

**Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council  
Undergraduate Student Research Award**

**The Department of Biology deadline is:  
Monday, January 26, 2026 at 4:00 pm  
No late applications will be accepted**

Please email information to Beata Malczewski ([bmalcze@uwo.ca](mailto:bmalcze@uwo.ca))

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**NSERC website: [www.nserc.ca](http://www.nserc.ca)**

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**What are these awards for?**

Undergraduate Student Research Awards (USRA) are meant to stimulate your interest in research in the natural sciences and engineering. They are also meant to encourage you to undertake graduate studies and pursue a research career in these fields. If you would like to gain research work experience that complements your studies in an academic setting, these awards can provide you with financial support through your host university. NSERC encourages qualified Aboriginal students to apply for this award.

**Are you eligible for an award?**

To be eligible to apply for an award, you must:

- be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada;
- be registered, at the time you apply, in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible university; and
- have obtained, over the previous years of study, a cumulative average of 80%.

In addition...

- If you already hold a bachelor's degree and are studying toward a second bachelor's degree, you may still apply to this program.
- You may hold only one USRA per fiscal year (April 1 to March 31).
- You may hold a maximum of three USRAs throughout your university career. To hold an award, you must:
  - have completed all the course requirements of at least the first year of university study (or two academic terms) of your bachelor's degree;
  - have been registered in the term immediately before holding the award in a bachelor's degree program at an eligible university;
  - not have started a program of graduate studies in the natural sciences or engineering; and
  - be engaged on a full-time basis in research and development activities in the natural sciences or engineering during the tenure of the award.

## **Who is not eligible?**

You are not eligible for an Undergraduate Student Research Award if:

- you are currently enrolled in an undergraduate professional degree program in the health sciences (e.g., MD, DDS, BScN); or
- you hold higher degrees in the natural sciences or engineering.

## **Value of awards**

These awards have a value of \$9,856 for a full 16-week period.

Universities are required to supplement the amount of the award by at least 25 percent of its value using other sources, such as university funds, NSERC grants, or any other research funds. Universities may also provide fringe benefits.

NSERC will not reimburse the university for any period during which you worked part-time. No payment will be approved for any vacation leave you take during the tenure of the award.

## **Duration of awards**

The duration of the award is 16 consecutive weeks on a full-time basis.

You may hold an award at any time during the year as permitted by your academic program.

Tenure may start on a date acceptable to both you and your host institution.

## **How do you apply?**

To apply for these awards, you must complete an Application for an Undergraduate

Student Research Award Part I (Form 202) online at [NSERC USRA](#). Just follow the instructions and email a copy to Beata Malczewski at [bmalcze@uwo.ca](mailto:bmalcze@uwo.ca) by **Monday, January 26, 2026**.

Students complete only Part 1. Please fill out the [Access to Academic Records](#) Form and forward it to [bmalcze@uwo.ca](mailto:bmalcze@uwo.ca) and your transcripts will be emailed to you. The proposed supervisor must complete Part II of Form 202 and email a copy to [bmalcze@uwo.ca](mailto:bmalcze@uwo.ca) by **Monday, January 26, 2026 at 4:00 pm**. The whole application is to be typed.

International students do not need to complete the NSERC application form (they are ineligible), so they just complete the Faculty of Science application form [at NSERC-USRA and WSRI USRI 2026 UG Research Award Application and EDID survey \(Faculty of Science application\)](#), the Access Academic Records form at [Access Academic Records](#), and the Biology form at [Biology Student Statement Form](#)

Students from other universities, who are NOT international students, may hold an NSERC (but NOT a USRI), so they MUST apply through the NSERC form (and all the others).

[NSERC USRI Summer 2026 - Western University](#)

NSERC USRI Summer 2026 Access to Academic Record Form of Consent NSERC USRI I, give permission to the administrative personnel in the Department/Faculty of at Western

[www.uwo.ca](http://www.uwo.ca)

### **Award decisions**

Each university will inform applicants of its award decisions after it has completed its selection process.

### **Payment of awards**

NSERC will pay its contribution directly to the university. You will receive your payment from the university. The university will issue payments to you for the total value of the award in accordance with its pay procedures. It will also issue a T4 or T4A slip (Statement of Income) to you at the end of the calendar year.

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## **DEPARTMENTAL PROCEDURE**

### **STEPS IN APPLYING FOR AN NSERC UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH AWARD (USRA) IN BIOLOGY**

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#### **Details about the award can be found:**

[https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/students-étudiants/ug-pc/usra-brpc\\_eng.asp](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/students-étudiants/ug-pc/usra-brpc_eng.asp)

- 1) Find a faculty member in the Department of Biology to be your supervisor. This person no longer needs to hold an NSERC grant.

- 2) After finding a supervisor, notify Beata Malczewski ([bmalcze@uwo.ca](mailto:bmalcze@uwo.ca)) that you are applying, (**especially if you are not from Western**) then complete the application form:
  - a) Complete an 'Access to Academic Records Form of Consent' and e-mail it to Beata Malczewski ([bmalcze@uwo.ca](mailto:bmalcze@uwo.ca)) which will allow her to pull your academic transcript and e-mail it to you.
  - b) Go to the NSERC website ([http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServiceservicesEnLigne/Index\\_eng.asp](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/OnlineServiceservicesEnLigne/Index_eng.asp)) and follow the links from 'PDF Forms and Instructions'. Complete the application form online.
  - c) Go to this video for help with filling in your application (very useful for first-time applicants). [http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/VideosVideos/usra-brpct\\_eng.asp](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Students-Etudiants/VideosVideos/usra-brpct_eng.asp)
  - d) Make sure you use your UWO e-mail address.
  - e) NSERC requires students to upload their academic transcript before allowing them to print off their application, so complete step (a) as soon as possible. Once you have your academic record upload the file to NSERC.

