2025 Competition

Doing Research as a Summer Job

Department of Psychology & Neuroscience Guidelines for Undergraduate Summer Research Awards

Last updated: Oct 25, 2024

Overview

Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRAs) provide students with the opportunity to do research as a summer job. These awards aim to cultivate your passion and foster the growth of your potential for a career in research. Meant to inspire undergraduates to pursue graduate studies, these awards offer valuable research experience that complements studies in an academic setting.

Citizenship requirements

- The majority of USRAs are supported by funds from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and therefore require that award-holders be Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada.
- That said, however, there are a *few* USRAs that otherwise follow the Canadian granting agency regulations but that can be held by international students. For this reason, we encourage *all* students who meet the following eligibility requirements to apply.

Student eligibility for research in Psychology & Neuroscience

To be eligible to apply to the Department of Psychology & Neuroscience for an award, you must:

- Have a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher by the end of the Fall term in this academic year
- Be registered as a full-time student in Psychology & Neuroscience at Dalhousie University in both the Fall and Winter terms of this academic year
    - Psychology and Neuroscience *minors* are not eligible to apply
    - Majors from other departments who want to do research in Psychology & Neuroscience should inquire whether their home department has an award allocation and, if so, whether they allow students to hold such an award outside of that home department; they are not eligible to apply through Psychology & Neuroscience even if their preferred supervisor is in our department
- Currently be in your 2nd year or higher, with more than 54 credit hours earned for your current degree by the end of the Winter term in this academic year
    - Credit hours are shown on your Dalhousie grade record (transcript)
        - In general: each one-semester course with a passing grade earns 3.0 credit hours and each full-year course with a passing grade earns 6.0 credit hours
- Not have held three previous Summer Research Awards (3 is the max. allowed)
- Be available for full-time employment in research activities for 16 weeks between May and August of the award year
    - In most cases, research requires that a student be available for **in-person** for the full duration of the award. In rare instances, potential supervisors *might* be able to support some hybrid or remote work. Accordingly, the application will query your in-person availability and this information will be taken into account when attempting to find a faculty match.
        - **IMPORTANT:** Do *not* indicate that you are available for 16 weeks of in-person work with the hope of obtaining remote/hybrid options after taking up an award:

The need for such arrangements must be indicated in the application and then discussed with and accepted by the supervisor *prior* to taking up an award.

To see all granting agency rules and eligibility requirements please see: https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/students-etudiants/ug-pc/usra-brpc_eng.asp

Value and duration

- The majority of USRAs are funded by granting agency awards in the amount $6,000 to support student research for a 16-week duration. The research supervisor is required to top-up this award in compliance with provincial employment standards (approx. $3,000)

How to apply

- All applications are made online using a centralized portal established by the Faculty of Science
  - Because this portal is used for all Faculty of Science applications, it is critical that you read all instructions/questions *very* carefully
    - **IMPORTANT:** Pay particular attention to instructions for file naming conventions. We can't process your application if it is directed to the wrong department or if we can't find your grade record because you failed to heed the instruction for naming!!
- As part of the application, you will need to confirm that you have completed the Dal census (the link will be provided in the application)
  - **IMPORTANT**: There are some sources of funding that are available only to **Black** and **Indigenous** scholars; eligibility requires that students self-identify on the census *and* give permission to share that information.
- Students who are applying to do research in the Department of **Psychology & Neuroscience** are NOT required to find, identify, or secure the commitment of a willing faculty supervisor before applying
  - **In our department *only*, the onus is no longer on students to find a willing supervisor before applying!** All eligible students are encouraged to apply.
    - The application form will ask you to rank-order your preferred areas of research.
      - You will be welcome to name a potential supervisor (or supervisors) with whom you are particularly interested in working, but doing so is neither required nor expected.

    NOTE: If you would like to do research in a department *other* than Psychology and Neuroscience, you *will* be required to find a willing supervisor before applying and should follow the instructions for the department in which you would like to work

- Do NOT apply until your fall term grades have been recorded on your transcript (grade record)
- All applications are due by the time the portal closes on ==**January 24 2025**==

What happens then?

- After the application portal closes, our department attempt to match students to potential supervisors. Matching will take into account student academic performance, but final selections will not be based on academic performance alone.

- o **IMPORTANT:** Please be aware that there will be many more applicants than there are available awards (e.g., last year there were >170 applications for a total of ~10 awards): There are no qualities of a student applicant that guarantee an award (not even a perfect GPA!).
- The department will attempt to match applicants to potential supervisors, taking into account the student's stated research preferences, supervisor availability and funding capacity, appropriateness of the student's background preparation for the research project, total number of awards available, etc.
  - o After the application link closes, you *may* be contacted by potential supervisors or members of the awards committee if more information is needed from you to facilitate a match. Accordingly, **please keep a close eye on your email** in the first couple weeks after the application portal closes so that you can respond promptly to any inquiries.
- The names of top-ranked students and their matched supervisors will be sent to the Faculty of Science
- The Faculty of Science will contact students who are granted an award with a cc to the matched supervisor
  - o Awardees will be given the opportunity to accept/reject the offered award and will receive instructions for submitting any additional documentation that is required

Further information

- To complete the application, have your grade record handy. You will need to know:
  - o Your cumulative GPA at the end of this Fall term
  - o Your cumulative GPA for courses that you've taken at other universities (but only if they will be counted towards your current degree program)
  - o The total number of course credit hours that you will earn by the end of the Winter term this academic year
  - o The number of weeks (0-16) you will be available for **in-person** work between May and August
- If you still have critical questions that have not been addressed after reading carefully through these instructions and through the information available on the NSERC USRA website, or that are unclear on the application form, you may email the departmental awards coordinator at pnawards@dal.ca
  - o **Be sure to include your full name and Banner ID in your email**
  - o Be mindful that this email address is monitored by a single faculty member and there is a very large pool of potential applications to these awards — please attempt to find the answers you need to the best of your ability *before* sending an email.
  - o For the sake of expediency please dispense with needless preamble and get directly to your question(s): Be clear and concise while providing all the information that will be needed to understand your question

Please do not email the department to inquire about receipt of your application or to inquire about the status of your application. You will receive an email from the department if we require more information from you and the Faculty of Science will ultimately send you an email to let you know the outcome of your application. Award announcements are usually made no later than the end of March.