



NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Awards (NSERC USRA) 2024-25 Cycle | Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Student Eligibility

1. I do not self-identify as Black or Indigenous, am I eligible to apply for the USRA?

Yes, you are eligible to apply for **NSERC USRA**. Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA) are opportunities for undergraduate students to consider graduate studies and/or a research career by providing research work experience that complements your studies in an academic setting.

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

1. Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC)*

**All undergraduate students who are Canadian Citizens or Permanent Residents can apply to this award.*

2. Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)**
3. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)**

***CIHR and SSHRC USRA are exclusively offered to Canadian Black students only. If you self-identify as Black student, please find out more information at the [Black student researchers pathway](#) page.*

2. I'm an undergraduate student graduating in May 2024 and meet all eligibility requirements, am I eligible to apply for the USRA in Summer 2024?

Undergraduate students graduating in May 2024 are eligible to apply for the USRA provided they are **registered in courses in Winter Term 2 (Jan - Apr 2024)** and meet all the other eligibility requirements stated at UBC's [USRA website](#).



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For students graduating in May 2024 and are **registered in courses in Winter Term 2 (Jan - Apr 2024)**, they can hold the award in Summer (May 1 to Aug 31) or Fall (Sep 1 to Dec 31) terms, as long as they have not started a graduate studies program.

3. **I'm in a Bachelor program, but did not register in any courses in Winter Term 2 (Jan - Apr 2024). Am I eligible to apply for the USRA in Summer 2024?**

No. Undergraduate students have to be **registered in courses in Winter Term 2 (Jan - Apr 2024)** and meet all the other eligibility requirements stated on UBC's [USRA website](#) to be eligible to apply.

4. **I'm a first-year undergraduate student, am I eligible to apply for NSERC USRA in Summer 2024?**

Yes. First year students are eligible to apply for the USRA provided they meet the eligibility requirements stated on UBC's [USRA website](#). NSERC requires first year students to have completed all the course requirements of at least the first year of university study (or two academic terms) of their bachelor's degree before they can hold the award. For this requirement, first year students will need to include the registered courses in Winter Term 2 under their transcript when they submit their application in order to be eligible.

- First year students who are successful in the competition will be asked to provide updated transcripts that show they have successfully completed one year, or two academic terms, of study.

5. **For UBC undergraduate students, how do we get the official transcript?**

Please refer to the [Enrolment Records website](#) for details on how to order your official transcript.

6. **How many courses can I take in the term that I'm holding the award?**

As the USRA position is a full-time activity, award holders may take **a maximum of two courses per term** with the agreement of their supervisor. If the course(s) is during normal working hours, special arrangements with the supervisor must be made for the student



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to make up the time spent on the course. Award holders are permitted to take only one course in each summer 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 nserc.usra@ubc.ca, outlining the reasons they require an exception, and including links to the courses, if possible. UBC Career Centre will then forward the request to NSERC for approval.

7. Can I do thesis research during the term of the award?

No. NSERC USRA holders are not permitted to do thesis research during the term of the award.

8. What is the application deadline for holding NSERC USRA in Summer 2024 (May - Aug 2024), Fall 2024 (Sep - Dec 2024) or Winter 2025 (Jan - Apr 2025)?

UBC holds one competition cycle a year for the summer, fall, and winter term.

Note: NSERC's fiscal year is from May 2024 - April 2025. The deadline and application instructions vary by faculty/department (and is usually between January - March). Please refer to UBC's [USRA website](#) and click on the drop down arrow under 'Faculty and School application details' for your respective faculty/school/department to find the deadline and application instructions.

9. Can I hold a NSERC USRA and a Work Learn position in UBC at the same time?

No. Students can only hold a Work Learn or an USRA appointment at any given time.

10. Can I work with a supervisor from a different faculty? Which faculty should we apply to?

Yes, you can. For students working with a supervisor from another faculty, they can apply through both the supervisor's faculty and the student's faculty. If the students are chosen by both faculties for the award, the UBC Liaison Officer will inform them and they will have to pick one.



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11. Where may students live while working on remote research projects as part of the USRA program?

In accordance to [UBC HR hybrid work guidelines](#), USRA students are required to work in British Columbia, Canada. Remote and on-campus work are subject to the same regulatory and statutory obligations. Work that would normally be performed on campus within British Columbia (BC) must continue to be performed at a location within the province. Work that would normally be performed outside of BC as a job requirement (such as research, field work, instruction, or study or administrative leave) is not subject

to this restriction. Those students who will be working outside of BC must be registered as a worker in the province or territory where the work will take place. To do so, your HR Advisor/Department should alert UBC's WSBC Claims Associate Aidan Gregory by email at aidan.gregory@ubc.ca. If students are residing outside of Canada, they will not generally be eligible to work remotely, as part of the USRA.

12. Am I subject to tax deductions on my earnings from NSERC?

Yes, NSERC award recipients are subject to tax on their earnings since you will be appointed as a 'Student Employee' by UBC. As such, 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.

- If you have questions that are not addressed above, please review [NSERC USRA FAQs for applicants](#). Students are highly encouraged to refer to the [Information for Students Handout](#) for guidelines on how to apply.

