Canadian Institutes of
Health Research

Instituts de recherche en
santé du Canada

Natural Sciences and Engineering
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences
naturelles et en génie du Canada

Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Guidelines for Undergraduate Student Research Awards Liaison Officers

2024–2025

Foreword

This document is a guide for the liaison officers (LO) who administer the Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA) program at Canadian institutions. It describes the activities carried out by LOs and by NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC staff, as well as the policies, guidelines and deliverables for this funding opportunity. The content of this document is intended to guide LOs and outline their responsibilities in the review process.

For more information about the USRA program, policies and guidelines contact NSERC by email at usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca.

This document is updated every year.

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1. The institution's role in administering the Undergraduate Student Research Awards program

1.1 Program overview

The Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA) program supports more than 3,000 students annually and is administered jointly by Canada's three granting agencies: the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

USRAs are meant to nurture students' interest in—and fully develop their potential for a research career in—health, natural sciences and engineering, or social sciences and humanities. These awards are also meant to encourage graduate studies in these fields. They provide financial support to students through the host institution to help them gain research work experience that complements their studies in an academic setting.

> Presently, CIHR and SSHRC USRAs are exclusively for Black student researchers. Institutions are assigned a separate allocation of awards to offer from each agency. Institutions must respect the agency-specific allocation. Refer to the Undergraduate Student Research Awards allocations web page for a list of allocations by institution and by agency.

Note: NSERC oversees the administration of the USRA program and the application process on behalf of the three agencies. Accordingly, applications must be submitted through NSERC's online system.

1.2 Application deadlines

USRA to be held in:	Applications saved on the A list (submitted to NSERC no later than*)	Confirmation of Payments from NSERC and SSHRC only (submitted no later than 1 month after the end of the awards)
Summer 2024 (May to August)	May 1, 2024	By September 30, 2024
Fall 2024 (September to December)	October 1, 2024	By January 31, 2025
Winter 2025 (January to April)	January 15, 2025	By May 31, 2025

NSERC must receive applications before 8:00 p.m. (ET) on the deadline date. If the deadline falls on a weekend or federal holiday, applications must be submitted on the following business day before 8:00 p.m. (ET).

1.3 Liaison officers and other administrative staff

- Register for access to the Grants and Scholarships Administrative Portal (GSAP). The *Guidelines for USRA Liaison Officers*, and the institution's allocations are posted there.

- Register with NSERC's online system for access to the online application.

- To be granted access to the USRA Liaison Officer (LO) Portfolio in the NSERC online system, submit the [Registration Form for Authorized Institutional Representatives](#) to institution@nserc-crsng.gc.ca. Once you have access, *Liaison Officer (Master)* will appear on the eConsole screen under *Institution Services* whenever you log into the system.

- Assign the following roles to other institution staff who will use the USRA LO Portfolio: Master LO, LO, and LO Assistant. (See *LO Portfolio Instructions* in GSAP [General > NSERC Scholarships] for definitions of these roles.)

- Notify USRA program staff of any changes to the USRA LO staff at your institution by emailing usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca. Provide the name(s) of any previous LO(s) to be removed from NSERC's email and contact lists, and provide the new LO's contact information.

1.4 Pre-review tasks

- Obtain your institution's regular allocation for all three agencies from the drop-down menu (Organizations Library > General > NSERC Scholarships) in [GSAP](#). These numbers are the guaranteed total allocation of summer, fall and winter awards at your institution for the current fiscal year. Note that at present, CIHR and SSHRC awards are exclusively for Black student researchers.

  o Any unused allocation following the summer review process may be carried over to the fall and/or winter terms. Supplementary allocations for use ONLY in the fall or winter terms **may** be made available during the year. In such cases, details will be provided by email.

- Set internal institution application deadlines. Awards may be held in the summer, fall or winter term. Determine if your institution holds one review process for all three terms or one review process for each term.

