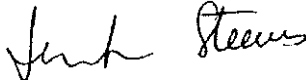


Memorandum

To: Distribution

From: Jennifer Steeves, Associate Dean – Research & Graduate Education


Date: January 14, 2021

Subject: NSERC Undergraduate Student Research Awards (NSERC USRA)

I am pleased to announce the call for applications to the 2021 NSERC USRAs. The university quota for 2021 is 46 awards. The Faculty of Science will be responsible for the adjudication of NSERC USRAs for LA&PS, Schulich School of Business and Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change. Every effort will be made to distribute the awards equally among the science departments. Please bring these awards to the attention of qualified students as soon as possible.

Further information on NSERC USRAs can be found on the NSERC website: https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/UG-PC/USRA-BRPC_eng.asp. The application form and instructions (Form 202) are now available on the NSERC website and must be filled out using NSERC's online system. Both students and supervisors will have to register online to be able to complete the application. Please read all instructions before beginning.

An information session will be held on **Friday, 22 January 2021 at 9:00 am via zoom**. Students are requested to register for the session at this [link](#).

I. Changes to the 2021 program

NSERC announced that effective for the summer 2021 competition (deadline May 1, 2021), the value of the NSERC portion of the award will be increased from \$4,500 to \$6,000. Supervisors will still be required to contribute a minimum of 25% to the award (\$1,500)

II. Changes to the 2020 program

- (a) NSERC will no longer require professors to hold an active grant when applying to supervise a USRA student.
- (b) NSERC recommends that USRA applications be assessed on the following criteria:
 - Academic record (transcripts)
 - Research aptitude (Research Interest Statement; see (1.) in section III)
 - Expected quality of the training to be received (Training Plan provided by supervisor)



- in Form 202)
- (c) Travel allowance has been discontinued; travel expenses will no longer be reimbursed.

III. Instructions to apply

HAND WRITTEN APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

Departments should ensure that students and faculty members are informed of the criteria listed in section III.

1. **Students:**

- Fill out **PART I** of Form 202 (NSERC's online system)
- Forward Reference Number to supervisor
- NEW: In a separate document, provide a 1 paragraph Research Interest Statement describing their research interest in the professor/research group, past experience (lab or course-related) and skills they will bring to the project, benefits they gain from the USRA experience and how the training environment they selected aligns with their career goals and academic interests

Supervisors:

- Fill out **PART II** of Form 202, including
 - Appropriate Reference Number
 - Specific, detailed research proposal (max. 1800 characters)
 - Description of student's role (max. 500 characters)
 - NEW: As per the new guidelines, the quality of the training environment will be used to assess the application. Please include a **brief training plan**, either in the research proposal or student's role section, that describes the proposed training including the type and extent of supervision and mentorship, the activities the student will participate in, the skills and other outcomes they will gain. Note that the **inclusion of EDI considerations** in research design makes research more ethically sound, rigorous and useful. Describe how these aspects will be addressed in the research design if applicable.
 - Students are encouraged to work 16 consecutive weeks. May 3, 2021 will be the suggested start date for all awardees unless special arrangements are made with the supervisor. August 20, 2020 will be the end date for the complete 16 weeks.
 - Research subject code: This must be from the list located at: http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/help-aide/scholarshipcodes-codespourbourses_eng.asp

2. A completed and signed application package must be submitted electronically (see email list below) to the respective department by **Friday February 26, 2021**. Full application packages must include:

- Form 202: Part I (student) & Part II (supervisor, including research project & training plan)
- 1 paragraph Research Interest Statement (student)
- Original transcripts are required for non-York students, which must be sent directly to the potential supervisor from the Registrar's Office of the student's home institution.

