

BROCK UNIVERSITY
Undergraduate Student Research Award (USRA) Guidelines (2025–2026)

Brock University's Internal Deadline: Monday, February 24, 2025, 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. No late applications will be accepted.

For questions: **Tyler Weaver**, Research Officer and USRA Liaison Officer (LO), Office of Research Services, Brock University, Email: tweaver2@brocku.ca

Program Description:

[Undergraduate Student Research Awards \(USRAs\)](#) are meant to nurture your interests and help to develop your potential for a research career in health, natural sciences, engineering, social sciences or humanities. These awards are also meant to encourage you to undertake graduate studies by providing research work experience that complements your studies in an academic setting.

Continuing in 2025–2026: the USRA program has been expanded and is administered jointly by Canada's three research granting Agencies: the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

[Brock University's USRA allocation:](#)

NSERC USRA: 21 open awards, 2 for self-identified Black student researchers, and unlimited for self-identified Indigenous student researchers

SSHRC USRA: 2 awards for self-identified Black student researchers

CIHR USRA: 1 award for self-identified Black student researchers

Black student researchers

For NSERC: NSERC provides supplementary allocations for additional awards for Black student researchers. The NSERC allocation for Black student researchers is not a limit. There is no limit on the number of Black student researchers that can be offered an award within an institution's allocation. NSERC expects institutions to use their allocations of awards to support applicants from all underrepresented groups, including Black student researchers.

For CIHR and SSHRC: At the present time, CIHR and SSHRC USRAs are exclusively for Black student researchers. Institutions are assigned an allocation of awards, as outlined in the [Undergraduate Student Research Awards allocations](#) webpage. To be eligible to apply for these awards, you must self-identify as Black by checking the relevant box within the application form. Note that this self-identification information will be shared with the institution to which you are applying and, if awarded, publicly. Refer to the [Instructions for completing an Undergraduate Student Research Awards \(USRA\) application – form 202](#) webpage for more information.

Indigenous student researchers (for NSERC only)

Institutions may recommend applications from self-identified Indigenous student researchers for USRAs beyond their allocation of awards.

"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, the Tri-agencies use the Canadian Constitution Act, 1982 definition of Aboriginal peoples as including the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

Eligibility:

To be eligible to apply for an award, each student:

- must be a 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;
- must be registered, as of the deadline date for applications at the institution, in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible institution;
- must have obtained, over the previous years of study, a satisfactory cumulative average (normally at least B-);
- cannot be currently enrolled in an undergraduate professional degree program in the health sciences (e.g., MD, DDS, BScN) (does not apply for CIHR USRAs);
- cannot be 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; and
- must be legally eligible to work in Canada and have a Social Insurance Number (SIN). International students with a work permit or study permit that allows work in Canada will be required to provide a copy of their permit and their SIN during the hiring process. Information about working in Canada can be found here: <https://brocku.ca/international/student-supports/working-in-canada/>

In addition, students

- who hold a bachelor's degree and are studying toward a second bachelor's degree are eligible to apply;
- may hold a maximum of one USRA per fiscal year (April 1 to March 31);
- may hold a maximum of three USRAs throughout their undergraduate career (regardless of the granting agency).

To hold an award, recipients

- 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 a bachelor's degree program at the time of application and 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; and
- cannot be registered in a graduate program.

Notes:

- Students may hold an award at any time during the year as permitted by the academic program.
- Tenure may start on a date acceptable to the student and the host institution.

Value and Duration of USRA Awards

- The value of the Agency portion of the award is **\$6,000**, with an award total ranging from \$9,775.50 to \$11,172.00 (see Table 1).
- The USRA will be treated as employment, with all students being compensated as **USRA Student Researchers**, at a rate of \$17.50/hour + vacation pay (in lieu of time off). This rate was established with consideration for the current minimum wage (\$17.20/hour) and comparable positions, including the Research Assistant and Student Assistant rate schedule. To ensure we are attracting high-quality applicants and to ensure the USRA program remains a desirable opportunity for students, the rate has been set above minimum wage.
- For the 2025–2026 competition, the VPR will contribute \$1000 (regardless of USRA term duration) to

offset the costs to supervisors when appointing current Brock undergraduate students and incoming graduate students. The supervisor must pay this full portion for non-Brock students. The VPR contribution is expected to be reduced by half for the 2026–2027 competition (\$500 per award) and discontinued thereafter. Researchers intending to apply for USRAs in the future should build the associated costs into their budgets.