- Publicize the program, your institution's internal deadlines, and the application procedures by referring to the [resource videos](#), the [USRA program description](#), [form 202](#) (you must be logged in to the NSERC online system to access the latter), and the [Instructions for completing an application – form 202](#) on NSERC's website. If your institution has additional requirements for the internal selection process that are more stringent than the agencies' basic requirements, include these in all advertising material and selection committee documentation.

- Submit requests for any awards of less than 14 weeks' duration to NSERC well ahead of the deadline. The agencies expect institutions to make all efforts to offer USRAs to qualified applicants able to hold the awards for 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 term.

- Appoint members to the institution's USRA selection committee(s) and set the date(s) for the meeting(s) to select the recipients to be recommended to NSERC for a USRA. Consult the [Guidelines governing membership of NSERC's peer review committees](#) for advice on selection committee composition.

1.5 Post-award tasks (for NSERC and SSHRC only)

- Complete the *Confirmation of Payments* form, found in [GSAP](#) under your institution's library folder. These should be posted approximately one month before the end of each work term. The form **must indicate**:

  o the actual start and end dates for each work term
  o the total number of weeks completed
  o the institution's contribution (gross amount) of the total payment issued

- Submit the *Confirmation of Payments* form no later than 1 month after the completion of each work term to NSERC's Finance and Awards Administration division by email to scholarshipsadministration@nserc-crsng.gc.ca.

Note: CIHR does not require institutions to submit Confirmation of Payments.

2. Selection committee

2.1 Guidelines for selection committee composition

Refer to the Guidelines governing membership of NSERC's peer review committees for the selection of internal selection committee members. The agencies believe that diverse selection committee membership results in higher-quality reviews. In choosing members for USRA selection committees, we encourage institutions to consider the following:

- diverse gender representation
- representation of people from underrepresented groups
- individuals at different stages of their careers
- broad range of expertise on multi-disciplinary committees
- where necessary, members who can review in both official languages

To support the merit review of CIHR and SSHRC USRA applications, institutions may wish to include health, social sciences and humanities, or multi-disciplinary experts on their selection committees.

The agencies encourage institutions and departments to publish selection committee membership and selection procedures on their websites.

2.2 Selection committee member training

The agencies expect institution selection committee members to consistently guard against the possibility of unconscious bias influencing the decision-making process, whether these biases are based on a school of thought, the perceived value of fundamental versus applied research, areas of research or approaches (including emerging ones), size or reputation of an institution, experience or prominence of the proposed supervisor, age, gender and/or other personal factors associated with the applicant.

The agencies are acting on the evidence that achieving a more equitable, diverse and inclusive Canadian research enterprise is essential to creating the excellent, innovative and impactful research necessary to advance knowledge and understanding and respond to local, national and global challenges. This principle informs the commitments described in the Tri-agency statement on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and is aligned with the objectives of the Tri-agency EDI Action Plan.

For more information, consult the Equity, diversity and inclusion considerations at each stage of the research process section of the NSERC guide on integrating equity, diversity and inclusion considerations in research web page.

USRA selection committee members are encouraged to complete the following training modules: Bias in Peer Review (produced by the three granting agencies) and one of the Sex and Gender training modules (produced by CIHR).

3. Application profile

3.1 Collection of self-identification data

EDI strengthens research communities and the quality, social relevance and impact of research. Self-identification data provide information on the diversity of the population applying for and receiving agency funds. This data is important for monitoring our programs and informing measures to increase EDI among all those involved in the research enterprise.

When applying for funding, students must complete the self-identification questionnaire found on the eConsole page by selecting *Maintain user profile* under *Account management* in the online system. The data gathered in this form provide information on the diversity of the population applying for and receiving agency funds. This information increases the agencies' capacity to monitor its progress on EDI in its programs, to recognize and remove barriers, and to design new measures to achieve greater EDI in the research enterprise. If a student does not want to self-identify, they have the option to choose "I prefer not to answer" for each question, but are required to select a response for the questionnaire to be marked as complete. Self-identification information is not part of the application and will be neither accessible to nor shared with external reviewers and/or selection committee members. For more information, refer to [Frequently Asked Questions about the Self-Identification Questionnaire](#).

