

OVERVIEW

The Western Undergraduate Summer Research Internships (USRIs) provide undergraduate students with engaged research experiences under the mentorship of a faculty member and are intended to stimulate undergraduate students' interest in research through direct exposure and hands-on experiences conducting research. Through participation in this program, students gain valuable and high-impact research, technical and professional skills that will help support academic and career development towards their future professional goals. Faculty mentors benefit from meaningful engagement, assistance towards their research program and can use the opportunity to further a diverse highly qualified personnel (HQP) training environment.

BACKGROUND

The USRI program was originally launched in 2020 as a pilot program, expanded to include professional development opportunities in summer 2021. Following on the overwhelming success of the program, Western Research, in partnership with Student Experience and Western Libraries, is thrilled to continue offering a suite of professional development opportunities and support. The professional development opportunities, which will complement the engaged research learning project, include sessions on scholarly writing, literature searches/reviews, citation management, GIS tools, knowledge exchange, resumes and CVs, research posters, equity, diversity, inclusion and decolonization (EDI-D) and much more. At the end of the summer, students will have the opportunity to share their research with the broader community during a virtual exhibition event.

VALUE AND DURATION OF AWARD

USRIs are research awards valued at a minimum of \$9,268 for a 16-week period through May to August 2024. Western will contribute \$7,414 toward each internship, with a required minimum match of \$1,854 from other sources (e.g., supervisor, department, Institute, and/or Faculty).

Students are only allowed to hold one USRI for the summer and the USRI should not be held concurrently with another paid student position. Faculty supervisors are responsible for communicating clear expectations and guidance, including anticipated outcomes, deliverables, and outlining hours per week to be agreed upon in the student's individualized learning plan. Hours should be consistent with the Supervisor's research group members and allow for the successful completion of research objectives.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

A broad and collaborative effort across several institutional portfolios, this program seeks to provide undergraduate students with first-hand experience in undertaking an exciting research project under the direction of a qualified faculty mentor/supervisor.

Program Outcomes

- Provide a comprehensive and supported undergraduate student research experience
- Increase undergraduate student confidence in research fields of interest
- Pave the way to graduate study and future research careers
- Provide opportunities for undergraduate students to expand their networks, enhance their student experience, and connect with other student researchers and members of the Western research community
- Help defray the costs in supporting undergraduate student research work
- Advance research, scholarship and creativity across Western

Student Objectives:

- Co-develop and execute a short-term research project, to be completed in the 16-week program time frame under the mentorship of a faculty member.
- Co-develop a learning and development plan with a faculty mentor based on institutional and individual needs.
- In consultation with their faculty supervisor, will develop and produce a multimodal research output oriented to lay audiences. They can select the most appropriate format for their research output based on their summer research project.
 - Options include but are not limited to infographic, research poster or other visual representation, blog, podcast, short video etc. Examples of previous research outputs can be viewed in Scholarship@Western:
 - 2021: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/usri/usri2021/researchoutputshowcase/>
 - 2022: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/usri/usri2022/ReOS/>
 - Research outputs will be shared during the end of summer virtual exhibition event (*more details will be shared*).
 - Research outputs can be based on incomplete projects and are intended to provide students an opportunity to begin to think about how to best share their work and learnings to larger audiences.



- Participate in a minimum of four professional development workshops that will aid in the creation of their research output and will support the summer research experience. This will be based on individual learning plans co-developed with their supervisors.
- Participate in student reflection opportunities, end of program surveys including a program evaluation and demographic survey; note that this is a condition of funding.
- Learn about open access and Western's repository through storage of a copy of the research output in Western's institutional repository Scholarship@Western.

Faculty Mentor Objectives:

- Participate in a summer research program providing guidance and mentorship for an undergraduate student that will further enhance research goals and the student's research and professional skills.
- Co-develop a learning and development plan geared towards the needs of your research program and your USRI fellow, with clear expectations to ensure an equitable working environment.
- Participate in at least one EDI-D workshop shared as a part of the Professional Development sessions.
- Support the development of the research output (required deliverable of USRI students) throughout the summer.
- Attendance at the virtual exhibition is highly encouraged and welcomed.
- Participate in end of program surveys including a program evaluation and demographic survey; note that this is a condition of funding.

Program Administration

Western Research strongly encourages Faculties to consider the diversity of their awardees and ensure equitable opportunities for students from equity deserving groups, such as but not limited to Black, Indigenous, students of color, students with disabilities, students who self-identify as LGBTQ2S+, immigrants and newcomers, and women as part of the ongoing commitment Western has made for EDI-D. Any Faculties who wish for guidance and/or support on embedding EDI-D considerations as part of their recruitment and adjudication activities may reach out to Western Research: **Alexandra Levine – Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Decolonization Research Officer**. alevin23@uwo.ca

Faculties will be provided:

- Excel spreadsheet template to track faculty supervisor and student matches.
- Administrative instructions for paying students and high-level overview of the program
- Letter of offer template
- A learning and development plan template to be distributed to supervisors and successful USRI students
- Professional development options for students through the summer
- Link to Scholarship@Western USRI Program space where a copy of research outputs will be stored: <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/usri/>
- Link to a designated OWL space for USRI students, supervisors, and administrators to foster community and information sharing

Faculties are responsible for program administration. Each faculty will receive an allocation of USRIs based on undergraduate enrolment and central matching funds will be provided to cover this number of USRIs for each faculty. Solicitation, review, and approval of faculty USRI proposals, and matching of students to approved internships will happen at the faculty or department level. Faculties are responsible for identifying and where necessary, collecting matching funds. Western Research will transfer to the faculties at the end of the program the central contribution to internships (details below in Administrative Details).

