



Canadian Institutes of  
Health Research

Natural Sciences and Engineering  
Research Council of Canada

Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Instituts de recherche en  
santé du Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences  
naturelles et en génie du Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

# **Guidelines for Undergraduate Student Research Awards Liaison Officers**

**2023–24**

## **Foreword**

This document is a guide for the liaison officers (LO) that are responsible for the administration of the Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA) program at Canadian institutions. It describes the activities carried out by liaison officers and by NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC staff, as well as the policies, guidelines and deliverables for this funding opportunity. The content of this document is intended to guide liaison officers and outline their responsibilities in the review process.

For more information about the USRA program, its policies and guidelines, contact [NSERC staff](#).

This document is updated annually.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF Contents .....	3
1. Role of the institution in the administration of the USRA program .....	4
1.1 Program overview .....	4
1.2 Application deadlines .....	4
1.3 Liaison officers and other administrative staff .....	4
1.4 Pre-review tasks .....	5
1.5 Post-award tasks .....	5
2. Selection committee.....	6
2.1 Guidelines for selection committee composition .....	6
2.2 Selection committee member training .....	6
3. Application profile.....	6
3.1 Collection of self-identification data .....	6
3.2 Applications from Indigenous Peoples and Black student researchers.....	7
4. Processing applications .....	7
4.1 Applicant eligibility.....	7
4.2 Exchange students and students studying abroad.....	8
4.3 USRA location of tenure and supervision .....	8
4.4 Adjunct faculty members .....	9
4.5 Transcripts .....	9
4.6 Academic credits.....	9
5. Submitting applications .....	10
6. Role of the granting agencies in the administration of the USRA program.....	11
6.1 Before receipt of applications .....	11
6.2 After receipt of applications .....	12
7. General guidelines for the verification of USRA applications .....	12
7.1 Supervisor's rights and responsibilities .....	12
7.2 Changing supervisors .....	12
7.3 Co-supervision .....	12
7.4 Use of funds.....	12
7.6 Other sources of income.....	12
7.7 Sick leave/vacation .....	13
8. Financial matters.....	13
8.1 Value of the award.....	13
8.2 Transfer of funds.....	13
8.3 Reconciliation of funds.....	13
9. Privacy issues .....	13
10. The granting agencies' obligations under the <i>Official Languages Act</i> .....	13
11. Contact information.....	14
12. Appendix: Selection criteria and indicators for USRA applications .....	15

# 1. Role of the institution in the administration of the USRA program

## 1.1 Program overview

The Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA) program supports more than 3,000 students annually and is administered jointly by Canada's three research granting agencies: the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

USRAs are meant to nurture interest and fully develop the potential for a research career in the health, natural sciences, engineering, social sciences or humanities fields. They are also meant to encourage graduate studies in these fields. These awards provide financial support through the host institution to gain research work experience that complements studies in an academic setting.

CIHR and SSHRC USRAs are, at the present time, exclusively for Black student researchers. Institutions are assigned a separate allocation of awards to offer from each agency. Institutions must respect the agency-specific allocation. Refer to the [Undergraduate Student Research Awards allocations](#) web page for a list of allocations by institution and by agency.

**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.

## 1.2 Application deadlines

<b>USRA to be held in:</b>	<b>Applications saved as A list</b> (submitted to NSERC no later than*)	<b>Confirmation of payments</b> (Submitted to NSERC no later than 1 month after the end of the awards)
<b>Summer 2023</b> (May to August)	May 1, 2023	By September 30, 2023
<b>Fall 2023</b> (September to December)	October 1, 2023	By January 31, 2024
<b>Winter 2024</b> (January to April)	January 15, 2024	By May 31, 2024

NSERC must receive applications before 8:00 pm (Eastern Time) on the deadline date. If the deadline falls on a weekend or federal holiday, applications must be submitted by the following business day before 8:00 pm (Eastern Time).

## 1.3 Liaison officers and other administrative staff

- Register for access to the [Grants and Scholarships Administrative Portal](#) (GSAP). The *Guidelines for USRA Liaison Officers*, the institution's application quota and review process results are posted on GSAP.
- Register to [NSERC's online system](#) for access to the online application.
- Submit the [Registration Form for Authorized Institutional Representatives](#) to [institution@nserc-crsng.gc.ca](mailto:institution@nserc-crsng.gc.ca) to be granted access to the USRA LO Portfolio in the NSERC online system. Once

you have been given access, *Liaison Officer (Master)* will appear on the eConsole screen under *Institution Services* the next time you log on to the online application system.

