



2026-27 UVIC USRA Guidelines

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Tri-Agency Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA) program supports more than 3,000 students annually. They provide opportunities for undergraduate students to consider graduate studies and/or a research career through research work experience in the health, natural sciences and engineering, or social sciences and humanities that complements their studies. A USRA is intended to be over and above the academic credits needed for the degree and may be held as a co-op placement.

The complete USRA program guidelines are available in the Program Guide for Students and Fellows on the NSERC website at https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/UG-PC/USRA-BRPC_eng.asp.

These awards are administered by Canada’s 3 research granting agencies:

<u>FUNDING AGENCY</u>	<u>STUDENT ELIGIBILITY</u>
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC)	<i>All undergraduate students who are Canadian Citizens or Permanent Residents can apply to this award.</i> <i>Additional allocations are available for self-identified Black students, and Indigenous students. These allocations will not be counted against the total NSERC USRA allocation.</i>
Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)	<i>CIHR and SSHRC USRA are exclusively offered to Canadian Black students only.</i>

Note: NSERC oversees the administration of the USRA program and the application process on behalf of the three agencies. Accordingly, applications must be submitted through NSERC’s online system.

VALUE AND DURATION OF AWARD

The duration of the award is a minimum of **14 consecutive weeks** on a full-time basis. The student can hold the award in the Summer, Fall or Winter terms. In some instances, the student may be hired for 18 weeks. The USRA program makes no provision for sick leave or vacation, or for other types of interruptions. Should a USRA be interrupted or terminated early for any reason, the agencies must be informed immediately.

USRAs have a value of **\$6,000**. Departments are required to supplement the NSERC/SSHRC/CHIRC portion of the award to comply with Employment Standards. The minimum Department supplement is outlined in the table below. The agency’s contribution is paid directly to the host institution.



2026/27 Undergraduate Student Research Awards Calculator

Number of Hours per Week

	35.00		
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
No. of Weeks	14	15	16
Total hours	490	525	560
USRA Award	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00
Effective Hourly Rate	\$ 12.24	\$ 11.43	\$ 10.71
BC Minimum Wage	\$ 17.85	\$ 17.85	\$ 17.85
Minimum vacation(4%)	\$ 0.71	\$ 0.71	\$ 0.71
Total Minimum Wage	\$ 18.56	\$ 18.56	\$ 18.56
Total Award (Includes \$6,000 USRA)	\$ 9,096.36	\$ 9,746.10	\$ 10,395.84
Hourly Wage Top Up Required	\$ 6.32	\$ 7.14	\$ 7.85
Total Top Up Required*	\$ 3,096.36	\$ 3,746.10	\$ 4,395.84
<i>Top Up Rounded:</i>	\$ 3,100.00	\$ 3,800.00	\$ 4,400.00
Mandatory Employee Related Costs (7.5%)*	\$ 680.41	\$ 729.01	\$ 777.61
MERCS (rounded)	\$ 690.00	\$ 730.00	\$ 780.00
TOTAL Top Up Required	\$ 3,790.00	\$ 4,530.00	\$ 5,180.00

*The department/supervisor will need to fund the required top up to comply with minimum wage standards as well as mandatory employment related costs



FUNDING SUPPLEMENTS FOR ACTIVE USRA RECIPIENTS *(new)*

Canadian Forest Sector Workforce Diversity supplement

The Canadian Forest Sector Workforce Diversity Supplement supports students from underrepresented groups by offering research opportunities in forestry and related fields. The program provides an additional \$5,000 to students applying for NSERC scholarships in areas aligned with the Canadian Forest Service's priorities, such as environmental engineering, forestry, and plant biology. This initiative encourages diversity and fosters future careers in the Canadian forest sector.

