

Attention: Academic units USRA contacts, Co-op programs

From: Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies

Re: 2022-23 USRA - Undergraduate Student Research Awards Competition (Sciences)

Memo Date: January 14, 2022

About the USRA (Undergraduate Student Research Award)

The USRAs are granted to undergraduate students working in a research capacity with an academic supervisor for a 16-week duration. While meant to stimulate interest and encourage undergraduate students to pursue graduate degrees and/or a research career, they are also a great way to recruit students into graduate programs.

NEW this year:

1. Students may now take a **maximum of 2 courses** (up from 1) while holding a USRA.

Reminder:

1. USRA scholarship values continue to be **\$6,000**.
2. The minimum full-time and part-time faculty supplement amounts continue to be \$2,512 and \$1,256.
3. Flexibility is given in terms of delivery method. The NSERC and VPR USRAs can be conducted in-person or remotely, at the discretion of the supervisor.
4. NSERC and VPR have relaxed the strict 16-week minimum for students holding their USRAs due to the continuing pandemic restrictions. For shortened USRA appointments, the supervisor minimum supplement remains unchanged and may not be reduced.

**The subject of research is required to be in the field of the natural sciences and engineering to qualify for the NSERC USRA or VPR Sciences USRA.*

There are 4 types of USRA Sciences available:

1. NSERC USRA
2. VPR USRA – Sciences
3. VPR USRA – Social Sciences & Humanities
4. Other USRA's & Supplements – details below

Please note! The VPR USRA *Social Sciences & Humanities* awards are on a first come-first serve basis, with GPS accepting applications **March 1 – March 31**
<https://www.sfu.ca/gradstudies/awards-funding/ugrad-research-awards/ugrad-research-awards.html>

Value & Tenure of USRA (Sciences)

The award portion of the USRA is **\$6,000** for the 16-week period at 35 hours per week. The student must also receive a faculty supplement valued at a minimum **\$2,512 + 9.8% benefits** in accordance with BCs minimum wage.

Other USRAs & Supplements:

Don't forget to indicate on your lists the names of the students receiving the following:

- **CHEM:** Dr. Ivor Fleming USRA - \$6,000 award value
- **STATS:** Charles Allard USRA (as per rotation schedule, 2022 award is for STATS)
- **PHYS:** Faculty of Science USRA (as per rotation schedule, 2022 award is for PHYS)
- **PHYS:** Grant Sheffer USRA **\$5,000** award value
**the Grant Sheffer award requires a higher faculty supplement portion*

Basic Eligibility

1. NSERC USRA Program (full student eligibility on NSERC's [website](#)):

- **be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada;**
- be registered in a Bachelor's degree program (at time of application);
- have been registered in at least one of the two terms prior to the research term;
- have obtained a CGPA of at least 2.67;
- hold the USRA for full time research activities in the natural sciences or engineering with a supervisor who holds major grant funding or other funds to pay the student's supplement.
- **not** have started a Graduate Program at any time while applying for or holding the USRA.
- **not** enrolled in a thesis course during the USRA term.

2. VPR USRA Sciences Program & Other USRAs (full student eligibility on Grad Studies [website](#)):

- be an SFU undergraduate student;
- be registered in a Bachelor's degree program (at time of application and USRA term);
- have been registered in at least one of the two terms prior to the award term;
- have obtained a CGPA of at least 2.67;
- hold the USRA for full time research activities in the natural sciences or engineering with a supervisor who holds major grant funding or other funds to pay student supplement.

How to Apply

Students eligible for both NSERC and VPR awards should create an [NSERC Online Account](#) and complete the application for an Undergraduate Student Research Award Form 202 (Part I).

Students who are **only** eligible for a VPR USRA must complete the application form found on the GPS site: <https://www.sfu.ca/gradstudies/awards-funding/ugrad-research-awards/deadlines-application-procedures.html>

Quotas for NSERC and VPR Sciences

As a result of the increased award value of the USRAs, our total number of NSERC and VPR awards available has decreased.

Indigenous Students

NSERC is continuing its initiative to encourage Indigenous students to pursue university studies in the natural sciences and engineering; NSERC USRA awards going to qualified Indigenous students are not included in your quota.

Payment Information

Payment – Award Portion

For SFU students: The \$6,000 award portion will be paid through go.sfu.ca in one lump sum payment in the first month of their appointment. The funds will be applied to their SFU account, paying any fees owing; remaining funds will be processed by direct deposit or via cheque.

For non-SFU students: non-SFU students will be paid their award portion through payroll as a 'national scholarship.' They will receive a lump sum payment of \$6,000 in the first month.

Payment - Faculty Supplement

The faculty portion of the USRA is paid through SFU Payroll, on a bi-weekly basis. Faculty members who hire USRA students are responsible for covering the cost of mandatory benefits. For example, if a faculty member pays the minimum supplement of \$2,512, the corresponding cost of mandatory benefits (CPP, EI and WCB) at 9.8% would be ~\$250. Faculty members are encouraged to contribute more than the minimum towards the USRA stipend.