- Supervisors must have an active research account with sufficient funds to be used to supplement their contribution of the award value. Note, in the **rare occasion** that an award is NOT granted by NSERC, the supervisor must have sufficient funds to cover the \$6,000 expected from the Agency.
- The duration of the award is 14 to 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 before the beginning of the work experience (please discuss with LO if applicable).
- Full-time basis refers to 35 hours/week. Recipients will receive a communication detailing this expectation. Full-time activities may include but are not limited to lab work (data collection, analysis, etc.), reading/literature reviews, independent study, completion of training modules, assisting other students with projects in the lab.
- The activities conducted during the tenure of the USRA are governed by the agreements, including employment agreements (if applicable) that the recipient of the award has with the host institution and the relevant terms and conditions of awards.
- The agency’s contribution is paid directly to the host institution and is included in the funds that you receive.
- 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.

Table 1: 14- and 16-week award duration totals, as well as required minimum supervisor contributions.

Rate	Duration of Award	Total ¹	Tri-Agency Portion	VPR Portion ²	Supervisor Portion
\$17.50/hour	14-weeks	\$9,775.50	\$6,000	\$1000	\$2,775.50
	16-weeks	\$11,172.00	\$6,000	\$1000	\$4,172.00

¹Total includes 14% mandatory employment costs.

² For the 2025–2026 competition, the VPR will contribute \$1000 (regardless of USRA term duration) to offset the costs to supervisors when appointing current Brock undergraduate students and incoming graduate students. The supervisor must pay this full portion for non-Brock students. The VPR contribution is expected to be reduced by half for the 2026–2027 competition (\$500 per award) and discontinued thereafter. Researchers intending to apply for USRAs in the future should build the associated costs into their budgets.

Canadian Forest Sector Workforce Diversity Undergraduate Supplements (applicable NSERC USRAs only)

In partnership with Natural Resources Canada – Canadian Forest Service NSERC is providing a supplement to the USRA program. The supplement has a value of \$5,000, in addition to the USRA. For full information see: https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/UG-PC/Forest-Forest_eng.asp

Environment and Climate Change Canada Atmospheric and Meteorological Undergraduate Supplements (applicable NSERC USRAs only)

This USRA supplement provides financial support to high-caliber students working toward degrees in the atmospheric or meteorological sciences or related fields. Environment and Climate Change Canada offers up to 20 supplements annually. The supplement has a value of \$1,000 in addition to the USRA. You must apply to this supplement separately. For full information see: https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/UG-PC/Meteorological-Meteorologique_eng.asp

Note, the above supplements are in addition to the NSERC, VPR, and supervisor’s contributions referenced above. These supplements are considered scholarships not employment income.

Overview of Application Process: The USRA application process involves *both* an internal Brock University Application (Parts A and B, and a reference letter) which will be reviewed by the internal selection committee, and an external application ([Form 202, Parts I and II](#)) which will be forwarded to the Funding Agencies (NSERC, SSHRC, or CIHR) if successful in the internal competition. Both internal and external applications have sections that are completed by the student applicant (Part I and Part A, transcript(s)) and the supervisor (Part II and Part B), in addition for the internal application a reference letter is **required** which is written either by the proposed supervisor or someone with the capability to describe the applicant's research potential.

Both internal and external applications must be completed and submitted by Brock University's internal deadline, **Monday, February 24, 2025, 5:00 p.m. No late applications will be accepted.**

Please see the Brock University USRA Application Instructions for the Student Applicant and the Proposed Supervisor below, the submission checklist, and be sure to consult the selection criteria below.

Please read the following carefully:

- the [USRA Program Description](#),
- the [Instructions for completing an application Form 202](#),
- and the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about the USRA program.

[NSERC On-line System](#) will be used for the USRA program regardless of the Agency chosen.

For CIHR and SSHRC supervisors: If you have not previously applied to NSERC, when creating the research supervisor profile leave the NSERC PIN field blank and a personal identification number (PIN) will be automatically assigned to you by the On-line system.

Research supervisors who have previously applied to NSERC have received an NSERC PIN from the former online system or a common personal identifier (CPI) from the research portal, the PIN or CPI can be found on all official correspondence from NSERC.

For an overview of navigating the NSERC On-line System please see the following [YouTube Video](#), and the [Frequently Asked Questions about the On-line System](#). For technical issues, or if you do not remember your NSERC PIN or CPI please contact [On-line Service Helpdesk](#) by email at webapp@nserc-crsng.gc.ca.

The project's subject matter must be aligned with the funding Agency mandate (NSERC, SSHRC, or CIHR) selected in the Application form. Please consult [Selecting the Appropriate Federal Granting Agency](#).

An eligible supervisor for a USRA application under Brock policies is permitted to supervise the research work of undergraduate students and holds a research grant (does not need to be a Tri-Agency research grant).