Eligibility:

Applicants applying for an Undergraduate Student Research Award (USRA) are automatically considered for this supplement. At the time of the application, the proposed research project must fall within the research areas of relevance to Natural Resources Canada – Canadian Forest Service, including the following:

Research subject codes:

- Civil engineering (1000)
- Construction engineering and management (1001)
- Structural engineering (1100)
- Forest engineering (1300)
- Environmental engineering (1500)
- Industrial engineering (1600)
- Design and manufacturing (1700)
- Chemical engineering (1800)
- Mechanical engineering (2100)
- Statistics and probability (3000)
- Geosciences (4000)
- Geographical information (4100)
- Remote sensing (4102)
- Physical geography (4150)
- Biogeography and landscape ecology (4704)
- Soil sciences (4800)
- Plant and tree biology (4900)
- Cell biology (5100)
- Biochemistry (5400)

Payment

The supplement payment will be made by NSERC on behalf of the Canadian Forest Service to UVIC. UVIC will issue payment to the student for the total value of the supplement in accordance with its own payment schedule. **The supplement will be paid to the student as an additional payment and is not part of the student's salary and does not impact the top-up.**

For more information, visit <https://nserc-crsng.canada.ca/en/funding-opportunity/canadian-forest-sector-workforce-diversity-supplement>.



Environment and Climate Change Canada Atmospheric and Meteorological undergraduate supplement

The Atmospheric and Meteorological Undergraduate Supplement from Environment and Climate Change Canada supports undergraduate students in atmospheric and meteorological sciences. The supplement offers an additional \$1,000 to students who are already receiving an Undergraduate Student Research Award (USRA), encouraging research that contributes to the advancement of atmospheric sciences and promoting future opportunities in graduate studies or employment with Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Eligibility:

- Must hold or have held a USRA.
- Must be enrolled in atmospheric science or meteorology courses at a Canadian institution.
- If an award is held in the fall or winter, those students can apply the summer after they hold their award

Application:

Submit your USRA award letter, transcripts, completed USRA application, and a brief research explanation to Environment and Climate Change Canada by August 1. For full details and to apply, visit <https://nserc-crsng.canada.ca/en/funding-opportunity/environment-and-climate-change-canada-atmospheric-and-meteorological>.

Payment

Environment and Climate Change Canada is responsible for releasing the award supplement. Environment and Climate Change Canada will release payment directly to the student. **The supplement is an additional payment and does not impact the student's salary and top-up.**



RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT *(new)*

1. Announcement of Award Allocations

In January of each year, Research Finance distributes UVIC's quota of USRA allocations for the full fiscal year to the Departments. UVic runs a single USRA competition that covers all three possible start terms (Summer, Fall, Winter).

2. Application period/Student recruitment

Departments are responsible for managing their allocated quotas, as well as recruiting and adjudicating applicants for the USRAs. All selections must follow the Tri-Agency USRA guidelines and principles outlined in **Appendix A**. Each application must be assessed based on both the student's academic record and research aptitude (refer to Student and Supervisor Eligibility below).

Departments must direct Supervisor–Student teams to submit online USRA Application Form 202 Part I (student) and Part II (supervisor) through the NSERC portal (see USRA Application process below). Upon request, Research Finance will provide Departments with a list of submitted applications from the portal.

Departments must submit their *ranked* **List of Recommended Applicants** for ALL terms by **March 16, 2026**, to Research Finance (orsfinance@uvic.ca). The List must indicate students on the A list (Recommended Applicants) and B List (Alternate Applicants). **Departments do not need to submit copies of the Form 202 and transcript to Research Finance.** If a department will not use its full allocation, contact Research Finance (orsfinance@uvic.ca) as soon as possible, so unused allocations can be reassigned.

Research Finance will review and confirm all applications submitted on the NSERC portal. If there are any errors/omissions or the application is incomplete, Research Finance will **RETURN** the application to the supervisor to allow the student and/or supervisor to make changes and re-submit.