Enrollment information for USRA holders

Although students cannot be enrolled in classes full-time while holding the award, there are some options for enrollment:

- In select departments, undergraduate students can get Co-op work term credit for a USRA towards their Co-op degree designation. By enrolling in a Co-op practicum course, students maintain their full-time status and are eligible for U-Pass, health plan, etc. Please contact your departmental or faculty co-op program for further details.
<http://www.sfu.ca/coop/contact.html>

USRA students with Study Permits

International students must comply with the conditions of their temporary resident status and ensure they have the proper work authorization.

Requirements for international students holding a USRA vary depending on the term:

Fall or Spring terms:

- To hold a USRA in the **Fall or Spring** terms, international students **must show full-time enrollment through co-op**.

Summer term:

- International students can hold a USRA in the Summer term, as either:
 1. A “**regularly scheduled break**” without the requirement of full-time enrollment
 - To be eligible, they must have maintained their full-time enrollment in the previous Spring and upcoming Fall terms; OR
 2. As a co-op work term.

Holding a USRA as a Co-op work term:

Students may hold their USRA in a co-op practicum course as part of the SFU Co-op Program.

- Note: the student must have previously joined the co-op program and have a valid co-op work permit at the time of the **USRA offer acceptance**. Students must apply to join the co-op program, which is typically done two terms in advance of their desired co-op work term period. This is to allow sufficient time to secure the required co-op work permit prior to the start of their employment. If this is not the case, the USRA must be deferred to a subsequent term.

Prior to accepting the USRA, international students are advised to check with an International Student Advisor, Immigration Specialist at intl_advising@sfu.ca to confirm their work eligibility, and review Co-op Program requirements at www.sfu.ca/coop/apply.

2022-23 USRA Sciences Competition: Process & Deadlines

Departments/academic units will need to decide their process, deadlines and contact(s) within the guidelines and dates provided. Note that, whatever your process, by **February 21, 2022** the students should have *created* an application online via the [NSERC USRA Research Portal](#); this includes uploading transcripts and having a supervisor **complete form 202 (Part II)**.

February 28, 2022: Departments/academic units must submit a ranked xls list of applicants to the Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies office (c/o Eric Tseung gpsaward@sfu.ca). Please use the **2022 USRA Template provided**; the list you submit should look like this:

NSERC A-LIST - should match your NSERC Quota - add rows as needed							
NSERC A-LIST	LastName	FirstName	SFU ID	Student email	Citizenship	USRA Supervisor	Notes
1	Smith	Sam	123		Canadian	Bob Parr	
2	Cooper	Gary	154		Canadian	Frank Oz	
3							
4							
Indigenous NSERC A-LIST*							
NSERC A-LIST	LastName	FirstName	SFU ID	Student email	Citizenship	USRA Supervisor	Notes
1	Feather	Amy	716	afeath@sfu.ca	Canadian	Tim Ho	
2							
*Indigenous student applications are given top priority and will not count towards the USRA quota.							
VPR A-LIST - should match your VPR Quota - add rows as needed							
VPR A-LIST	LastName	FirstName	SFU ID	Student email	Citizenship	USRA Supervisor	Notes - indicate ranking for NSERC B-LIST if applicable
1	Jones	Jessica	152	jjones@sfu.ca	International	Erin Walter	
2	Cage	Luke	192	cluke@sfu.ca	Canadian	Greg Mark	BLIST 1 for NSERC
3							
4							
B-LIST - After exhausting above lists, we will proceed to offer in the order you list here:							
ALL - B-LIST	LastName	FirstName	SFU ID	Student email	Citizenship	USRA Supervisor	Award(s) Blisted for
1	Reed	Mandy	712	mreed@sfu.ca	Canadian	Patrick Starr	NSERC USRA or VPR USRA
2	Spears	Britney	752	bspears@sfu.ca	International	John Locke	VPR USRA
3							

Submission:

Student applying for:	Method of submission:
NSERC & VPR USRA	NSERC online application
NSERC USRA only	NSERC online application
VPR/Other USRAs only	VPR USRA Application form (email preferred)

*Note that you only need to complete the VPR USRA application form if the student is **not** applying for the NSERC USRA. Students applying for both NSERC & VPR USRAs only need to complete the NSERC application on the online portal. Do not submit NSERC USRA applications to GPS as we can access the applications online. Please submit your list and the VPR USRA applications via email to gpsaward@sfu.ca.

Please be advised that NSERC recommends the applications be assessed on the following 3 criteria:

- i) Academic Record
- ii) Research Aptitude
- iii) Expected quality of training to be received

Process (within GPS):

1. Indigenous students eligible for NSERC USRAs will be offered awards first.
2. Students A-LIST'd and eligible for NSERC USRAs will be offered awards next in accordance to each department's quotas.
3. Students A-LIST'd and eligible for VPR USRAs will be offered awards next.
4. As students decline USRAs, we will refer to the list you provided to offer available awards to your B-LIST'd students. Please ensure you indicate the NSERC B-LIST in the notes section if the student is on your VPR A-LIST (see example above).

GPS Contacts: gpsaward@sfu.ca

Eric Tseung - Manager, Financial & Award Systems
778-782-6844

Robyn Hiew - Financial Assistant
778-782-3907