The allocation for each Faculty can be used to support undergraduate students from another Faculty (cross-faculty applications). Any cross-faculty USRIs awarded will count as part of the existing allocation for the home faculty of the supervisor.

With the increase in award stipend and associated top up requirement, Faculty mentors who wish to participate in the USRI Program but who encounter challenges in meeting the required \$1,854 in matching funds are encouraged to reach out to department and/or faculty sources for supplementary funding. If department and faculty sources have been exhausted, ADRs (or designate) can submit a combined request to Western Research for financial support. Western Research has set aside limited funding for faculty mentors who have demonstrated financial need. Up to a maximum of \$1,500 can be requested from Western Research to help defray costs. Please note that priority will be given to requests from equity-deserving scholars.

Contact

The Western Research contact for this program: Internal Grants team (intgrant@uwo.ca).



Key Dates

Early 2024	Faculties to communicate and launch the USRI program
By March 11, 2024:	Faculties can submit a request for additional matching support for equity-deserving scholars or students. Consolidated requests must come from the ADR (or delegate) via this submission form here .
By March 25, 2024:	Faculties provide final USRI list to Western Research of supervisor/student pairings. NOTE: Western Research and Human Resources have developed a simplified process to have the USRI students entered into the HR system. <i>You will not be required to complete a SAN for each student but instead are required to accurately complete all information listed on the provided excel tracking spreadsheet.</i>
May 1, 2024:	Earliest start date of the USRI program
Monthly:	Faculties provide updated list of interns if they leave the program.
August:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Summer Exhibition • Deadline for Professional Development session credits towards USRI certificate • Deadline for student and supervisor program evaluation and demographic survey submission
August 31, 2024:	Latest possible end date of the 16-week internship.
End of September	Confirmed spreadsheet for students who completed Western USRI program sent to intgrant@uwo.ca .

Eligibility

Supervisor eligibility:

- 1) The lead supervisor must hold a research-eligible appointment at Western. Subject to approval at the faculty level, co-supervision is acceptable under this program, and co-supervisors do not need to hold a research-eligible appointment at Western.
- 2) Participation in program evaluation and demographic survey—at the end of the summer is a condition of funding.
- 3) Participation in at least one EDI-D workshop presented as a part of the Professional Development sessions is strongly recommended.
- 4) Participation in end-of-summer virtual exhibition event is encouraged and welcomed.

Student eligibility:

- 1) Faculties are strongly encouraged to broadly advertise USRI positions within and outside of their faculty and to give preference in their adjudication of applications to students from equity deserving groups, economically disadvantaged and/or first-generation students. Support for embedding these considerations is available from Western Research.
- 2) Students must have been enrolled at Western in an undergraduate program in Winter 2024 and should be planning to attend Western in Fall 2024. Faculties are encouraged to give preference to students completing 3rd year and/or returning students, but final decisions about internships are up to the Faculty.
- 3) Students must be available to participate in research activity as described in the proposal for 16 weeks between May 1 and August 31, 2024; specific dates of research engagement to be determined collaboratively with the faculty supervisor through the individual learning plan.
- 4) Students will work with a faculty supervisor to co-create a research project. The hours per week devoted to this work is based on scholarly outcomes and should allow for the successful delivery of research objectives. Vacation and sick days are not built into the internship and should be discussed with the respective supervisors.
- 5) Participation in program evaluation and demographic survey is a condition of funding.
- 6) Participation in program objectives including attending/viewing four Professional Development sessions, completing a research output, and attendance of the end of summer research showcase is also a condition of the funding and for students to receive Co-curricular credit on their transcript.

Application for USRI:

- 1) All research proposals involving human research ethics and/or animals must be approved by the appropriate [Western certification committee](#). It is the faculty supervisor's responsibility to ensure students are noted on applicable approved protocols and any disclosure of research output is within the bounds of their approved ethics.
- 2) Applications must include:
 - a. Supervisor name and names of co-supervisor (if applicable)
 - b. Identification of the source and amount of the matching component/top up (minimum \$1,854)
 - c. 250-word research activity plan with associated timelines.

Process

- 1) USRI proposals are submitted by faculty members to their home faculty per faculty-specific application guidelines.
- 2) Home faculties will review and approve applications.
- 3) Student interns are identified (process to be determined by the supervisor, department and faculty) to fill each approved USRI.
- 4) Faculty provides details of USRIs to Western Research (see details below).
- 5) Faculty mentors are accountable for ensuring all research activities covered under this award and carried-out in association with Western University fully abide by research ethics requirements recognized by Western. When in doubt, academic mentors and students are encouraged to contact [Human Research Ethics](#) at Western University for guidance and advice on what requirements (if any) apply.