3. Award Notification

Research Finance will distribute award notifications to successful applications no later than March 31, 2026. If successful A List applicants decline, the award will be offered to B List applicants in ranked order. Departments will receive a finalized list of their USRA holders by early April 2026. Departments are responsible for notifying unsuccessful B List applicants and their supervisors.

Research Finance will do the final submission of all UVIC USRA applications on the NSERC portal.

4. Appointment of Students

Departments are responsible for preparing and submitting the necessary paperwork. Departments will provide Research Finance (orsfinance@uvic.ca) with a copy of the **Recommendation for Appointment** form that was submitted to pay each student. The original completed Recommendation for Appointment



form must be sent directly to the **Payroll Department** at least two weeks prior to the start of the work term.

When completing the form, ensure:

1. Start and end dates are accurate and fall within the appropriate USRA term.
2. Award duration must be a minimum of 14 consecutive weeks on a full-time basis.
3. Student salaries must include the required top-up amount and comply with the BC Employment Standards Act (See Calculator above for details).

5. Reimbursement

At the end of the term, Research Finance will transfer the award amount of \$6,000 as recovery to the account from which the student was paid, as indicated on the Recommendation for Appointment form.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

*Students can hold a USRA at any eligible Canadian university, not only the one they are registered at. USRAs can be used to allow students to expand their training at other institutions, as well as to provide the university with the opportunity to offer a similar experience to students from elsewhere. Moreover, universities may use the program as a recruitment tool for potential graduate students. **Allocations are not transferable from one university to another.***

To be eligible to apply, a student must be registered in a bachelor's program, as of the deadline date for the application at the institution.

To then be eligible to hold the award, the student must have been registered in at least one of the two preceding terms. This allows students who have graduated to hold a USRA in one of the two terms immediately following their graduation. Students who have completed their degree requirements by the application deadline are not eligible to apply.

To be eligible to apply for an award

- Canadian citizen, a permanent resident of Canada or a Protected Person under subsection 95(2) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada) as of the deadline date for applications at the institution
- Registered, as of the deadline date for applications at the institution (March 16, 2026), in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible university
- Obtained a minimum cumulative B- average over your previous years of study as defined by the university (minimum cumulative GPA of 4.0). *If a supervisor wishes to recommend an applicant who does not meet the minimum GPA requirement, the supervisor can provide a justification letter to amandah@uvic.ca outlining why the student is meritorious. The agencies do not reject applications based on GPA.

- Not currently enrolled in an undergraduate professional degree program in the health sciences (e.g., MD, DDS, BScN) **(does not apply for CIHR USRAs)**
- Not currently registered or have been previously registered, at any time, in a graduate program in the same field of study
- Cannot have completed all your degree requirements
- Must reside in British Columbia, Canada during the work term
- Students with a bachelor’s degree and are studying toward a second bachelor’s degree, may still apply for this award
- May only hold only one USRA per fiscal year (April 1 to March 31)
- May hold a maximum of three USRAs throughout your undergraduate career (regardless of the granting agency)

To hold an award

- Must have completed all course requirements for at least the first year of study (or two academic terms) of your bachelor’s degree
- Must have been registered in at least one of the two terms immediately before holding the award
- Must be working full time in eligible research and development activities in your proposed field of research during tenure of the award
- Cannot be registered in a graduate program

SUPERVISOR ELIGIBILITY

Supervisors must be faculty members who are authorized to supervise students. Additionally, they must ensure that their research project lies in the area of research supported by the respective agency they are applying to. Details and general guidelines for the eligibility of subject matter can be found here:

<https://science.gc.ca/site/science/en/interagency-research-funding/policies-and-guidelines/selecting-appropriate-federal-granting-agency?OpenDocument>.

