

BROCK UNIVERSITY

Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Undergraduate Student Research Award (USRA)

APPLICANT GUIDELINES

2021–2022 Competition

DEADLINE: Wednesday, February 24, 2021, 4:30 p.m.

Brock University's quota: 23

Please note new information from NSERC.

The objective of the NSERC USRA program is to nurture your interest and fully develop your potential for a research career in the **natural sciences and engineering**. It is also meant to encourage you to undertake graduate studies in these fields. The awards provide a research work experience that complements your undergraduate studies in an academic setting. NSERC and Brock University encourage qualified Aboriginal students to apply for this award.

NEW! The value for NSERC portion of the award is being increased from \$4,500 to \$6,000 effective from the summer 2021 competition. The minimum contribution of 25% from the supervisor will still be in effect. Therefore, the award will have a minimum value of \$7,500 for the student.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to apply, you must:

- be a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident of Canada as of our internal deadline;
- be registered, at the time you apply, in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible university;
- have obtained, over previous years of study, a cumulative average of at least second class (B or B–) as defined by your university. Brock University students must have a minimum overall academic average of 70%.

In addition:

- If you already hold a bachelor's degree and are studying toward a second, you may apply for the award.
- You may hold only one (1) university USRA per fiscal year (April 1 to March 31).
- You may hold a maximum of three (3) university USRAs throughout your undergraduate university career.

To hold an award, you must:

- have completed course requirements for at least the first year (two academic terms) of university study of your bachelor's degree;
- have been registered in at least one of the two terms immediately before holding the award in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible university;
- **not** have started a program of graduate studies in the natural sciences or engineering at any time;
- be engaged **full-time** in research and development activities in the natural sciences and engineering, under normal circumstances, for **16 consecutive weeks**; however, see **ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO COVID-19** below.

You are not eligible for a USRA if:

- you are currently enrolled in an undergraduate professional degree program in the health sciences.
- you hold higher degrees in the natural sciences or engineering.

NEW! ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO COVID-19

- Remote supervision of projects will be permitted. Supervisors must hold regular meetings with USRA holders via phone or video calls.
- Work terms do not need to be 16 weeks long and can be less than 12 weeks.
- NSERC will honour the full value of the award regardless of the length of the work term. Supervisors are required to provide the minimum 25% top-up.

NEW! Canadian Forest Sector Workforce Diversity undergraduate supplements. In partnership with Natural Resources Canada – Canadian Forest Service (NRCan – CFS), NSERC is providing a new supplement to the USRA program. Up to thirty (30) awards per year will be offered in each of the 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23 competitions. The supplement has a value of \$5,000, in addition to the USRA. This amount will be given to the student as a top up to

the \$7,500 (minimum total) that student receive from the NSERC and supervisor. For full information see:
https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/UG-PC/Forest-Forest_eng.asp

HOW TO APPLY

- 1) Identify a faculty supervisor. Any faculty member deemed an eligible supervisor under Brock policies may serve as a supervisor for a USRA application.
- 2) Discuss your research project with your (potential) faculty supervisor. Under the terms of this NSERC program, Your project must be in the area of the **natural sciences or engineering, not health or the social sciences**.
- 3) 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 employment period was completed.
- 4) For a list of suggested supervisors, please contact Danusha Kalinga at dkalinga@brocku.ca
- 5) Read carefully the [NSERC USRA Program web page](#)¹ and the [instructions for completing an application—Form 202](#).² Also consult the [Frequently Asked Questions for Applicants and Proposed Research Supervisors](#).³
- 6) Register and/or log onto the NSERC on-line system⁴ and select Form 202 Part 1 under *For Students and Fellows*. Note that you can create only one of these forms, so if you have applied to this program in the past, please update the form you created previously. (Do not use nicknames.) Complete all the modules on the left side of the screen.
- 7) **Transcript(s)**. Order your transcript from Registrar’s office. Make sure that your Fall marks are included. The transcript must be up-to-date as of January 2021 and must include marks for Fall 2020. Upload a copy of your transcript to the NSERC website.
- 8) Provide a copy of your **Form 202 Part 1** with your reference number to your proposed supervisor. They will complete Form 202 Part 2.
- 9) Complete **Brock’s USRA application form Part A**. Submit it **by email** with required attachments to the USRA Liaison Officer by the deadline. Your proposed supervisor will complete Part B of the form.
- 10) **Proof of academic record (including Fall 2020)**. If you are a Brock student, access your “Program Status, UG1” from BrockDB; this will show your current academic average. Save as PDF (or get a screen shot) and include it with your application. If you are NOT a Brock student or if you have attended other post-secondary institution(s) besides Brock, an unofficial transcript will be acceptable, or have your most recent transcript(s) from each institution attended sent to the Liaison Officer.
- 11) **Letter of Reference**. Ask your potential supervisor or another person who has supervised you to write a letter of reference. This letter should speak to your research aptitude and experience, work ethic, problem-solving skills, communication skills, lab skills, etc. (See the description of research aptitude below.) The letter writer should address the letter to the **USRA Selection Committee** and send it directly to the USRA Liaison Officer by email (ors-submissions@brocku.ca).
- 12) **Instructions for Application Submission to LO (New 2021)**
The LO will accept applications by e-mail to ORS-Submissions (ors-submissions@brocku.ca). To ensure your application is received accurately, please follow the instructions below.

