

Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA) 2026 Competition Overview

TMU Quota

- 36 NSERC USRAs (+ unlimited awards for Indigenous student researchers)
- +4 NSERC, 4 SSHRC and 1 CIHR USRAs exclusively for Black student researchers.

Award Details

- \$6,000 from the agency plus the supervisor's contribution (top-up)
- The duration of the award is 14–16 weeks on a full-time basis

Application Deadline

Consult your faculty for deadlines.

Student Eligibility

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 application deadline.
- Be registered in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible university as of the application deadline.
- Have obtained a cumulative GPA equivalent to a B (3.0 at TMU) over the previous years of study.
- Have completed all the course requirements of at least your bachelor's degree's first year of university study (two academic terms).*
- Be engaged on a full-time basis in research and development activities in your proposed field of research during the tenure of the award.

You may hold a maximum of three (3) USRAs throughout your (undergraduate) university career.

*Preference will be given to students entering their third and fourth years of study.

Note: you are ineligible if you are either:

- Currently enrolled in an undergraduate professional degree program in the health sciences (e.g., MD, DDS, BScN) (does not apply to CIHR USRAs).
- Currently registered or have been previously registered, at any time, in a graduate program in the same field of study.

For CIHR and SSHRC: At present, CIHR and SSHRC USRAs are exclusively for Black student researchers. To be eligible to apply for these awards, you must self-identify as Black by checking the relevant box within application Form 202. Note: this self-identification information will be shared with the institution to which you are applying and, if awarded, publicly.

Application Process

Applications are to be submitted via Google Forms. See Application Instructions below.

Faculty Contact

Please email your faculty contact and include “USRA Program” in the subject line:

- Faculty of Arts: Valerie Deacon (valerie.deacon@torontomu.ca)
- The Creative School: Nirva Saatjian (nirva.saatjian@torontomu.ca)
- Faculty of Community Services: Sarah Bukhari (sarah.bukhari@torontomu.ca)
- Faculty of Engineering and Architectural Science: Stephen Waldman (swaldman@torontomu.ca)
- Faculty of Science: Science Research and Administration Office (srio@torontomu.ca)
- Ted Rogers School of Management: Maya Paidi (mpaidi@torontomu.ca)

Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA) 2026 Competition Application Guidelines

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

Information about the awards is available at the [NSERC USRA website](#).

Application Deadline

Consult your faculty for deadlines.

Student Eligibility

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 TMU application deadline date.
- Be registered and in at least one of the two terms immediately before holding the award in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible university as of the TMU application deadline.
- Have obtained a cumulative GPA equivalent to at least a B over the previous years of study.
- Have completed all the course requirements of at least your bachelor's degree's first year of university study (two academic terms). Preference will be given to students entering their third and fourth years of study.
- Be employed on a full-time basis in eligible research and development activities in your proposed field of research during the tenure of the award.
- At present, CIHR and SSHRC USRAs are exclusively for Black student researchers. To be eligible to apply for these awards, you must self-identify as Black by checking the relevant box within the application Form 202. Note that this self-identification information will be shared with the institution to which you are applying and, if awarded, publicly.

You may hold a maximum of three USRAs throughout your (undergraduate) university career.

You are ineligible if you are either:

- Currently enrolled in an undergraduate professional degree program in the health sciences (e.g., MD, DDS, BScN). This does not apply to CIHR USRAs.
- Currently registered or previously registered, at any time, in a graduate program in the same field of study.

Eligibility of Proposed Supervisors

- 1) **Supervisor eligibility:** Supervisors no longer need to hold an active grant but must be authorized by their university to independently supervise students. (TMU eligibility: TFA members only).
- 2) **For NSERC only:** The proposed research project must clearly lie within the natural sciences and/or engineering (NSE). It is not necessary for the proposed supervisor's research program to be exclusively within the NSE. The university will evaluate the suitability of the research project as part of the award selection process. Projects deemed outside of the NSE will be deemed ineligible, and the application will be withdrawn from the competition.

Application Instructions

- 1) TMU Google Forms application by faculty deadline:
 - a. Find and secure an eligible supervisor/faculty member working in the research area you want to explore. Discuss the proposed project with them and secure their agreement to sponsor your application.
 - b. Complete and submit the Google Forms application.
- 2) If selected for a USRA by the faculty, the student and supervisor will need to complete Form 202 on the NSERC On-Line Services Portal by April 17, 2026 (instructions will be provided).

Selection Criteria and Review Procedure

Applications will be reviewed/ranked using the following criteria:

- 1) **Academic excellence:** As demonstrated by past academic results, transcripts, awards and distinctions.
- 2) **Research potential:** As demonstrated by the applicant's research history, their interest in discovery and year of study.
- 3) **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.

The university will allocate a number of USRA awards to each faculty, who will recommend USRA awardees up to their allocated quota. There will be a limited waitlist.

For CIHR only: Due to the limited number of awards, these applications will be assessed and awarded at the university level using the above criteria.

Communication of Results

Faculties will notify students and supervisors of the competition results.

Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA) 2026 Competition Application Guidelines Addendum

USRA Eligibility Confirmation Form

Each applicant is asked to complete, sign and upload the provided USRA Eligibility Confirmation Form to ensure that they meet all of the eligibility requirements for the USRA program.

Student Statement

Format: one-page maximum, single-spaced, 12 pt Times New Roman, 2 cm margins all-around

Each applicant is asked to submit a one-page statement that describes their research interests, experience and how the USRA will benefit their academic/career goals.

Upload a statement that answers the following questions:

1. Explain why you want to undertake this research project and how it relates to your plans following the completion of your undergraduate degree.
2. Describe your qualifications (e.g. education, experience, leadership roles, etc.) and your research experience to date (including previous awards and scholarships; as well as your involvement in publications, posters and presentations) for this research award.
3. If you are a previous USRA Award Holder, provide a justification for why you should be considered for another USRA award.

This is to be written by the student alone, not in collaboration with your supervisor.

Note: An additional page can be added to explain exceptional circumstances that may have negatively impacted your GPA.

Transcript Requirements

All transcripts must be combined into a single PDF file.

For Toronto Metropolitan University students: Transcripts in PDF format from MyServiceHub are accepted. An official transcript may be required at a later date if you are granted the award. If you have also attended another university, please include a scanned copy of your official transcripts from that institution, including the grading system legend.

For students applying from other universities: Official, up-to-date transcripts for all university programs must be provided. Official transcripts must be scanned into a single PDF file, including the grading system legend for each institution.

The purpose of uploading the legend is to help the committees and the Agency (NSERC/CIHR/SSHRC) understand the grading system at each postsecondary institution. In this context, official transcripts are those that show the name of the institution, the program in which you are enrolled, your complete course of study, your marks and the legend explaining acronyms, etc.

To be up-to-date, transcripts must show the term before the application was prepared. For example, if you applied to your university USRA competition in February, the transcript must show the previous fall (September to December) term's marks.