UVIC APPLICATION DEADLINES

All applications must be submitted through the NSERC portal and List of Recommended Applicants submitted by the department to Research Finance by the following dates:

USRA Term	Submission	Term Start Date
Summer (May-August)	March 16, 2026	May 1, 2026
Fall (September-December)	March 16, 2026	September 1, 2026
Winter (January-April)	March 16, 2026	January 1, 2027

USRA APPLICATION PROCESS

- Only applications prepared using the NSERC online system will be accepted.
- To submit an application, go to the online application system and select Login or Register as a New User: https://ebiz.nserc.ca/nserc_web/nserc_login_e.htm
- Complete Form 202 Parts I and II. Form 202 and its instructions are available at https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/onlineservices-servicesenligne/instructions/202/USRA-BRPC_eng.asp

Help with the NSERC Online System:

https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServices-ServicesEnLigne/FAQ-FAQ_eng.asp

When applying for funding, students must complete the self-identification questionnaire found on the eConsole page by selecting Maintain user profile under Account management in the online system. The data gathered in this form provide information on the diversity of the population applying for and receiving agency funds. This information increases the agencies' capacity to monitor their progress on EDI in their programs, recognize and remove barriers, and design new measures to achieve greater EDI in the research enterprise.

If a student does not want to self-identify, they have the option to choose "I prefer not to answer" for each question but are required to select a response for the questionnaire to be marked as complete. Self-identification data is not part of the application and will be neither accessible to nor shared with external reviewers and/or review committee members. For more information, refer to [Frequently Asked Questions about the Self-Identification Questionnaire](#).

Although responses to these questions are not available to LOs, the agencies encourage institutions to select a cohort of awardees that mirrors the diversity of the student population and/or applicants to the USRA program. Consideration should also be given to the diversity of the USRA supervisors.

Applications from Indigenous and Black Student Researchers

NSERC has unlimited allocations for both Black and Indigenous students. To be recommended for these additional allocations, Indigenous and Black student researchers must provide consent on the application form to share this information with their institution and NSERC. If an Indigenous or Black student researcher's application is not identified in the appropriate section of the form, they will be counted as part of the institution allocation. NSERC will not accept replacement applications.

Presently, CIHR and SSHRC USRAs are exclusively for Black student researchers. To be eligible to apply for these awards, applicants are asked to disclose within the application form that they self-identify as Black and to confirm that they understand that this information will be shared with the institution to which they are applying and, if awarded, publicly.

FORM 202 (PART I) – COMPLETED BY THE STUDENT

- Students must register or log onto the NSERC online system and select Form 202 Part 1 under For Students and Fellows.
- Students can only create one Part 1 of Form 202. If they applied for a USRA in a previous year, they must update the form for use in the current year.
- Students must complete all the modules shown on the left-hand side of the screen, and then verify the form on the My Portfolio screen until the report shows that it is complete.
- Students must complete the self-identification statement and provided consent, if relevant (for Indigenous and Black student researchers)
- Students then forward the reference number generated by the system to their potential supervisor(s).
- Students must attach a copy of their current transcript (an unofficial, administrative version verified/signed by the student’s home department is acceptable for UVic students; students from another institution must attach an official version).

This form is available for update any time. If a student makes a change to the Form 202 Part I after the supervisor has pressed submit on the application, the data will not be reflected in the application. The student’s supervisor will have to contact Research Finance (orsfinance@uvic.ca) to release the application back to the applicant. Once the changes have been made, the supervisor will then need to again verify and resubmit the application.

FORM 202 (PART II) – COMPLETED BY THE SUPERVISOR

- Supervisors must log on to the on-line site with the same password and username they use to apply for their NSERC grant. If they cannot remember their access information, supervisors should contact the NSERC Online Services Helpdesk at 613-995-4273.
- Enter the reference number for the student with whom they wish to work and complete all the modules necessary to create a Form 202 Part II for that student.
- Verify the form using the button on the My Portfolio screen until the report states it is complete.