- Assign roles to other institution staff who will use the USRA LO Portfolio: Master LO, LO and LO Assistant. (See *NSERC LO Portfolio Instructions* in GSAP [General > NSERC Scholarships] for a definition of these roles.)
- Notify USRA program staff by email to [usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca](mailto:usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca) of any changes in USRA LO staff at your institution. Provide the name(s) of previous LO(s) to be removed from NSERC's email and contact lists, and provide the new LO's contact information.

#### 1.4 Pre-review tasks

- Obtain your institution's regular quota for all three agencies from the drop-down menu (Organizations Library > General > NSERC Scholarships) in [GSAP](#). These numbers are the guaranteed total allocation of summer, fall and winter awards at your institution for the current fiscal year. Note that at the present time, CIHR and SSHRC awards are exclusively for Black student researchers.
  - Unused quota following the summer review process may be carried over to the fall and/or winter terms. Supplementary quotas for use **ONLY** in the fall or winter terms **may** be made available during the year. In such cases, details will be provided by email.
- Set internal institution application deadlines. Awards may be held in the summer, fall or winter term. Determine if your institution holds one review process for all three terms or one review process for each term.
- Publicize the program, your institution's internal deadlines and the application procedures by referring to the [resource videos](#), the [USRA program description, form 202](#) (must be logged in to the NSERC online system to access) and the [Instructions for completing an application – form 202](#) on NSERC's website. If your institution has added requirements for the internal selection process that are more stringent than the agencies' basic requirements, include them in all advertising material and selection committee documentation.
- Submit requests for any awards less than 14 weeks in duration to NSERC well ahead of the deadline for submitting applications. The agencies expect institutions to make all efforts to offer USRAs to qualified applicants able to hold the awards for 14-16 weeks on a full-time basis. Exceptions will be made for shortened work terms only in exceptional cases where the situation is beyond the control of the award recipient, and where the appropriately justified request is received at before the beginning of the work term.
- Appoint members to the institution's USRA selection committee(s) and set the date(s) for the meeting(s) to select the recipients to be recommended to NSERC for a USRA. Consult the [Guidelines governing membership of NSERC's peer review committees](#) for advice on selection committee composition.

#### 1.5 Post-award tasks

- Complete the *Confirmation of Payments* form, found in [GSAP](#) under your institution's library folder. These should be posted approximately one month before the end of each work term. The form **must indicate**:
  - the actual start and end dates for each work term
  - the total number of weeks completed
  - the institution's contribution (gross amount) of the total payment issued

- Submit the *Confirmation of Payments* form no later than one month after the completion of each work term to NSERC's Finance and Awards Administration division by email to [scholarshipsadministration@nserc-crsng.gc.ca](mailto:scholarshipsadministration@nserc-crsng.gc.ca).
- **Temporary change remaining in effect for 2023–24:** Because of the uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, no awards will be prorated. Anyone awarded a USRA will receive the full \$6,000 from the agencies. Institutions will decide how they adjust their contribution, if necessary. Institutions do not need to submit requests for shortened work terms.

## 2. Selection committee

### 2.1 Guidelines for selection committee composition

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 review. In selecting 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 that 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.

### 2.2 Selection committee member training

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, fundamental versus applied research, certain sub-disciplines, areas of research or approaches (including emerging ones), size or reputation of an institution, age, gender, and/or other personal factors.

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 to respond to local, national and global challenges. This principle informs the commitments described in the [Tri-agency statement on equity, diversity and inclusion \(EDI\)](#). For more information consult the [NSERC guide on integrating equity, diversity and inclusion considerations in research](#).

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).

## 3. Application profile

### 3.1 Collection of self-identification data

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) strengthen research communities and the quality, social relevance and impact of research. Self-identification data provide information on the diversity of the population applying for and receiving agency funds. These data are important for monitoring the fairness of our programs and informing future measures to increase EDI among all those involved in the research enterprise.

