

NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA) – 2014/15

Information for Students

Would you like to get some research experience in an academic setting? If you are an undergraduate student with an interest in working on research and development projects at a university, you may be eligible to apply for an Undergraduate Student Research Award (USRA). The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) subsidizes eligible professors to hire students on their research projects, thereby creating interesting research-related jobs and giving you the opportunity to gain valuable work experience.

ARE YOU ELIGIBLE FOR AN AWARD?

To be eligible to **apply** for an award, you must:

- Be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada
- Be registered (at the time you apply) in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible university (full-time or part-time) in the term immediately before holding the award
- Have obtained, over the previous years of study, a minimum cumulative B- (68%) average
- Have completed (at the time you hold the award) all the course requirements of at least the first year of university study (or two academic terms) of your bachelor's degree
- **Not have started** a program of graduate studies in the natural sciences or engineering

In addition:

- If you already hold a bachelor's degree and are studying toward a second bachelor's degree, you may still apply to this program
- You may hold only **one** academic USRA per fiscal year (April 1 to March 31)
- You may hold a maximum of three academic USRAs throughout your university career
- If you are a **graduating student**, you may hold an award in the term immediately following the completion of all requirements of your undergraduate program, regardless of your graduation date
- Once you start working, you must be engaged, **on a full-time basis for a minimum of 16 consecutive weeks**, in research and development activities in the natural sciences or engineering during the tenure of the award

WHO IS NOT ELIGIBLE?

You are **not eligible** for an Undergraduate Student Research Award if:

- You are currently enrolled in an undergraduate professional degree program in the health sciences (e.g., M.D., D.D.S., B.Sc.N., B.Sc.Pharm.)
- You hold higher degrees in the natural sciences or engineering

HOW DO YOU FIND USRA POSITIONS?

This depends on which faculty/department you want to work in. Check out the [student page](#) of the Centre for Student Involvement & Careers website for a listing of eligible grant holders who could supervise a USRA, Coordinators who can answer questions regarding the application process and how award winners are chosen, as well as deadlines for submitting the necessary applications. ***Please note:** *The list of grant holders that are eligible to supervise a USRA candidate for the upcoming 2014/15 competition will be updated in December 2013.*

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HOW DO YOU CONTACT ELIGIBLE FACULTY MEMBERS?

Try to create your own research opportunity by contacting eligible professors you would like to work with and tell them about this program. Many professors will be happy to talk to you about the opportunity to hire you at a subsidized wage. If you find a professor who is interested, ask him/her to contact their USRA Coordinator for more information.

Here are some tips:

- Know what you are going to say: be prepared to talk about your interests, knowledge areas, and lab or volunteer experience. Familiarize yourself with your professor's research subject so you can ask informed questions about it. This will show that you are genuinely interested in helping with the research.
- Bring a copy of your resumé.
- Print out the [program rules for supervisors](#) from the Centre for Student Involvement & Careers website. Make sure you understand the program parameters.
- Regardless of whether you get the position or not, thank the professor for his/her time. A thank-you email would be a nice touch.

HOW DO YOU APPLY?

- The NSERC USRA program is administered and coordinated through the Faculty/School USRA Coordinators. Each faculty establishes procedures for identifying and ranking applicants and setting deadlines.
- To apply, both Project Supervisors and students must complete and submit an online NSERC USRA application Form 202 part I (student) and Part II (supervisor). Forward your **reference number** to the supervisor so they can include it in their part of the application.
 - You must complete the [online forms](#) by clicking on “System Login” or, if you are a first time user, “Register”.
 - Read the [instructions](#) on how to complete the forms
 - You must also upload, with your application form, a copy of your official transcripts, including one copy of the back page legend.
- **Once completed online, a copy of the forms (Part I and Part II, as well as the student's transcripts) have to be submitted to your Department/Faculty/School USRA Coordinator for review.**
- Your USRA Coordinator will be in touch with your proposed project supervisor about the outcome of the application.
- **NSERC will not accept hardcopy forms so the official application must be completed and submitted electronically.** The copies sent to the USRA Coordinator are only necessary for the internal review process.