Administrative Details

- 1) Allocated USRIs
 - a. Faculties solicit, review, and approve proposals from supervisors. All approved proposals must meet eligibility requirements for supervisors and proposals.
 - b. Faculties can determine their own process for adjudication and application intake.
- 2) If Faculties cannot fill their allocation of USRIs, please notify the Internal Grants team (intgrant@uwo.ca) immediately so that Western Research can offer available spots to other Faculties.
- 3) Faculties should notify successful students and supervisors before the beginning of May.
- 4) A template letter of offer has been provided.
 - a. Due to the volume of students, they will be awarded their stipend through Western's HR payroll system with details provided in the offer letter.
 - b. Western Research will communicate the information for awarded USRIs to Western HR. Student information will be uploaded to the HR system by May 1st, provided faculty supply information by internal deadlines.
- 5) It is highly recommended that Faculties supply one central speed code to pay students for the summer. Faculties will be reimbursed the base amount (\$7,414 x # of students) and can determine how to collect the top up (minimum \$1,8534) from their researchers and departments. Faculties may decide to provide the top-up themselves.



- 6) Upon completion of the application process, faculties will submit to the Internal Grants team (intgrant@uwo.ca) an excel file which will include details of successful awards.
 - a. Please send finalized information via the supplied Excel spreadsheet in batches as students are confirmed leading up to the March 25th, 2024 deadline.
 - b. This will ensure HR can effectively get students into the system and set up prior to the May 1st start. Please review the information in the tracking sheet for accuracy as some changes have been made in lieu of a staff appointment notice (SAN) to be created for each student.

- 7) Faculties will be required to:
 - a. Track the number of applications received.
 - b. Confirm with Internal Grants each month to indicate any discontinued internships (these will not continue to receive payment). Please notify HR to stop payment by completing a termination notice.

- 8) In the Fall, Western Research will transfer to the speed code provided for payment the amount of \$7,414 for each approved and completed internship. In those cases where internships are *not* completed, \$1,854 will be transferred for each month of internship fully completed and paid (e.g., if the intern completes and is paid for only 3 months of internship, the transfer will be \$5,560.50).

Professional Development for Students and Supervisors

A template for a learning and development plan will be provided by Western Research to be distributed to successful USRIs and their supervisors. Students will be expected to attend/view a minimum of four Professional Development sessions and/or workshops throughout the summer from the suite of offerings to be posted on the USRI 2024 OWL course. Workshops should complement their learning plan and contribute towards the successful completion of their research output.

A workshop focused on EDI-D will be available for supervisors to share experiences and develop strategies on how to implement the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion or decolonization into their supervision practices with diverse students. Workshop details will be finalized and provided by the end of April on Western Research's website. (Suggestions for workshops are welcome, particularly discipline-specific topics):

<https://www.uwo.ca/research/funding/students/usri.html>

FAQ:**1) I have a student at another institution who would like to work with me this summer, is this student eligible to apply?**

USRIs are reserved for students registered in an undergraduate program at Western in 2024. Preference should be given to students who are planning to return to Western in the Fall 2024 semester whether as an undergraduate student or graduate student.

2) I have a 4th year student who would like to apply for this opportunity, would they be eligible?

This will be up to the discretion of the specific Faculty, but preference should be given to students who are expected to enroll in the Fall 2024 semester.

3) Will students be taxed on this funding?

The award is categorized as a fellowship and will be reported to the student on a T4A tax slip (non-employment income) at the end of 2024. There are no statutory deductions required to be withheld from the payments.

4) What is an individual learning and development plan?

A template will be provided which outlines the program requirements. The learning and development plan will help guide the goals for the summer and will encourage students to think about how to integrate what they learn in the workshops into their research output. The learning plan will establish an agreement between the student and faculty supervisor concerning expectations of research activity, attendance, communication, and the final research output.

5) Can a Faculty mentor oversee more than one USRI award?

Yes, a supervisor can oversee more than one student or USRI project during the summer program. The final decision will be up to the discretion of the home Faculty.

6) Can a student hold more than one USRI award?

An undergraduate student can only hold one USRI award during the summer. However, the program welcomes returning students who participated in previous summers, provided they are registering in the Fall 2024 term.

7) As a supervisor, do I have to attend the EDI-D workshop?

The EDI-D workshops are not mandatory but given the importance of EDI-D among research funders and the critical contribution to research creativity and excellence, participation is strongly encouraged.

8) I supervisor other undergraduate students who are not USRI Fellows. Are they allowed to participate in the professional development workshops?



Undergraduate students working through other summer research opportunities offered at Western are welcome to register for any USRI workshops being offered.

9) Can Faculties have more than the allocated number of USRI students?

Yes, Faculties can chose to fully fund more than the allocated number of USRI students. Please provide the names and information of those students and indicate that the central and top up funds will be coming from the faculty. We will not include these students in the reimbursement from central for the base amount (\$7414/student). These students will be able to fully participate in all of the available summer programming.