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 provides information on the diversity of the population applying for and receiving agency funds. This information increases the agencies' capacity to monitor its progress on EDI in its programs, to recognize and remove barriers, and to 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 information is not part of the application and will be neither accessible to nor shared with external reviewers and/or selection committee members. For more information refer to the [Frequently asked questions about the self-identification questionnaire](#).

While 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.

### 3.2 Applications from Indigenous Peoples and Black student researchers

Columns in the USRA LO Portfolio will show which applicants self-identified as Indigenous and those who self-identified as a Black student researcher. A third column will show to which agency the application was submitted.

**For NSERC only:** In order for Indigenous and Black student researchers to be recommended for awards above the institution quota, they must self-identify and provide consent within the application form for this information to be shared with their institution and NSERC. The institution must indicate this information on the 2023 Recommended USRA applicants form provided in and to be submitted via [GSAP](#). 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 quota. NSERC will not accept replacement applications.

### **LOs are not required to verify self-declared Indigenous or Black student researcher status.**

As a guideline, you may use the following definition of Indigenous: \* "Indigenous peoples" is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. "Aboriginal peoples" is also often used as a synonym. For the purposes of this program, NSERC uses the *Canadian Constitution Act, 1982* definition of Aboriginal peoples as including the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

### **For CIHR and SSHRC:**

At the present time, 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. For further details on these awards, refer to the USRA [program description](#) and the [Undergraduate Student Research Awards allocations](#) web page.

## **4. Processing applications**

### 4.1 Applicant eligibility

Ensure that the applicant:

- provided a complete application
- is registered, as of the institution's deadline date for applications, in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible institution
- has not held a previous USRA in the current fiscal year, or more than 2 previous USRAs (regardless of the agency) in total
- has completed all the course requirements of at least the first year (or two academic terms) of the bachelor's degree

- is a Canadian citizen, permanent resident of Canada or a Protected Person under subsection 95(2) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada)* as of the institution's deadline
- has obtained, over the previous years of study, a satisfactory cumulative average (normally at least B-, if applicable) as defined by the institution
- indicated a start date after April 1 (for summer term only)
- meets all eligibility criteria as described in the [USRA program description](#)
- has selected the agency whose mandate aligns most closely with their research and that your institution has an allocation for the selected agency (for further details, refer to the [Selecting the appropriate federal granting agency](#) and the [Undergraduate Student Research Awards allocations](#) web pages; additionally, an [Addendum to the guidelines for the eligibility of applications related to health](#), which contains examples of eligible and ineligible research topics, has been added to NSERC's website)
- has completed the self-identification statement and provided consent, if relevant (for Black student researchers)
- will, during tenure of the award, have been registered in **at least one** of the two immediately preceding terms in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible institution\*\*

\*\*For the purposes of this eligibility criterion, the terms of an academic year are:

- Summer: May to August
- Fall: September to December
- Winter: January to April.

If the institution subdivides any of those periods into two separate sessions, registration in either one will count as registration in that term.

The eligibility criteria to **apply for** and to **hold** a USRA are known to cause confusion. To be eligible to **apply**, a student must be registered, as of the deadline date for the application at the institution, in a bachelor's program. 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.

If an institution wishes to recommend an application that does not meet the minimum GPA requirements, they can provide a justification letter outlining why the student is deemed meritorious. The agencies do not reject applications based on GPA.

#### 4.2 Exchange students and students studying abroad

Students who are registered at an eligible Canadian institution, but who have studied abroad for one semester during an exchange program are eligible for a USRA provided they were registered in a bachelor's degree program at the Canadian institution or the foreign institution.

Students studying at a foreign institution who are Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada are eligible for a USRA, provided they meet all other eligibility criteria.

#### 4.3 USRA location of tenure and supervision

USRAs can be held at any eligible Canadian institution. The agencies encourage mobility of students at the undergraduate level. USRAs can be used to allow students to expand their background training at other institutions, as well as to provide your institution with the opportunity to offer a similar experience to students from elsewhere. Moreover, institutions may use the program as a recruitment tool for graduate studies.

Students must apply to the institution where they would like to hold the USRA. They must comply with the internal selection criteria of that institution and be selected by that institution to hold one of their allocated awards. **Quotas are not transferable from one institution to another.** The proposed USRA supervisor



must be affiliated with the host institution and must be approved by the institution where the student will hold the USRA.