Brock University USRA Instructions for the Student Applicant

1. (Student) **Official, up-to-date transcripts from all post-secondary institutions attended.** Order your transcript(s) from the Registrar's office. Your transcript must show your most recent marks for the Fall 2024 term. Upload a .pdf copy of your official transcripts through the PART A internal application online form. Ensure you follow the file naming convention detailed on the online form. Note as of February 7, 2022, Brock University's Official transcripts will be issued through MyCreds, powered by Digitary. These digital credentials can be shared securely with post-secondary institutions, employers, or other third parties. Please note that requesting the most current version of your transcript must be done via my.brocku.ca, which is then sent to MyCreds for accessing and sharing. MyCreds does not automatically refresh or maintain the most updated transcript. Click [here](#) for more information.
2. (Student) **USRA application form, Form 202 Part I.** [Instructions for completing an application Form 202](#). If you have applied previously, login to your account and update your existing form on the [NSERC On-line system](#). If you do not have an NSERC account, register and create a profile.
 - Complete Form 202 online.
 - Include your email address.
 - Include anticipated year/month of degree completion.
 - Upload your transcript(s) as a single document (PDF).
 - Verify (on the "My Portfolio" page).
 - Give a verified copy of the completed form and the reference number to your proposed supervisor. (You may provide the Form 202 Part I to your proposed supervisor before uploading your transcript.)
3. (Student) **Brock USRA online application form Part A.** When answering the questions on Part A, please consult the selection criteria below. Complete the PART A internal application online form. You can only submit this form one time, so be sure to proofread your answers and ensure all criteria are met before submitting the online form. Also ensure your official transcripts are uploaded to the form as described above, following the appropriate naming convention detailed on the form. [\[Part A Form\]](#).
4. (Student) **Statement of academic standing.** Upload a screenshot of your statement of academic standing to the PART A online application form. Ensure this screenshot is in .pdf format and follows the naming convention detailed in the form. This statement will show your cumulative or overall academic average as of the end of the fall term 2024 (for Brock students, "Program Status, UG1" from BrockDB). Non-Brock students may use a screenshot (.pdf format) of their unofficial transcripts for this purpose.
5. (Student and proposed supervisor, or reference letter writer) **Reference Letter.** Ask your proposed supervisor or another person in a position to address your research potential such as a previous supervisor, to write a reference letter. The reference letter **should not include** the value of marks from any coursework. The letter should be addressed to the USRA Selection Committee. Note: The reference letter is required and must be provided by someone who can address your research potential as described above. Applications without a reference letter will not be considered.

If your proposed supervisor writes the reference letter, they are to submit a .pdf copy in the PART B online application form.

If someone other than your proposed supervisor writes your reference letter, it should be addressed to the USRA Selection Committee and emailed by the writer directly to ors-submissions@brocku.ca before the deadline.
6. (Proposed supervisor) **NSERC USRA application form, Form 202 Part II.**
7. (Proposed supervisor) **Brock USRA online application form (Part B).** [\[Part B Form\]](#)

To ensure your internal application is received accurately, please follow the instructions below.

- Official Transcripts online form upload should be in .pdf format.
- Statement of Academic Standing online form upload should be in .pdf format.
- Reference Letter online form upload should be in .pdf format.
- Ensure that all uploads follow the exact naming convention detailed in the online forms.
- When you complete the online form, use the proper sentence case for your answers (e.g., capitalize the first letter of names, proper sentence structure for longer answers).
- Ensure your proposed supervisor has your correct student number and the proper spelling of your last name.
- Email inquiries - subject line: Please include the competition (e.g., NSERC USRA 2025), and student and supervisor's names.

The LO will review Form 202 Parts I and II through the NSERC On-line System.

DEADLINE: Monday, February 24, 2025, 5 p.m. Eastern Time. No late applications will be accepted.

Brock University USRA Application Instructions for the Proposed Supervisor

1. (Student) **Official, up-to-date transcripts from all university programs (.pdf).**
2. (Student) **NSERC USRA application form, Form 202 Part I.**
3. (Student) **Brock USRA online application form [Part A](#).**
4. (Student) **Statement of current academic standing (.pdf).**
5. (Proposed supervisor or another qualified person) **Reference Letter.** The applicant will ask you (or another person such as a previous supervisor) to write a reference letter.

The letter should address the applicant's research potential only (see selection criteria). If you have taught the student in a class, do not include the value of their marks in the letter since these will be redacted. The letter should be addressed to the USRA Selection Committee. If the proposed supervisor writes this letter, it should be uploaded through the online form. If someone other than the proposed supervisor writes this letter, it should be emailed by the writer directly to ors-submissions@brocku.ca before the deadline. Ensure the letter is in .pdf form.

6. (Proposed supervisor) **NSERC USRA application form, Form 202 Part II** [Instructions for completing an application Form 202](#). Form must be completed in [NSERC's On-line System](#); enter the student's name and reference number from Form 202, Part I, to create the form. The starting date of the award is important for the payment process. For a summer 2025 award, the starting date must be no later than 14 weeks before the Labour Day weekend. For a fall 2025 or winter 2026 award, it is important to note the eligibility criteria, e.g. the student must be able to engage full-time on the USRA project. For a fall award, the starting date must be no later than 14 weeks before Brock's holiday closure. There is more flexibility in timing for a winter 2026 award; however, a winter award must end before the next fiscal year to remain eligible to reapply next year.