Although responses to these questions are not available to LOs, the agencies encourage institutions to select a cohort of awardees that mirrors the diversity of the student population and/or applicants to the USRA program. Consideration should also be given to the diversity of the USRA supervisors.

3.2 Applications from Indigenous and Black student researchers

Columns in the USRA LO Portfolio will show which applicants self-identified as Indigenous and those who self-identified as a Black student researcher. A third column will show to which agency the application was submitted.

For NSERC only: In order for Indigenous and Black student researchers to be recommended for awards beyond the institution allocation, they must provide consent on the application form to share this information with their institution and NSERC. The institution must indicate this information on the 2024 Recommended USRA applicants form provided in (and to be submitted via) [GSAP](#). If an Indigenous or Black student researcher's application is not identified in the appropriate section of the form, they will be counted as part of the institution allocation. NSERC will not accept replacement applications.

LOs are not required to verify self-declared Indigenous or Black student researcher status.

As a guideline, you may use the following definition of Indigenous: * "Indigenous Peoples" is a collective name for the original peoples of North America and their descendants. "Aboriginal Peoples" is sometimes used as a synonym. For the purposes of this program, NSERC uses the *Canadian Constitution Act, 1982* definition of Aboriginal Peoples, which includes First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada.

For CIHR and SSHRC:

Presently, CIHR and SSHRC USRAs are exclusively for Black student researchers. To be eligible to apply for these awards, applicants are asked to disclose within the application form that they self-identify as Black and to confirm that they understand that this information will be shared with the institution to which they are applying and, if awarded, publicly. For further details on these awards, refer to the [USRA program description](#) and the [Undergraduate Student Research Awards allocations](#) web page.

4. Processing applications

4.1 Applicant eligibility

Ensure that the applicant:
- provided a complete application

- is registered in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible institution as of the institution's deadline date for applications.

- has not held a previous USRA in the current fiscal year or more than 2 previous USRAs throughout their undergraduate career (regardless of the agency)

- has completed all course requirements for at least the first year of study (or two academic terms) of the bachelor's degree

- is a Canadian citizen, permanent resident of Canada, or Protected Person under subsection 95(2) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada)* as of the institution's deadline

- has obtained, over the previous years of study, a satisfactory cumulative average (normally at least a B–, if applicable) as defined by the institution

- has indicated a start date after April 1 (for summer term only)

- meets all the eligibility criteria described in the [USRA program description](#)

- has selected the agency whose mandate aligns most closely with their research and that the institution has an allocation for the selected agency (for further details, refer to the following web pages: [Selecting the appropriate federal granting agency](#), [Undergraduate Student Research Awards allocations](#), and [Addendum to the guidelines for the eligibility of applications related to health](#))

- has completed the self-identification statement and provided consent, if relevant (for Black student researchers)

- will, during tenure of the award, have been registered in **at least one** of the two immediately preceding terms in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible institution**

**For the purposes of this eligibility criterion, the terms of an academic year are:
  - Summer: May to August
  - Fall: September to December
  - Winter: January to April

If the institution subdivides any of these periods into two separate sessions, registration in either will count as registration in that term.

The eligibility criteria to **apply for** and **hold** a USRA have been known to cause confusion:

- To be **eligible to apply**, a student must be registered, as of the deadline date for the application at the institution, in a bachelor's program.

- To then be **eligible to hold** the award, the student must have been registered in at least one of the two preceding terms. This allows students who have graduated to hold a USRA in one of the two terms immediately following their graduation.

- Students who have completed their degree requirements by the application deadline are **not eligible** to apply.

If an institution wishes to recommend an applicant who does not meet the minimum grade point average (GPA) requirements, it can provide a justification letter outlining why it deems the student to be meritorious. The agencies do not reject applications based on GPA.