The agencies permit USRA recipients to spend a portion of time away from their host institution, including outside of Canada. 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 their supervision. The agencies expect the research supervisor to be present for the majority of the award period (i.e., at least six 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.

#### 4.4 Adjunct faculty members

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 order to do so, 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, 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 an industrial internship.

#### 4.5 Transcripts

Consult the [Instructions for completing an application - form 202](#) for further details about transcripts. The instructions state that the legend on the back of the transcript is required, but it is only needed for transcripts from other institutions. The agencies may ask for one copy of the legend from your institution as needed.

It is the responsibility of the LO to ensure the presence and authenticity of transcripts submitted to the agencies for selected students. Institutions may choose to accept unofficial transcripts from their applicants. In this case, the agencies will accept unofficial transcripts if sent from the institution.

The agencies may require official or updated documents to be provided after the completed application has been submitted to the agencies for verification purposes.

#### 4.6 Academic credits

Award recipients may take a maximum of two courses during the tenure of the award if special arrangements to make up the time have been made with the supervisor. USRA recipients are not permitted to do thesis research during the term of the award. Courses taken outside of regular working hours can be taken over and above the two courses limit. If institutions divide the summer term into two short terms, USRA recipients are permitted to take one course in each term.

Students wishing to take **more than two** courses must first discuss the matter with their supervisor and obtain approval. The supervisor then makes a formal request to the LO, outlining the reasons they require an exception, and including links to the courses if possible. The LO will then forward the request, along with any comments they have, to NSERC via email to [usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca](mailto:usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca) for approval.

For the purposes of the USRA program, the credits assigned to co-op placements are not considered academic credits.

## 5. Submitting applications

- Verify the eligibility of applications (refer to the [applicant eligibility](#) section).
- Submit applications to the USRA selection committee(s) using the LO Portfolio. The LO Portfolio has sorting capabilities in most columns. You will be able to view the applications and provide read access to the institution selection committee(s). **Applications only appear in the LO Portfolio after the transcripts are attached and part I is linked to a supervisor's part II.**
  - Clicking on the applicant's name in the LO Portfolio will provide a PDF version of the application.
  - There is no capacity to download information from the LO Portfolio in Excel format.
  - If a student makes a change to their application after it has been submitted to the LO by the supervisor, that data will not be reflected in the version received. To receive an up-to-date version, you must return the application and ask the supervisor to re-submit.
- Hold the meeting with the institution selection committee(s). The institution will assess the merit of each application based on the following three selection criteria:
  - Academic excellence
  - Research potential
  - Expected quality of the training and mentorship to be received

Institutions are responsible for determining the weight of the three selection criteria. Selection committees may evaluate the suitability of the supervision as part of the third criterion. Refer to the [appendix](#) for suggestions on how to evaluate the three selection criteria.

Supervisors can hold grants from NSERC, CIHR or SSHRC, provided the research proposed for the USRA falls within the selected agency's mandate.

- Use the USRA LO Portfolio in NSERC's online system to track the progress and status of applications from your institution. Refer to the NSERC LO Portfolio Instructions, available on [GSAP](#), for more information. **Verify that the correct start date of the award is entered in form 202, part II and that applicants have uploaded up-to-date transcripts.**

The application status can be set to the following lists:

- **List A** = Approved by institution, to be submitted to NSERC
- **List B** = Not forwarded to NSERC; could be changed to either the A or C list before the deadline date
- **List C** = Not forwarded to NSERC (not recommended, unsuccessful) and cannot be changed to List A or B in the future

Once you save the A-list applications, the status on the applicant's portfolio and the LO Portfolio will be updated to *Approved* within 24 to 48 hours. If an application does not update to *Approved* after 48 hours, send an email to [usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca](mailto:usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca).

If you save an application to List A by mistake, email [usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca](mailto:usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca).

**Note:** Once an application has been A listed, NSERC cannot return the application for any changes. Application substitutions will not be accepted after the deadline date. If an application needs to be postponed to another term, it will be withdrawn by NSERC, and a new application will need to be created and submitted for the next term.

- Complete the *2023-24 Recommended USRA applications* form (can be found on the [GSAP](#) under

General > NSERC Scholarships), following the recommendations made by the institution's USRA selection committee(s). NSERC requires an unranked, **alphabetical list** of recommended applications on which the institution will identify all Indigenous applicants, all Black student researchers, and the agency where the application is submitted. Once completed, submit the form by email to [usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca](mailto:usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca).

