

# 2020/2021 Social Sciences Undergraduate Student Research Award (USRA) - Information for Faculty

McMaster Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRAs) are supported by the Office of the Vice-President, Research and the Faculty of Social Sciences.

The USRAs are intended to cultivate and support research partnerships between undergraduate students and faculty members. These Awards provide undergraduate Social Sciences students with an opportunity to complete research-based activity either during the Fall-Winter academic year, or during the Summer Term. The intent is that the proposed research deepens the student's learning about a substantive area and enhances the student's research skills.

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## USRA Competitions

Fall:

There are 3 awards of \$3500 available to cover part-time, research-based activity during the academic year (November – March). The Fall USRA will take place over 20 weeks where students are expected to complete 12 hours of work per week.

*Application deadline: October 6th, 2020 before 4:00pm*

Summer:

There are 12 awards of \$7500 available to cover full-time, research-based activity during the Summer Term (May – August). The Summer USRA will take place over 15 weeks where students are expected to complete 35 hours of work per week.

*Application deadline: January 21, 2021 before 4:00pm*

Payment:

The USRA is paid to students in bi-weekly installments over the duration of the research term.

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Students may apply to both competitions within the same academic year. If the student is successful in their Fall USRA application, a proposal for the Summer USRA must be for a different project.

Successful candidates must submit a reflection paper and participate in a poster session to recognize their achievements and to help to promote the opportunity to other students.

## Role of Faculty Members

Faculty members can assist students by:

- identifying potential applicants and supporting the applicant's proposed research;
- attending the USRA Poster Session where past award recipients showcase their work;
- proposing opportunities related to their own research to a potential applicant; and/or,
- agreeing to supervise a USRA.

## Supervising a USRA Student

The USRA supervisor can be a faculty member in the Social Sciences or from another Faculty within McMaster. Eligible supervisors include: full-time faculty members who are tenure-track, tenured, teaching-track, or permanent teaching professors. Other faculty that are eligible include professors emeriti, adjunct professors, and associate faculty members. CLA professors are able to supervise students provided their employment contract does not end throughout the duration of the award.

Sessional instructors and postdoctoral fellows are not eligible to supervise USRA students; clinical and/or visiting faculty from areas outside the Social Sciences are also typically not eligible. Questions related to supervision of the USRA can be directed to Mark Busser (see contact information below).

## Student Eligibility

To apply, students must:

- be a full-time undergraduate student enrolled in a degree program within the Faculty of Social Sciences;
- be eligible to work in Canada; and,
- have received fewer than two (2) USRAs to this point in their academic studies at McMaster.

Graduating students are eligible to apply for a USRA.

Students who are registered in a Combined Honours degree program in Humanities and Social Sciences will apply to the Faculty in which their supervisor resides. Students registered in the Arts and Science Program are not eligible to apply for the Social Sciences USRA.

## Application Process

Supervisors must sign the student's application. By signing this form, supervisors agree that they have discussed the proposed project with the student (including ethical implications), are supportive of the project plan, and agree to supervise the student in completing the proposed research activities.

Applications are to be submitted electronically as per the instructions listed on the application form, located on the [student USRA webpage](#). Students should not include additional information (e.g. wording, photos, etc.) exceeding the word limit listed as these will be removed prior to the review process.

Late or incomplete proposals will not be considered. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that applications are complete and that all information is accurate.

## Ethics Approval

Projects requiring the submission of an ethics application for approval are discouraged for the Fall USRA competition due to the time required to obtain the appropriate clearance and its impact on the research process.

Ethics approval is not needed to submit an application. However, if an award is offered and ethics approval is required, a copy of the certificate indicating this approval must normally be produced before the award is granted. Students are encouraged connect with the [McMaster Research Ethics Secretariat](#) while completing their proposal.

## Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated on the overall project description, articulation of potential relevance of the research to a broader audience, and clearly articulated responses to the following criteria.

### Learning Objectives

- What are your learning objectives for your research project?
- What strategies will you undertake to achieve your learning objectives?
- How will the successful completion of your objectives be assessed?  
(Refer to the Guide to Creating Learning Plans and Learning Objectives found on the [student USRA webpage](#)).

### Role in the Research

- What is your overall role in the research project?
- What are your specific tasks in the research project?
- What methods will you use to conduct your research project?
- If complementing or extending another project, what new and distinct learning goals differentiate this project?

### Connection to Academics

- What is the connection between your research and your academic studies within the Social Sciences?

### Overall Quality of the Research Plan

- Reviewers will also rate the overall feasibility and quality of the proposal.

### Context of Research

- What is the broader relevance of your research project?

### Academic Record

- Normally students should have a Term and Cumulative GPA of at least 8.0.

## COVID-19 and Travel Limitations

For the 2020-2021 round, the Social Sciences USRA is unable to support projects involving international travel, or research methods that cannot safely be conducted in keeping with McMaster's policies and practices surrounding COVID-19. For details on McMaster's policies related to the novel coronavirus, please see the [travel information page](#) on [McMaster's COVID-19 web portal](#).

## Selection Process

USRA applications are reviewed by a committee of faculty using the USRA rating form, located on the [USRA webpage for students](#). Students will be notified of their award status via email, generally within two weeks of the application deadline date for the Fall USRA and within four weeks for the Summer USRA.

## Further information

Please contact Mark Busser, Program and Research Coordinator  
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