4.2 Exchange students and students studying abroad

Students who are registered at eligible Canadian institutions, but have studied abroad for one semester during an exchange program, are eligible for a USRA if they were registered in a bachelor's degree program at the Canadian or foreign institution.

Students studying at a foreign institution who are Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada are eligible for a USRA if they meet all the other eligibility criteria.

4.3 USRA location of tenure and supervision

USRAs can be held at any eligible Canadian institution. The agencies encourage mobility of students at the undergraduate level. USRAs can be used to allow students to expand their background training at

other institutions as well as to provide institutions with the opportunity to offer similar experiences to students from elsewhere. Moreover, institutions may use the program as a recruitment tool for graduate studies.

Students must apply to the institution where they would like to hold the USRA. They must comply with the internal selection criteria of that institution and be selected by that institution to hold one of their allocated awards. **Allocations are not transferable from one institution to another**. The proposed USRA supervisor must be affiliated with the host institution and approved by the institution where the student will hold the USRA.

The agencies permit USRA recipients to spend a portion of time away from their host institution, including outside of Canada. However, students are not permitted to spend the entire period of their award away from their host institution if not in the company of their supervisor. This means that it would be acceptable, for example, for a student to do field work abroad **with their supervisor,** but it would not be acceptable for a student to be sent to a different lab abroad **without their supervisor.**

Supervisors may choose to send award recipients to work with their collaborators at labs elsewhere in Canada or outside the country or to conduct field work. Supervisors are responsible for the travel expenses and other costs, which are in addition to the institution's required contribution to the award.

If supervisors choose to send award recipients elsewhere to do research, they are still responsible for supervising them. The agencies expect the research supervisor to be present for the majority of the award period (i.e., at least seven to eight weeks), and supervisors must make appropriate arrangements for colleagues, postdoctoral fellows and/or or doctoral students to fill in for them the remainder of the time.

Remote work is acceptable, with supervision expected on a frequent basis.

4.4 Adjunct faculty members

USRAs are meant to be held in an academic setting. However, an institution may choose to authorize its adjunct faculty members to supervise USRA students, including outside of the academic setting. In this case, the supplemented funds for the award must come from institution sources or from a Tri-agency research grant for which this expense is eligible (for example, NSERC Discovery Grants or SSHRC Insight Grants). The student should not be an employee of the supervisor's non-academic institution as it relates to the USRA. All such arrangements described above must be approved by the institution. USRAs are not industrial internships.

4.5 Transcripts

Consult the [Instructions for completing an application - form 202](#) for further details about transcripts. The instructions state that the legend on the back of the transcript is required, but it is only needed for transcripts from other institutions. The agencies may ask for 1 copy of the legend from your institution as needed.

It is the responsibility of the LO to ensure the presence and authenticity of transcripts submitted to the agencies for selected students. Institutions may choose to accept unofficial transcripts from their applicants. In these cases, the agencies will accept unofficial transcripts, if sent from the institution.

The agencies may require official or updated documents to be provided after the completed application has been submitted to the agencies for verification purposes.

4.6 Academic credits

Award recipients may take a maximum of two courses during the tenure of the award if special arrangements have been made with the supervisor to make up the time. USRA recipients are not permitted to do thesis research during the term of the award. Courses taken outside of regular working hours can be taken over and above the two course limit. If institutions divide the summer term into two short terms, USRA recipients are permitted to take one course in each term.

Students wishing to take **more than two** courses must first discuss the matter with their supervisor and obtain approval. The supervisor then makes a formal request to the LO, outlining the reasons they require an exception, and including links to the courses, if possible. The LO will then forward the request, along with any comments they have, to NSERC for approval via email to usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca.

For the purposes of the USRA program, credits assigned to co-op placements are not considered as academic credits.

5. Submitting applications

- Verify the eligibility of applications (refer to the applicant eligibility section).