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

- Press the Submit to LO (Liaison Officer) button to make the application available to the Office of Research Services.
- If the supervisor does not verify the application, the “Submit to LO” button will not appear.
- If supervisors want to make changes after submitting the application, they need to contact the UVic Liaison Officer (orsfinance@uvic.ca) and request the application be released back to them.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

COURSEWORK DURING USRA TERM

Students should not receive academic credit for the work done during the term of a USRA. Therefore, holders of these awards are generally NOT permitted to take courses during working hours throughout the term of their award unless special arrangements to make up the time have been made with the supervisor. In particular, students are not permitted to do thesis research during the term of the award. Students are permitted to take two courses with the consent of their supervisor. An email must be made available to the Liaison Officer orsfinance@uvic.ca from the Supervisor if a student is enrolled in a course.

USRA LOCATION OF TENURE AND WORKING HOURS

LOCATION:

The agencies permit USRA recipients to spend a portion of time away from their host institution, including outside of Canada. However, students are not permitted to spend the entire period of their award away from their host institution if not in the company of their supervisor. This means that it would be acceptable, for example, for a student to do field work abroad with their supervisor, but it would not be acceptable for a student to be sent to a different lab abroad without their supervisor.

- Supervisors may choose to send award recipients to work with their collaborators at labs elsewhere in Canada or outside the country or to conduct field work. Supervisors are responsible for the travel expenses and other costs, which are in addition to the institution's required contribution to the award.
- If supervisors choose to send award recipients elsewhere to do research, they are still responsible for supervising them. The agencies expect the research supervisor to be present for the majority of the award period (i.e., at least seven to eight weeks), and supervisors must make appropriate arrangements for colleagues, postdoctoral fellows and/or or doctoral students to fill in for them the remainder of the time.
- Remote work is acceptable, with supervision expected on a frequent basis.
- USRAs are meant to be held in an academic setting. However, an institution may choose to authorize its adjunct faculty members to supervise USRA students, including outside of the academic setting. In this case, the supplemented funds for the award must come from institution sources or from a Tri-agency research grant for which this expense is eligible (for example, NSERC Discovery Grants or SSHRC Insight Grants). The student should not be an employee of the supervisor's non-academic institution as it relates to the USRA. All such arrangements described above must be approved by the institution. USRAs are not industrial internships.

WORKING HOURS OF USRA HOLDERS:

The agencies expect USRA holders to work approximately the same hours on average and have the same working conditions, etc. as other university employees, within the limitations of the type of research they are doing, and in consultation with their supervisor. If staff at the institution in that department work 40-

hour weeks on average, then the USRA recipient should, too. An average workweek is considered to be a minimum of 35 hours.

SUPERVISION OF USRA HOLDERS

a) Supervisor eligibility

Provided you are authorized by your institution to independently supervise students, the agencies consider you eligible to supervise USRA holders. You must be approved by your institution to supervise a USRA student.

b) Supervisor rights and responsibilities

The supervisor has the responsibility to ensure that the student is properly supervised at all times (especially during field work) and appropriately trained in research techniques and safety methods. They also have the right to set working hours and assign tasks. Should the student's performance not match expectations, the supervisor is expected to take appropriate steps to explain matters and retrain the student. If, after a reasonable time period, the student's performance has not improved, the supervisor may, in consultation with other university administration, decide to terminate the work term. NSERC must be informed, and the award will be pro-rated.

c) Changing supervisors

Award recipients may change supervisors at the discretion of the institution before the award starts. After it has started, the award recipient is expected to stay with that supervisor to ensure continuity of training.

d) Co-supervision

The agencies allow for co-supervision of USRA students, if they are working on a research project that allows them to be exposed to all aspects of the research process. One supervisor must be designated as the official supervisor, and that person should complete Part II of form 202.

e) Maximum number of students

At the University of Victoria, a supervisor may supervise a maximum of two USRA students per year.

f) Field work expenses

Any additional costs related to field work (e.g., travel expenses and equipment) must be covered by the supervisor or the university. The USRA funds are for the student's personal use.