Electronic submission:

bioaward@yorku.ca (Department of Biology)

[machform](#) submission – Department of Mathematics & Statistics, Department of Physics & Astronomy, Department of Chemistry, Division of Natural Science & Department of Science & Technology

3. Each department prepares a **one-page departmental summary** (e-mailed, in excel format) of the students' records which should include for each student: name, student number, department, cumulative GPA, supervisor's name, research subject code (from the list included in the instructions supplied with Form 202), university attended, 'year' level, if previous NSERC recipient.
4. Each department prepares a **departmental ranking** sent to the Dean's Office by **Friday March 12, 2021**.

You are reminded that it is absolutely essential that **all departments ensure the students are qualified** to apply for the awards and that the **supervising faculty member has sufficient funds to provide operating support for the duration of the student's project**. NSERC provides \$6,000 per student. The **supervisor must contribute \$1,500**, and the Dean's Office will contribute \$480 for Faculty of Science students for a total support of **\$7,980 for the 16 weeks**. If a student is selected from another university to hold their award at York, the supervisor will be responsible for paying 4% vacation pay and 10% for benefits. .

III. NSERC USRA in Universities

- (a) The NSERC USRA is a stipend of \$7,500 for 16 weeks of full time (35 hours per week) work. NSERC provides \$6,000, the supervisor provides \$1,500. The Faculty of Science will contribute an additional \$480 per award for science students. This is equivalent to minimum wage (\$14.25/hr).
- (b) This call is for awards that will be held during the summer semester. We will send additional communication if awards become available for the Fall and Winter
- (c) Typically, NSERC encourages students to work the full term, so the departments must make the students aware that the awards are for the full 16 weeks, full-time hours. Shorter work terms require approval from the Dean's Office and NSERC prior to application. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students might have limited access to laboratories but are then encouraged to contribute to literature reviews, manuscript preparation and data analysis.
- (d) Applications (both Part I and Part II) must be completed online by **Friday February 26, 2021 with electronic copies submitted to the departments**. Non-York applicants must order their official transcripts from the Registrar's Office to be sent directly to their potential supervisor at York by the above deadline. (At most Canadian institutions, transcripts issued directly to students are not considered official.) All successful

applicants will be instructed on attaching their transcripts as PDF documents to their on-line applications at a later date.

Departments must submit their completed applications and transcripts, along with their rankings, to the Dean's office no later than **Friday March 12, 2021 at 9:00am**.

- (e) Students are required to include a Research Interest Statement (1 paragraph) describing their research interest in the professor/research group, past experience (lab or course-related) and skills they will bring to the project, benefits they gain from the USRA experience and how the training environment they selected aligns with their interest and goals.
- (f) Notification of awards will be issued by the end of March 2021.
- (g) Students will have one week to accept or decline the award from the date of notification. **Students who accept the award are encouraged to participate in a virtual Undergraduate Research Conference in the third week of August 2021 to present their research in a poster or oral presentation.**
- (h) Recipients must devote their full time to research and are not permitted to take any additional summer employment (assistantships, etc.). Recipients may be permitted to register for one 3-credit course during the tenure of the award provided it is justified and approved by NSERC. An approval request to NSERC must come from the Liaison Officer and conditions for attending course lectures outside of regular working hours must be set by the supervisor to ensure that full time work hours are not affected.
- (i) Students may not hold more than three USRA awards during their university career.
- (j) Applicants must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents and must be registered as full-time students in an eligible bachelor degree program in the natural sciences, and must have completed all the course requirements of at least the first year of university study (or two academic terms) of a bachelor's degree by **April 30, 2021**.
- (k) Candidates who hold higher degrees in natural sciences or engineering, or are candidates for an undergraduate professional degree in health sciences (e.g. M.D., D.D.S., B.Sc.N.) are not eligible. Female applicants are especially encouraged to apply.
- (l) In continuation of its incentive for Aboriginal undergraduate students to pursue graduate studies and research careers in the natural sciences and engineering, NSERC asks each university to actively promote the availability of USRAs to qualified Aboriginal students. Awards that are made to Aboriginal students will be in addition to the university's quota of awards.