Supervisor and Research Proposal Eligibility

13. I do not hold an NSERC grant, am I eligible to supervise a USRA holder?

You are eligible to be an USRA supervisor if you are a faculty member who is authorized to independently supervise students deemed by your home institution

- As part of UBC's requirement, eligible faculty will need to continue holding an active NSERC grant from the [Research Grant List](#). Faculties/Schools have the ability to endorse non-NSERC grant holders to apply for the award, on the approval of the Associate Dean or appropriate designate.



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- Please check with your Faculty/School/Department Coordinator if you have queries on the process in your faculty/school/department for non-NSERC grant holders.

14. I'm a new NSERC grant holder, how can my name be added to the list of eligible Grant Holders?

Please connect with [UBC Research Information Systems \(RISe\)](#) to add you to the list of NSERC grant holders. The current list for the 2024-25 cycle was pulled from the system on November 1, 2023. If your status has been updated in RISe after November 1, 2023, please email nserc.usra@ubc.ca to add your name to the list.

15. Is there a minimum number of weeks for shortened work terms, in order to receive the full value of the award (\$6,000)?

Yes. Shortened award term (less than 14 weeks) will have to obtain exception approval from NSERC prior to submission. 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 before the beginning of the work term.

Even with shortened award terms, NSERC requires that the supervisor pays a minimum salary of \$6,000. The students must be paid at least the [hourly minimum wage in BC](#) (currently is \$16.75 per hour).

Please note that the program makes no provision for sick or vacation leave, or for other types of interruptions. In the case of early termination of your student who is holding an approved USRA award, the supervisor may be required to pay the student the full value of the award. **Please contact the UBC Liaison Officer (nserc.usra@ubc.ca) immediately should a work term be interrupted or terminated early for any reason.**

16. Are there any resources available to USRA supervisors on hiring and supporting student's wellbeing during the work term?



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Yes, the [USRA Supervisor Guide](#) provides useful resources if you have concerns about your student employee's wellbeing. Various other helpful tips and resources for before, during and after the work term are included in the guide such as:

- Interview Strategies and Questions
- Safety and Wellbeing in the Workplace
- Orientation and Onboarding
- Equity and Inclusivity
- Performance Management

Award confirmation and Reimbursement

17. When will the student be informed of their award confirmation? What is the process?

NSERC will make the final funding decision and issue award letters for the summer term to students in July. Award letters will be issued directly to students one month after the university term starts in Fall and Winter. For NSERC and SSHRC award holders, the award letters will be available on NSERC's SharePoint whereas CIHR award holders will receive their award letters by email. (Please note that emails from NSERC may go to your junk email folder.)

It's usually the case that **students will start work on their USRA before awards are actually confirmed by NSERC.**

Process: Once applications are verified complete and the students are eligible, your Form 202 will be submitted to NSERC. Supervisors will be notified by the UBC Liaison Officer that their application has been submitted to NSERC, and the supervisor must submit the student appointment to Workday by the deadline. Students will start work according to the proposed start date and supervisors must start payments to students without waiting for approval of the awards from NSERC. Supervisors must also continue to employ any students whose applications are rejected by NSERC for the remainder of the work term.

Student Appointments on Workday

18. What is the deadline to submit a hire business process on Workday?

The deadline to submit a hire business process for Summer 2024 is **Friday, May 10, 2024.**



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19. What information do I need to provide to my finance/HR/administrator for setting up the USRA student appointment on Workday?

Please send the USRA S24 Appointing Students (will be available March 2024) on the [Faculty and Staff NSERC USRA](#) webpage to your finance/HR/administrator. **Please ensure that the student number of the student you wish to hire is included in the first comments field in the hire business process, using the following format {12345678}**. This ID allows our office to verify that the information submitted in this business process is what was approved and to confirm student eligibility.

Note: We recommend only **one Worktag (Grant/Cost Centre/Program etc.)** is used to pay the student's salary for ease of your reimbursement.

20. What happens if I submit my student appointment under the incorrect job profile?

Selecting the correct job profile ensures that the hire BP is routed to the Work Learn Office Coordinator on Workday. If the incorrect job profile is selected, your student appointment will not be confirmed in our databases and thus, would not be set up to be reimbursed. Please be sure to submit your student appointments under the correct job profile to ensure that you receive the reimbursement:

- UBC-Vancouver: **Student Salaried - NSERC USRA UBC-V**
- UBC-Okanagan: **Student Salaried - NSERC USRA UBC-O**

21. When will my student get paid?

For information on when your student will get paid, please review the [UBC Finance Pay Schedule](#).

22. Does Workday take into account the benefits (CPP, EI, WCB) in the student's monthly wage?

Yes. Workday will automatically charge the benefits (CPP, EI, WCB) to the cost center assigned.

23. When will supervisors receive the reimbursement for approved awards?

Supervisors are expected to be reimbursed in



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- September or October 2024 for awards held in Summer (May – Aug 2024),
 - January or February 2025 for awards held in Fall (Sep – Dec 2024), and
 - May or June 2025 for awards held in Winter (Jan – Apr 2025).
- If you have a question that's not addressed above, please review [NSERC USRA FAQs for applicants](#). Supervisors are highly encouraged to refer to the USRA [Supervisor Info sheet](#) for guidelines on how to apply.

For further queries, please email nserc.usra@ubc.ca or phone 604-827-2937, from 9:00 AM – 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

If you have specific questions about Workday, please contact the [UBC IRP](#) team for support.