- Submit applications to the USRA selection committee(s) using the LO Portfolio. The LO Portfolio has sorting capabilities in most columns. You will be able to view the applications and provide read access to the institution selection committee(s). **Applications appear in the LO Portfolio only after the transcripts are attached and Part I is linked to a supervisor's Part II.**
    - o Clicking on the applicant's name in the LO Portfolio will provide a PDF version of the application.
    - o There is no capacity to download information from the LO Portfolio in Excel format.
    - o If a student makes a change to their application after the supervisor has submitted it to the LO, the data will not be reflected in the version received. To receive an up-to-date version, you must return the application and ask the supervisor to resubmit.

- Hold the meeting with the institution selection committee(s). The institution will assess the merit of each application based on the following three selection criteria:
    - o academic excellence
    - o research potential
    - o expected quality of the training and mentorship to be received

Institutions are responsible for determining the weight of the three selection criteria. Selection committees may evaluate the suitability of the supervision as part of the third criterion. Refer to the appendix for suggestions on how to evaluate the three selection criteria.

Supervisors can hold grants from NSERC, CIHR or SSHRC, provided the research proposed for the USRA falls within the selected agency's mandate.

- Use the USRA LO Portfolio in NSERC's online system to track the progress and status of applications from your institution. Refer to the NSERC LO Portfolio Instructions, available on GSAP, for more information. **Verify that the correct start date of the award is entered in form 202, Part II and that applicants have uploaded up-to-date transcripts.**

    The application status can be set to the following lists:

    - o **List A** = approved NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC applications to be forwarded to NSERC
    - o **List B** = not forwarded to NSERC; could be moved to the A or C list before the deadline
    - o **List C** = not forwarded to NSERC (not recommended and cannot be changed to the A or B list in future

    Once you save the A-list applications, the status on the applicant's portfolio and the LO Portfolio will be updated to *Approved* within 24 to 48 hours. If an application does not update to *Approved* after 48 hours, send an email to usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca.

    If you save an application to List A by mistake, email usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca.

    Note: Once an application has been A-listed, NSERC cannot return the application for any

changes. Application substitutions will not be accepted after the deadline date. If an application needs to be postponed to another term, it will be withdrawn by NSERC, and a new application will need to be created and submitted for the next term.

- Complete the *2024-2025 Recommended USRA applications* form. Be sure to follow the recommendations made by the institution's USRA selection committee(s).

- To ensure students' information is transmitted in a secure and confidential manner, all institutions must upload an unranked alphabetical list of recommended application forms (including self-identified Indigenous and Black student researchers) to GSAP and send an email to schol-slo@nserc-crsng.gc.ca after the form has been uploaded. The LO must identify all Indigenous and Black student researchers as well as the agency to which the application is being submitted.

  o **For NSERC only:** LOs can indicate, either in the email or on the form, which applications should be considered for the **Canadian Forest Sector (CFS) Workforce Diversity undergraduate supplement**. Applications that list one of the targeted research subject codes or have one of the targeted keywords in the title will be considered automatically.

  Areas of relevance for the CFS may fall within the following research subject codes:

- Civil engineering (1000)
- Construction engineering and management (1001)
- Structural engineering (1101)
- Forest engineering (1300)
- Environmental engineering (1500)
- Industrial engineering (1600)
- Chemical engineering (1800)
- Mechanical engineering (2100)
- Electrical and electronic engineering (2500)
- Robotics (2600)
- Artificial intelligence (2800)
- Statistics and probability (3000)
- Organic chemistry (3700)
- Polymer chemistry (3750)
- Geography (4100, 4150 and 4704)
- Remote sensing (4102)
- Plant ecology (4707)
- Wildlife management (4711)
- Plant-animal interaction (4712)
- Chemical ecology (4713)
- Soil sciences (4800)
- Plant and tree biology (4900)
- Biochemistry (5400)

- Ensure that you do not exceed your institution's allocation:

  o **For NSERC awards:** Applications from Indigenous and Black student researchers should **not** be counted as part of your institution's allocation.

  o **For CIHR and SSHRC awards:** Presently, USRAs are exclusively for Black student researchers.

