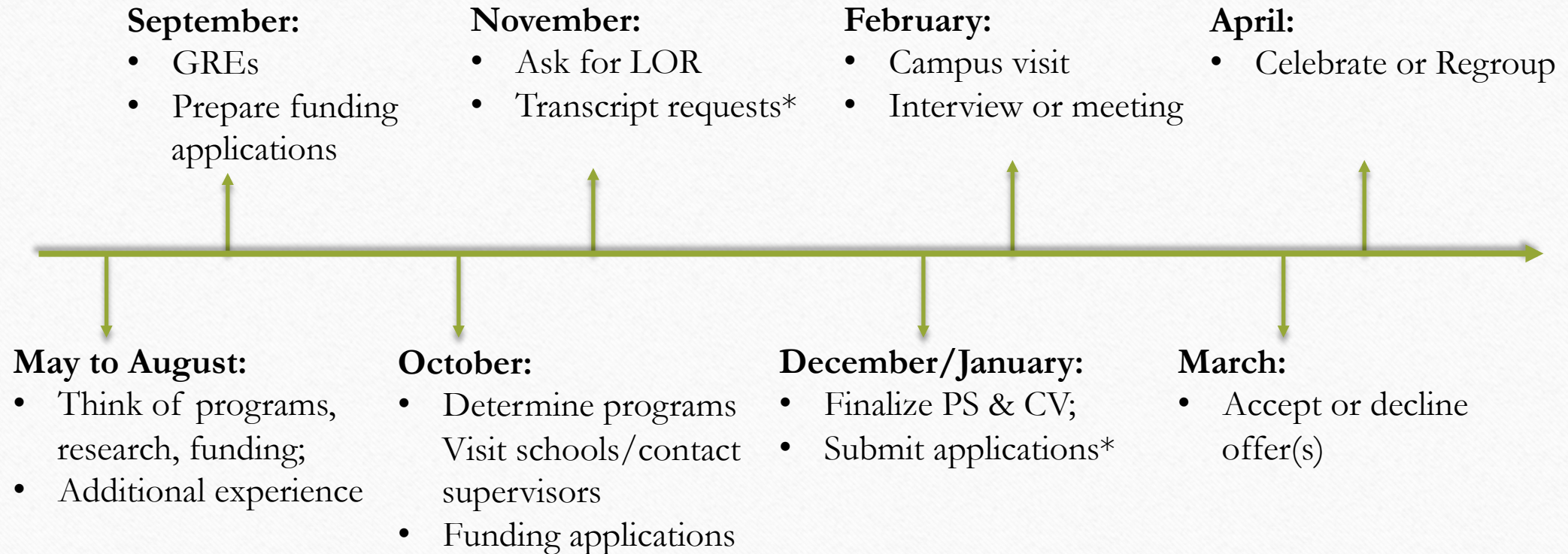


Preparing for Interviews

- How to prepare for interviews?
- Potential questions
- Interview format
- Other relevant information?



Application Timeline



Rejected: What to Do?

- Don't be discouraged: more denials than acceptances
- Most people reapply: graduate school in psychology is very competitive!
- Self-care: applications are long and demanding and rejection can be difficult
- Take some time to ask yourself how you can improve your application
 - What were your strengths and weaknesses?
- Restructure your application for the following year
- Do not submit the same documents all over again
- Get more research experience (e.g., lab work, conference presentations, and publications)

The background features large, stylized, overlapping letters 'Q', 'R', and 'A'. The 'Q' is olive green, the 'R' is blue, and the 'A' is red. They are set against a black background. The word 'Questions?' is centered over the 'Q' and 'R' in a white serif font, with a thin white horizontal line underneath it.

Questions?

Good luck!

Thank
you