- **For NSERC only:** LOs can indicate, either in the email or on the form, which applications should be considered for the **Canadian Forest Sector (CFS) Workforce Diversity undergraduate supplement**. Applications that list one of the targeted research subject codes or that have one of the targeted key words in the title will be considered automatically.

Areas of relevance for the CFS may fall within the following research subject codes:

- Forest engineering (1300)
  - Environmental engineering (1500)
  - Industrial engineering (1600)
  - Chemical engineering (1800)
  - Mechanical engineering (2100)
  - Statistics and probability (3000)
  - Geography (4100, 4150 and 4704)
  - Remote sensing (4102)
  - Soil sciences (4800)
  - Plant and tree biology (4900)
  - Biochemistry (5400)
- 
- Ensure that you do not exceed your institution's quota.  
**For NSERC awards:** Applications from Indigenous Peoples and Black student researchers should **not** be counted as part of your institution's quota.  
**For CIHR and SSHRC awards:** At the present time, USRAs are exclusively for Black student researchers.
- Substitutions for ineligible or rejected applications will **not** be permitted. If any applications have to be withdrawn after they have been submitted, substitutes will not be accepted for the same term. Additions to the list will not be permitted after the deadline date.
- Inform all applicants of the outcome of the institution's internal selection process (including those on the B and C lists).

**Note: Students will start working on their USRA project before awards can be confirmed by the agencies. Institutions must start payments to students to whom they have offered positions without waiting for approval of the awards from the agencies. Institutions must also continue to employ any students whose applications are rejected by the agencies for the remainder of the work term.**

## 6. Role of the granting agencies in the administration of the USRA program

### 6.1 Before receipt of applications

NSERC on behalf of the three agencies

- Reply to inquiries regarding the eligibility of the applicant and the proposed research.
- Evaluate requests to pre-approve work terms shorter than 14 weeks.
- Respond to inquiries regarding other program matters.

## 6.2 After receipt of applications

### NSERC on behalf of the three agencies

- Verify that applications meet all requirements of the program, particularly that the student and the research proposal are eligible, and the transcript is correct.
- Verify that the *Recommended USRA applications* form list matches the applications received through the online system.
- Verify that applications received do not exceed the quota.
- Request any missing information.
- Notify USRA LOs of any rejected applications (replacements for rejected applications will **not** be accepted in the same term).
- Notify USRA LOs of any applications selected for the Canadian Forest Sector Workforce Diversity undergraduate supplement.
- Post *Confirmation of Payments* forms for each institution on [GSAP](#).
- Receive final *Confirmation of Payments* forms from institutions.

### Each agency, individually

- Approve applications.
- Send award letters directly to recipients (midway through their award).
- Issue payments to institutions.
- Respond to post-award inquiries.

## 7. General guidelines for the verification of USRA applications

### 7.1 Supervisor's rights and responsibilities

Supervisors must ensure that the student is properly supervised at all times (especially during field work) and appropriately trained and mentored in research techniques and safety methods. Supervisors also have the right to set working hours and assign tasks.

### 7.2 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.

### 7.3 Co-supervision

The agencies allow USRA recipients to work under the supervision of two people, as long as 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 they should complete form 202 part II.

### 7.4 Use of funds

USRA recipients must not be expected to contribute to the costs of research (equipment and supplies or travel) from their award. In addition, they are not required to be registered during the work term.

### 7.5 Working hours of USRA recipients

The agencies expect USRA recipients to work approximately the same hours on average and have the same working conditions as institution 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. The standard work week is 35 hours or more.

### 7.6 Other sources of income

The agencies do not place restrictions on outside sources of funding or employment that award recipients may have while holding the award, provided the following regulations are adhered to:

- When considering other sources of income, all institutional regulations must be followed.
- USRA recipients must devote full-time hours to the USRA research.

- Full-time hours may vary depending on the institution at which award recipients are completing their award.

#### 7.7 Sick leave/vacation

The program makes no provision for sick or vacation leave, or for other types of interruptions. Should a USRA be interrupted or terminated early for any reason, the agencies must be informed immediately, and the *Confirmation of Payments* form must be completed. Awards may not be deferred.