- Substitutions for ineligible or rejected applications are not permitted. If any applications have to be withdrawn after they have been submitted, substitutes will not be accepted for the same term. Additions to the list will not be permitted after the deadline date.

- Inform all applicants of the outcome of the institution's internal selection process (including those on the B and C lists).

Note: Students will start working on their USRA projects before awards can be confirmed by the agencies. Institutions must start payments to students to whom they have offered positions without waiting for approval of the awards from the agencies. Institutions must also continue to pay any students whose applications are rejected by the agencies for the remainder of the work term.

6.   Role of the agencies in administering the USRA program

6.1 Before receipt of applications

NSERC, on behalf of the three agencies, must:

- Reply to inquiries regarding the eligibility of the applicant and proposed research
- Evaluate requests to pre-approve work terms shorter than 14 weeks
- Respond to inquiries regarding other program matters

6.2 After receipt of applications

NSERC, on behalf of the three agencies, will:

- Verify that applications meet all program requirements, particularly that the student and research proposal are eligible and the transcript is correct
- Verify that the *Recommended USRA applications* form list matches the applications received through the online system
- Verify that the number of applications received does not exceed the allocation
- Request any missing information
- Notify USRA LOs of any rejected applications (replacements for rejected applications will **not** be accepted in the same term)
- Notify USRA LOs of any applications selected for the CFS Workforce Diversity undergraduate supplement
- Post the *Confirmation of Payments* forms for NSERC on GSAP
- Receive final *Confirmation of Payments* forms from institutions (NSERC and SSHRC only)

Each agency, individually, must:

- Approve applications
- Send award letters directly to recipients (midway through their award)
- Issue payments to institutions
- Post Confirmation of Payments forms (SSHRC only) (CIHR does not require these)
- Receive Confirmation of Payments from institutions (SSHRC)
- Respond to post-award inquiries

7.   General guidelines for verifying USRA applications

7.1 Supervisor's rights and responsibilities
Supervisors must ensure that students are properly supervised at all times (especially during field work) and appropriately trained and mentored in research techniques and safety methods. Supervisors also

have the right to set working hours and assign tasks.

7.2 Changing supervisors
Award recipients may change supervisors at the discretion of the institution before the award starts. After it has started, the award recipient is expected to stay with that supervisor to ensure continuity of training.

7.3 Co-supervision
The agencies allow USRA recipients to work under the supervision of two people, as long as they are working on a research project that allows them to be exposed to all aspects of the research process. One supervisor must be designated as the official supervisor, and that person should complete Part II of form 202.

7.4 Use of funds
USRA recipients must not be expected to contribute to the costs of research (such as equipment and supplies or travel) from their award. In addition, they are not required to be registered during the work term.

7.5 Working hours of USRA recipients
The agencies expect USRA recipients to work approximately the same hours on average and have the same working conditions as institution employees, within the limitations of the type of research they are doing, and in consultation with their supervisor. If staff at the institution in that department work 40-hour weeks on average, then the USRA recipient should too. The standard work week is 35 hours or more.

7.6 Other sources of income
The agencies do not place restrictions on outside sources of funding or employment that award recipients may have while holding awards, provided the following regulations are adhered to:
- When considering other sources of income, all institutional regulations must be followed
- USRA recipients must devote full-time hours to their USRA research
    - Full-time hours may vary depending on the institution at which award recipients are completing their award

7.7 Sick leave and/or vacation
The USRA program makes no provision for sick or vacation leave, or for other types of interruptions. Should a USRA be interrupted or terminated early for any reason, the agencies must be informed immediately, and the *Confirmation of Payments* form must be completed. Awards may not be deferred.

8.   Financial matters

8.1 Value of the award
USRAs have a value of $6,000, and the host institution is required to supplement the award. The activities conducted during the tenure of a USRA are governed by the agreements, including employment agreements (if applicable), that award holders have with host institutions and the relevant terms and conditions of awards.

Each agency's contribution is paid directly to the host institution and is included in the amount that the USRA recipient receives.