The project must be within the appropriate Agency's funding mandate (NSERC, natural sciences and engineering; SSHRC, social sciences and humanities; or CIHR, health research). The research proposal must be specific and detailed. Consider equity, diversity, and inclusion in the research design as applicable. Describe the student's role in the project and information related to the student's supervision. Plan activities to ensure the student is able to work full time for the duration of the award. Describe the expected quality of the training to be received. Verify and submit. There will be an opportunity to edit the Form 202, if needed, before recommended applications are forwarded to the Agencies in mid to late April.

7. (Proposed supervisor) **Brock USRA online application form [Part B](#).** The proposed supervisor completes the form and uploads the reference letter (.pdf) through the form (if applicable). You can only submit this form one time, so ensure all your answers are correct and have been proofed before submitting.

To ensure your application is received accurately, please follow the instructions below.

- The Reference Letter upload should be in .pdf format and follow the exact naming convention detailed in the online form.
- E-mail inquiries subject line: Please include the competition (e.g., NSERC USRA 2025), and student and supervisor's names.

The LO will review Form 202 Parts I and II through the NSERC On-line System.

DEADLINE: Monday, February 24, 2025, 5 p.m. Eastern Time. No late applications will be accepted.

Complete Submission Checklist:

Brock University's Internal Deadline for both External and Internal Applications:

Monday, February 24, 2025, 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time

External Application

The applicant completes Form 202 Part I and uploads transcript(s) on the NSERC On-line System before the deadline.

The proposed supervisor completes Form 202 Part II on the NSERC On-line System before the deadline.

Internal Application

The applicant completes the online application form [Part A](#) and uploads their Official Transcripts (.pdf format) and the Statement of Academic Standing (.pdf format) through the online form.

The proposed supervisor completes the online application form [Part B](#) and uploads the applicant Reference Letter (.pdf format) through the online form (if applicable).

If the reference letter writer is not the proposed supervisor and is another person who is in a position to write a reference letter addressing research potential such as a previous supervisor, this person must send their letter directly to ors-submissions@brocku.ca before the deadline, in .pdf format. **Note: The reference letter is required. Applications without a reference letter will not be considered.**

Selection of Awardees:

There will be three USRA Selection Committees comprised of diverse Brock researchers from appropriate disciplines to rank applicants for 1) NSERC USRAs, and 2) SSHRC USRA, and 3) CIHR USRA. A supervisor may support more than one USRA applicant, and students will not be punished if multiple qualified applicants apply from the same laboratory. Additionally, students from outside Brock are also encouraged to apply, as long as they have a Brock Faculty supervisor. Applicants will be considered and ranked within their academic level. The Selection Committees will meet in March to rank the applications. Decisions will be communicated to applicants by email before the end of March. Recommended awardees must confirm acceptance within one week of notification. Any declined award will be offered to one of the alternate applicants. The Agencies will send an official notification after confirmation of eligibility of the awardee, supervisor, and research topic mid-way through the award period.

Selection criteria:

Applicants overall scores will be composed of:

- Academic excellence (student) **40%**
- Research potential (student) **40%**
- Expected quality of the training and mentor to be received (supervisor) **20%**

Academic excellence: The student's **cumulative academic average** will be factored into an overall score.

Research potential: Research potential is evaluated based on the **reference letter** and the student applicant's responses on **Part A**. The following are indicators of **research potential**:

- Previous research/work experience (e.g., co-op terms, previous USRAs held etc.)
- Enthusiasm for pursuing a research career in the natural sciences or engineering, social sciences or humanities, or health research, as applicable
- Relevance of work experience and academic training to the proposed field of research
- Judgement and ability to think critically and to demonstrate problem-solving and organizational skills
- Ability to apply skills and knowledge
- Initiative and autonomy, and ability to engage in a collaborative environment
- Written and oral communication skills
- Curiosity, attention to detail, creativity, persistence

Expected quality of the training and mentorship to be received: Part B completed by the proposed supervisor will be reviewed. Indicators of expected **quality of the training** and mentorship to be received:

- Exposure to the research team (how the student will interact with the supervisor and other team members)
- Training in research techniques, and other important skills
- Expected contributions to research outputs
- Proposed supervisor's past supervisory experience, and success mentoring undergraduate students
- Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) considerations in the research training that the student applicant will receive

Research potential and **quality of the training** will each be rated on the following scale:

10 Exceptional
9.0 **or** 9.5 Outstanding
8.0 **or** 8.5 Very strong
7.0 **or** 7.5 Strong
6.0 **or** 6.5 Moderate
Below 6.0 Insufficient