For updated instructions, please consult the UVIC USRA website at <https://www.uvic.ca/research-services/funding/undergraduate-student-research-award/index.php>.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions regarding this program that are not on the NSERC site, you may contact Amanda Ha at amandah@uvic.ca.

Frequently asked questions about USRAs:

https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/students-etudiants/ug-pc/usrafaq-brpcfaq_eng.asp

APPENDIX A: SELECTION GUIDELINES, CRITERIA, AND INDICATORS FOR USRA APPLICATIONS

SELECTION GUIDELINES:

Refer to the [Guidelines governing membership of NSERC's peer review committees](#) for the selection of internal selection committee members. The agencies believe that diverse selection committee membership results in higher-quality reviews. In choosing members for USRA selection committees, we encourage institutions to consider the following:

- diverse gender representation
- representation of people from underrepresented groups
- individuals at different stages of their careers
- broad range of expertise on multi-disciplinary committees
- where necessary, members who can review in both official languages.

To support the merit review of CIHR and SSHRC USRA applications, institutions may wish to include health, social sciences and humanities, or multi-disciplinary experts on their selection committees.

The agencies encourage institutions and departments to publish selection committee membership and selection procedures on their websites.

The agencies expect institution selection committee members to consistently guard against the possibility of unconscious bias influencing the decision-making process, whether these biases are based on a school of thought, the perceived value of fundamental versus applied research, areas of research or approaches (including emerging ones), size or reputation of an institution, experience or prominence of the proposed supervisor, age, gender and/or other personal factors associated with the applicant.

The agencies are acting on the evidence that achieving a more equitable, diverse and inclusive Canadian research enterprise is essential to creating the excellent, innovative and impactful research necessary to advance knowledge and understanding and respond to local, national and global challenges. This principle informs the commitments described in the [Tri-agency statement on equity, diversity and inclusion \(EDI\)](#) and is aligned with the objectives of the [Tri-agency EDI Action Plan](#).

For more information, consult the [Equity, diversity and inclusion considerations at each stage of the research process](#) section of the [NSERC guide on integrating equity, diversity and inclusion considerations in research](#) web page.

USRA selection committee members are encouraged to complete the following training modules: [Bias in Peer Review](#) (produced by the three granting agencies) and one of the [Sex and Gender](#) training modules (produced by CIHR).

SELECTION CRITERIA

The following table contains suggestions for evaluating the 3 selection criteria. Institutions are encouraged to develop their own evaluation methods.

Selection criteria	Indicators and evidence
Academic excellence	<p>As demonstrated by past academic results, transcripts, awards and distinctions</p> <p>Indicators of academic excellence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic record • scholarships and awards held. • duration of previous/current studies • type of program and courses pursued. • course load • relative standing in program (if available) <p>Members should consider an applicant’s entire academic record when assessing academic excellence. Members should favourably consider situations where an applicant has demonstrated an improving trend.</p>
Research potential	<p>As demonstrated by the applicant’s research history and their interest in discovery. Along with form 202, many institutions require students to submit additional material to support this selection criterion. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a resume/CV • a statement of interest outlining the student’s research interests and goals • a letter of support from the proposed supervisor <p>Institutions may also conduct interviews with applicants.</p> <p>Indicators of research potential include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic training • previous research/work experience (can include co-op terms) (e.g., previous USRAs held) • relevance of work experience and academic training to field of proposed research • judgment and ability to think critically • ability to apply skills and knowledge • enthusiasm for research, relevant community involvement, and outreach • initiative and autonomy • research experience and achievements that could reasonably be expected from someone with the applicant’s academic background
Expected quality of the training and mentorship to be received	<p>As demonstrated by the proposed supervisor’s plan for the student described in form 202 Part II. Indicators of expected quality of the training and mentorship to be received include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exposure to a research team • training in research techniques and skills • expected contributions to research output • the proposed supervisor’s supervisory experience