VALUE AND PAYMENT OF AWARDS

- These awards have a value of \$4,500. This amount will be reimbursed to your project supervisor's account at the end of your work tenure.
- Universities are required to supplement the amount of the award by **at least 25%** of its value using other sources such as university funds, NSERC grants, or any other research

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- funds. Therefore, your **minimum pay for the tenure of your award of 16 weeks is \$5,740**. If the award is longer than 16 weeks, your pay should increase by a minimum of \$358.75/week for each additional week.
- You will receive your payment from the university in accordance with its pay procedures. You will also receive a T4 or T4A slip (Statement of Income) for tax purposes from UBC Payroll.
 - A travel allowance may also be granted if you take up the award at a university other than the one at which you are currently registered (see the section on Travel Allowances below for more information).
 - NSERC will **not reimburse** the University for any period during which you worked **part-time**. No payment will be approved for any vacation leave you take during the tenure of the award.

HOW LONG IS THE AWARD?

- The **minimum** normal duration of the award is **16 consecutive weeks of full-time** work.
- Under exceptional circumstances, NSERC may approve awards for periods of less than 16 weeks.
- You can hold an award at any time during the year as permitted by your academic program (e.g., an award may be held concurrently with a co-op placement). Most USRAs are held in the Summer from early May to late August, however, you can also hold a USRA from September to December, or from January to April.

WHERE CAN YOU HOLD YOUR AWARD?

An Undergraduate Student Research Award is tenable at any eligible Canadian university. Once NSERC has approved your award for tenure at one particular institution, you **may not** transfer it to another institution.

You must work under the supervision of a faculty member who holds an eligible active NSERC research grant (e.g., research, strategic, research partnerships), either at the time you submit the application or when you hold the award.

AWARDS IN INDUSTRY

Some eligible Canadian companies can also participate in the NSERC USRA program. If you are interested, contact the company directly. [Learn more](#) about the industrial USRA.

TRAVEL ALLOWANCES

NSERC may approve a travel allowance for the actual costs you incur to get to your host university if it is different from the one you are attending at the time of the award. The maximum allowance is an amount equivalent to economy airfare between the cities where the universities are located.

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In addition...

- NSERC will pay the return travel costs only if the actual period of tenure is 12 weeks or more.
- NSERC will not provide a travel allowance for your spouse or children.
- This allowance is **not** designed to offset your daily commuting costs to and from the host university.
- NSERC will provide an allowance (as deemed reasonable by NSERC's Finance Division) for ground transportation costs to and from your residence and your point of departure (e.g., airport, train station, bus station). Receipts must be provided.
- NSERC will not provide an allowance for the cost of transporting excess baggage or removing household effects.
- Frequent flyer points will not be reimbursed.
- NSERC will not reimburse travel expenses to and from field research locations other than the UBC campus.

IMPORTANT DATES - 2014/15 USRA COMPETITION

NSERC USRA Application Period	Students and supervisors must register or log onto the NSERC on-line system to complete Form 202 Part 1 (student application) and Form 202 Part II (supervisor application) starting January 2014 . See above for internal application deadlines.
USRA Placements	Summer Term – May – August 2014 *(May 12, 2014) Fall Term – September – December 2014 *(September 2, 2014) Winter Term – January – April 2015 *(January 9, 2015) *latest a student can start working on their award
NSERC Award Notification	Award letters will be issued to students no later than the month of July for the summer term.
Travel Claim Forms (visiting students)	To request a travel allowance, contact your USRA Coordinator. Copies of your travel requisition form and travel receipts should be forwarded to the CSI&C Office (1036 Brock Hall, Attn: NSERC USRA Liaison Officer) by Friday, September 12, 2014.

QUESTIONS?

You are encouraged to contact your Faculty/School USRA Coordinator in case you have any further questions.

As a second resource you can also contact:

NSERC USRA Liaison Officer / UBC Centre for Student Involvement & Careers / nserc.usra@ubc.ca