8.2 Transfer of funds
For summer awards, payments will be issued before the end of July. For fall or winter awards, payments are normally issued within four to six weeks after the submission deadline for the term.

8.3 Reconciliation of funds
After receiving the *Confirmation of Payments* form, each agency's Finance and Awards Administration division will review it, make the necessary calculations, and, if applicable, contact the institution for reimbursement of any portions of awards not used by USRA recipients.

9. Privacy issues

The information that institutions and applicants are asked to provide is collected under the authority of the *Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Act*, the *Canadian Institutes of Health Research Act*, and the *Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Act*. Information about applications received by NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC is stored in accordance with the relevant personal information banks described in each agency's Info Source chapters. Additional details concerning the use, protection and disclosure of this information can be found on NSERC's Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) page, CIHR's ATIP page, and SSHRC's ATIP page.

Institutions must use the information provided by the applicant only to help complete the institution's evaluation of the application and not for any other purpose.

NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC are obliged by the *Privacy Act* to protect the personal information of applicants associated with applications to their programs. NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC expect institutions to store such information in a secure manner, not to use or disclose it for any other purpose, and to destroy—in a secure manner within a short period after it is no longer required—any information that has not been forwarded to the agencies. All personal notes and documents must also be securely destroyed at the conclusion of the review process. All applications and documentation provided to members electronically must be deleted.

10. The agencies' obligations under the *Official Languages Act*

Under the *Official Languages Act*, federal institutions, including NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC, must ensure respect for the rights of individual Canadians to receive services from federal institutions and organizations that provide services on their behalf, in the official language of their choice.

NSERC, CIHR and SSHRC are committed to promoting equitable access by:

- ensuring that its funding opportunities enable the participation of both official language communities
- providing applicants with equitable access to information and resources in the official language of their choice
- monitoring and promoting the participation of Official Language Minority Institutions, researchers and students in its programs

As partners in co-delivering the agencies' funding opportunities, institutions must respect the act in when managing their internal selection processes. Therefore, applicants are able to submit their applications in the official language of their choice. Institutions must have mechanisms in place to review both English and French applications.

11. Contact information

USRA program	usra-brpc@nserc-crsng.gc.ca
USRA financial matters	scholarshipsadministration@nserc-crsng.gc.ca
Online services helpdesk	webapp@nserc-crsng.gc.ca
Post awards inquiries	
CIHR	support-soutien@cihr-irsc.gc.ca
SSHRC	fellowships@sshrc-crsh.gc.ca

12. Appendix: Selection criteria and indicators for USRA applications

The following table contains suggestions for evaluating the 3 selection criteria. Institutions are encouraged to develop their own evaluation methods.

Selection criteria	Indicators and evidence
Academic excellence	As demonstrated by past academic results, transcripts, awards and distinctions Indicators of academic excellence: • academic record • scholarships and awards held • duration of previous/current studies • type of program and courses pursued • course load • relative standing in program (if available) Members should consider an applicant's entire academic record when assessing academic excellence. Members should favourably consider situations where an applicant has demonstrated an improving trend.
Research potential	As demonstrated by the applicant's research history and their interest in discovery. Along with form 202, many institutions require students to submit additional material to support this selection criterion. Examples include: • a resume/CV • a statement of interest outlining the student's research interests and goals • a letter of support from the proposed supervisor Institutions may also conduct interviews with applicants. Indicators of research potential include: • academic training • previous research/work experience (can include co-op terms) (e.g., previous USRAs held) • relevance of work experience and academic training to field of proposed research • judgment and ability to think critically • ability to apply skills and knowledge • enthusiasm for research, relevant community involvement, and outreach • initiative and autonomy • research experience and achievements that could reasonably be expected from someone with the applicant's academic background
Expected quality of the training and mentorship to be received	As demonstrated by the proposed supervisor's plan for the student described in form 202 Part II. Indicators of expected quality of the training and mentorship to be received include: • exposure to a research team • training in research techniques and skills • expected contributions to research output • the proposed supervisor's supervisory experience