

BROCK UNIVERSITY
Undergraduate Student Research Award (USRA) Guidelines (2023–2024)

Brock University’s Internal Deadline: Friday, February 24, 2023, 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. No late applications will be accepted.

For questions: **Vincent Annibale**, Research Officer and USRA Liaison Officer (LO), Office of Research Services, Brock University, Email: vannibale@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.

New in 2023–2024: 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: 23 awards, in addition, applications from qualified self-identified Indigenous* and Black student researchers for NSERC USRAs may be recommended beyond the institutional 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.

SSHRC USRA: 1 award, and **CIHR USRA: 1 award**

At the present time, both the SSHRC and CIHR USRAs are exclusively for self-identified Black student researchers. To be eligible to apply for these awards, applicants are asked to disclose within the [NSERC On-line System](#) that they self-identify as Black and to confirm that they understand that this information will be shared with Brock University and, if awarded, publicly.

Eligibility:

To be eligible to apply for an award

- you 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 internal deadline date
- you must be registered, as of the internal deadline date in a bachelor’s degree program
- you must have obtained, over the previous years of study, a satisfactory cumulative average (a cumulative average of at least a B as defined by the university). Brock University students must have a minimum overall academic average of 70%.
- you 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)
- you cannot be currently registered or have been previously registered, at any time, in a graduate program in the same field of study
- you cannot have completed all your degree requirements
- Note: SSHRC and CIHR USRAs are, at the present time, exclusively for self-identified Black student researchers.

In addition

- if you already hold a bachelor’s degree and are studying toward a second bachelor’s degree, you may still apply for this award

- you may hold only one USRA per fiscal year (April 1 to March 31)
- you may hold a maximum of three USRAs throughout your undergraduate career (regardless of the granting agency)

To hold an award

- you must have completed all the course requirements of at least the first year of study (or two academic terms) of your bachelor's degree
- you 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
- you must be employed full time in eligible research and development activities in your proposed field of research during tenure of the award
- you cannot be registered in a graduate program

Notes:

You may hold an award at any time during the year as permitted by your academic program and in consideration of the other eligibility criteria.

Value and Duration of USRA Awards

- The value of the Agency portion of the award is \$6,000.
- Supervisors are required to supplement the award and should comply with Ontario and/or federal employment standards. At Brock University the total award which includes the supervisor's supplement must be aligned with the Part-time and Student Employment Rate Schedule for Research Assistants (<https://brocku.sharepoint.com/human-resources/SitePages/Compensation.aspx>).
- Supervisors must have an active research account from which the student can be paid. That account will be reimbursed when confirmation is received from the supervisor that the work period is completed.
- 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 at before the beginning of the work term (please discuss with LO if applicable).

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

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, **Friday, February 24, 2023, 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, Submission checklist, and 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.

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 2022 term. Email a copy of your transcript(s) with your application to ors-submissions@brocku.ca and upload to the NSERC On-line System.

2. (Student) **USRA application form, Form 202 Part I.** [Instructions for completing an application Form 202.](#) If you have applied previously, log into 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 e-mail address.
- Include anticipated year/month of degree completion.
- Upload your transcripts as a single document (PDF).
- Verify (on the "My Portfolio" page) then give a 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 Application Form Part A.** When answering the questions on Part A, please consult the selection criteria below. Submit it by email to ors-submissions@brocku.ca before the deadline.

4. (Student) **Statement of academic standing.** Send a statement of academic standing by email to ors-submissions@brocku.ca in PDF format (or as a screen shot). This statement will show your cumulative or overall academic average as of the end of the fall term 2022 (for Brock students, "Program Status, UG1" from BrockDB). Non-Brock students may use 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.

It should be addressed to the USRA Selection Committee and sent by the writer directly by email to ors-submissions@brocku.ca before the deadline.

6. (Proposed supervisor) **NSERC USRA application form, Form 202 Part II**

7. (Proposed supervisor) **Brock USRA application form (Part B)**

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

- Attachments should be in PDF format (screenshot of Statement of Academic Standing also acceptable).
- Please name your documents according to the following format:
Agency USRA 2023_ student's family name, student's first name and supervisor's last name_Document type (e.g., NSERC USRA 2023_Jones, Jessica and Smith_Part A)
- Email subject line: Please include the competition (e.g., NSERC USRA 2023), and student and supervisor's names

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

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Brock University USRA Application Instructions for the Proposed Supervisor

1. (Student) **Official, up-to-date transcripts from all university programs.**
2. (Student) **NSERC USRA application form, Form 202 Part I.**
3. (Student) **Brock USRA Application Form Part A.**
4. (Student) **Statement of current academic standing.**
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 and sent by the writer directly by email to ors-submissions@brocku.ca before the deadline.
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 2023 award, the starting date must be no later 14 weeks before the Labour Day weekend. For a fall 2023 or winter 2024 award, it is important to note the eligibility criteria, e.g. the student must be able to work 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 a bit more flexibility in timing for a winter 2024 award.

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). 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. 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 application form Part B.** The proposed supervisor completes the form and submits it by email to ors-submissions@brocku.ca before the deadline. Please consult the selection criteria below.

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

- Attachments should be in PDF format (screenshot of Statement of Academic Standing also acceptable).
- Please name your documents according to the following format:
Agency USRA 2023_ student's family name, student's first name and supervisor's last name_Document type. (e.g., NSERC USRA 2023_Jones, Jessica and Smith_Part A)
- E-mail subject line: Please include the competition (e.g., NSERC USRA 2023), and student and supervisor's names

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

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Complete Submission Checklist:

**Brock University's Internal Deadline for both External and Internal Application:
Friday, February 24, 2023, 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time**

External Application

- The applicant completes Form 202 Part I and upload 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 submits the following documents as email attachments to ors-submissions@brocku.ca before the deadline:
 - Transcript(s)
 - Brock USRA Application Form Part A
 - Statement of Academic Standing for Brock student applicants, or Unofficial transcript for non-Brock student applicants.
- The proposed supervisor submits the following documents to ors-submissions@brocku.ca before the deadline:
 - Brock USRA Application Form Part B.
 - The reference letter (if applicable)
- The reference letter writer, who may be the proposed supervisor or another person in a position to write a reference letter addressing research potential such as a previous supervisor, must send their letter directly to ors-submissions@brocku.ca before the deadline.

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. Although a supervisor may support more than one USRA applicant, typically only one will be selected. Under exceptional circumstances as determined by the Selection Committee, an award of a second applicant may be recommended. 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 award letter 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, demonstrate problem-solving skills and organizational skills.
- Ability to apply skills and knowledge.
- Initiative and autonomy, and ability to work 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 with mentoring undergraduate students

Both **research potential** and **quality of the training** will 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