Attachments

- Ideally PDF or Microsoft Word (Please do not send a hyperlink to download your documents stored on a cloud server.)
- Please name your documents according to the following format: USRA2021_document title_student’s full name and supervisor’s last name (e.g., USRA2021_PartA_Susan,Jones and SMITH)

¹ http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/UG-PC/USRA-BRPC_eng.asp

² <http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServices-ServicesEnLigne/instructions/202/e.asp>

³ http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/UG-PC/USRAFAQ-BRPCFAQ_eng.asp

⁴ http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServices-ServicesEnLigne/Index_eng.asp

- E-mail subject line. Please include the competition name (e.g., NSERC USRA 2021), document title (e.g., Part A, Part B, Reference letter) and student's name

SELECTION OF AWARDEES

The USRA Selection Committee comprises natural sciences and engineering researchers from those Faculties whose members hold NSERC research grants: Applied Health Sciences (Health Sciences, Kinesiology), Mathematics and Science (all departments), and Social Sciences (Geography and Tourism Studies, Psychology).

Although a faculty member may support more than one USRA applicant, normally only one of these will be selected. Under exceptional circumstances (as determined by the USRA Selection Committee), an award for a second applicant may be recommended.

Selection criteria:

- Academic record
- Research aptitude
- Expected quality of the training (**NEW in 2020 competition**)

Research aptitude is evaluated on the basis of the letter of reference and the applicant's responses to the questions on Brock's application form. Applicants at all undergraduate levels will be considered.

Examples of characteristics that may be considered in evaluating **research aptitude** include: enthusiasm for pursuing a research career in the natural sciences or engineering; written and oral communication skills; critical thinking; problem-solving skills; ability to work in a collaborative environment; relevant academic and work experience; organizational skills; curiosity; attention to detail; creativity; initiative; persistence.

The Selection Committee 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 alternates. NSERC will send an official award letter after confirmation of eligibility of the awardee, supervisor, and research topic.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

You should not receive academic credits for the work done during your award term. You are not permitted to take courses during work hours, although you may take one course after hours or if special arrangements are made with your supervisor to make up the time under supervision. You cannot be enrolled in your Honours Thesis course during the work term. **You may hold an award during co-op placements.**

Supplemental quota. A small supplemental quota (1–2 awards) may be available for Fall 2021 and/or Winter 2022. Should we receive additional awards, we hold a new mini-competition.

Other undergraduate opportunities at NSERC. You may hold a USRA at another eligible Canadian university; however, you must apply directly to that university. If you are interested in an [Experience Award](#) (previously Industrial Undergraduate Student Research Awards),⁵ you must apply directly to an eligible Canadian organization.

CONTACT

Danusha Kalinga
NSERC USRA Liaison Officer (LO)
Office of Research Services, Brock University
1812 Sir Isaac Brock Way
St Catharines, Ontario L2T 1W7
Email: dkalinga@brocku.ca

⁵ www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/UG-PC/Experience-Experience_eng.asp