### 8. Financial matters

#### 8.1 Value of the award

USRAs have a value of \$6,000, and the host institution is required to supplement the award. The activities conducted during the tenure of a USRA are governed by the agreements, including employment agreements (if applicable), award holders have with the host institution and the relevant terms and conditions of awards.

Each agency's contribution is paid directly to the host institution and is included in the amount that the USRA recipient receives.

#### 8.2 Transfer of funds

For summer awards, payments will be issued before the end of July. For fall or winter awards, payments are normally issued within four to six weeks after the submission deadline for the term.

#### 8.3 Reconciliation of funds

After receiving the *Confirmation of Payments* form, each agency's Finance and Awards Administration division will review it, make the necessary calculations and, if applicable, contact the institution for reimbursement of any portions of awards not used by USRA recipients.

### 9. Privacy issues

The information institutions and the applicants are asked to provide is collected under the authority of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Act, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research Act and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Act. Information on applications received by NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC is stored in accordance with the relevant personal information banks described in each agency's [Info Source](#) chapters. Additional details concerning the use, protection and disclosure of this information can be found on NSERC's [Access to Information and Privacy \(ATIP\)](#) page, CIHR's [ATIP](#) page and SSHRC's [ATIP](#) page.

Institutions must use the information provided by the applicant only to help complete the institution's evaluation of the application and not for any other purposes.

NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC are obliged by the *Privacy Act* to protect the personal information of applicants associated with applications to their programs. NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC expect institutions to store such information in a secure manner, to not use or disclose it for any other purpose, and to destroy, in a secure manner within a short period after it is no longer required, any information that has not been forwarded to the agencies. All personal notes and documents must also be securely destroyed at the conclusion of the review process. All applications and documentation provided to members electronically must be deleted.

### 10. The granting agencies' obligations under the *Official Languages Act*

Under the [Official Languages Act](#), federal institutions, including NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC, must ensure respect for the rights of individual Canadians to receive services from federal institutions and organizations that provide services on their behalf, in the official language of their choice.

NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC are committed to promoting equitable access by:

- ensuring that its funding opportunities enable the participation of both official language communities
- providing applicants with equitable access to the information and resources in the official language of their choice
- monitoring and promoting the participation of Official Language Minority Institutions (OLMI), researchers and students in its programs.

As partners in the co-delivery of the agencies' funding opportunities, institutions must respect the Act in the management of their internal selection processes. Therefore, applicants are able to submit their application in the official language of their choice. Institutions must have mechanisms in place to review both English and French applications.

## 11. Contact information

USRA program	<a href="mailto:usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca">usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca</a>
Lists of recommended applicants	<a href="mailto:usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca">usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca</a>
USRA financial matters	<a href="mailto:scholarshipsadministration@nserc-crsng.gc.ca">scholarshipsadministration@nserc-crsng.gc.ca</a>
Online services helpdesk	<a href="mailto:webapp@nserc-crsng.gc.ca">webapp@nserc-crsng.gc.ca</a>

## 12. Appendix: Selection criteria and indicators for USRA applications

The following table contains suggestions for evaluating the three 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"> <li>• Academic record</li> <li>• Scholarships and awards held</li> <li>• Duration of previous/current studies</li> <li>• Type of program and courses pursued</li> <li>• Course load</li> <li>• Relative standing in program (if available)</li> </ul> <p>Members should consider the 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 in order to evaluate this selection criterion. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A resume/CV</li> <li>• A statement of interest outlining the student's research interests and goals</li> <li>• Letter of support from proposed supervisor</li> <li>• Interviews with applicants</li> </ul> <p>Indicators of research potential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic training</li> <li>• Previous research/work experience (can include co-op terms) (e.g., previous USRAs held)</li> <li>• Relevance of work experience and academic training to field of proposed research</li> <li>• Judgement and ability to think critically</li> <li>• Ability to apply skills and knowledge</li> <li>• Enthusiasm for research, relevant community involvement and outreach</li> <li>• Initiative and autonomy</li> <li>• Research experience and achievements relative to expectations of someone with the applicant's academic experience</li> </ul>
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.</p> <p>Indicators of expected quality of the training and mentorship to be received:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure to research team</li> <li>• Training in research techniques, skills</li> <li>• Expected contributions to research output</li> <li>• Proposed supervisor's past supervisory experience</li> </ul>