IMPORTANT information: Please do **not** hit "submit" in the [NSERC Online System](#) until after uploading, the correct "Academic Record" - that's accurate to **Dec. 31, 2025**.

(Your name, the university's name, and the program in which you're enrolled appear. Grades up to **December 31st** of the year preceding the award are included. Western's **"Academic Record"** format meets NSERC's transcript requirements. (N.B. students can't access the Academic Record on their own; transcripts such as those printed from a student's account do not meet NSERC's requirements as there is insufficient identifying information).

If you are undertaking a USRA at Western but your **home university is different**, you must attach an official transcript from your home university to your online application, including the legend).

- 3) **Please email the copies of all parts of your application** to Beata Malczewski ([bmalcze@uwo.ca](mailto:bmalcze@uwo.ca))

**Faculty members are listed on the Biology Department website.**

**<http://www.uwo.ca/biology/people/faculty.htm>**

**For more details, including potential supervisors and research areas, please visit:**

**[Faculty Interested in Accepting Students - NSERC USRA and WSRI USRI 2026](#)**

**Note: Students can approach other Biology Faculty Members not listed below.**

**A complete list of Biology faculty members is located at:**

**<http://www.uwo.ca/biology/people/faculty.htm>** plus adjuncts at

**<https://uwo.ca/biology/people/crossappointed-adjunct-and-sessional-faculty.html>**

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**Dr. Alice Boyle**, Collip 107, [aboyle7@uwo.ca](mailto:aboyle7@uwo.ca)

**Website:** [www.aliceboyle.net](http://www.aliceboyle.net)

Project proposal: Avian ecology, including studies of Ontario's threatened grassland communities and experimental tests of responses to rainfall.

**Dr. Robert Buchkowski**, BGS 2074, Ext. 88969, [rbuchkow@uwo.ca](mailto:rbuchkow@uwo.ca)

**Website:** <https://nmuwo.wordpress.com/>

Project proposal: We work on terrestrial ecology and climate change. Ongoing projects include studying animal effects on carbon cycling, soil carbon storage, and soil biodiversity. USRA/USRI projects focused on field work (in Ontario or New Brunswick), laboratory experiments with soil and soil fauna, or computational modelling are all possible. Please reach out if you're interested or have a project in mind that we might be able to support.

**Dr. T. DeFalco**, NCB 465, Ext. 81475, [tdefalc@uwo.ca](mailto:tdefalc@uwo.ca)

**Website:** <https://scholar.google.ch/citations?hl=en&user=KIOgpxsAAAAJ>

Project proposal: Receptor kinase signalling in plant stress

We use a variety of molecular, biochemical, and genetic approaches to decipher how plants respond to environmental perturbations at the cellular level. The project will involve identifying and characterizing protein kinases and their substrates that function in receptor kinase (RK) signalling pathways.

**Dr. Vojislava Grbic**, WSC 341, Ext. 86898, [vgrbic@uwo.ca](mailto:vgrbic@uwo.ca)

Project Proposal: Are you fascinated by how tiny herbivores outsmart plants? Our lab unravels the molecular chess match between plants and the two-spotted spider mite, a globally important pest. We combine omics, molecular biology, and biochemistry to reveal how mites adapt, detoxify, and resist plant defences.

**Dr. G. Kelly**, WSC 359, Ext. 83121, [gkelly@uwo.ca](mailto:gkelly@uwo.ca)

Website: <http://www.uwo.ca/biology/directory/faculty/kelly.html>

Also, check out website: //thekellylab.weebly.com (Access via Wifi)

Project proposal: Wnt and Hedgehog signalling pathways in embryonic and cancer cells.

**Dr. S. Kohalmi**, WSC 319, Ext. 86485, [skohalmi@uwo.ca](mailto:skohalmi@uwo.ca)

Website: <http://www.uwo.ca/biology/Faculty/kohalmi/index.htm>

Project proposal: Sequence to Function: the ADT Gene Family

Then come and check out the world of Arabidopsis. Our lab is interested to understand how members of a gene family are regulated, respond to environmental stresses, differ or overlap in their function, are targeted to subcellular compartments and contribute to a functional plant. Intrigued? Ask for more information and stop by for a chat.

**Dr. K. Hill**, WSC 333, Ext. 81337, [khill22@uwo.ca](mailto:khill22@uwo.ca)

See K Hill [Google Scholar page](#) for a list of our recent publications

Project proposal: NSERC-USRA/USRI researchers in the Hill lab this summer 2026 will be engaged and wet and dry bench work aimed at the discovery/detection of mutations and epimutations that arise with early development. We will be using techniques of whole genome sequencing and deep targeted DNA sequence and methylation profiling. The dry bench work is *in silico* bioinformatics for variant discovery and characterization. The variants are point mutations and large structural deletions, duplications and insertions. Our research aims to understanding mutagenesis occurring in the context of normal mouse development and in the context of primary tumors and secondary metastases. We also design data visualization tools, statistical tools and machine learning algorithms that we will be applying in our summer research.

**Dr. N. Mhatre**, B&GS 3023, Ext. 84505, [nmhatre@uwo.ca](mailto:nmhatre@uwo.ca)

Website: [www.natashamhatre.net](http://www.natashamhatre.net)

Project proposal: Studying vibrational communication in spiders, or acoustic communication in crickets.

**Dr. Yolanda Morbey**, Collip 209, Ext. 80116, [ymorbey@uwo.ca](mailto:ymorbey@uwo.ca)  
Website: <https://www.uwo.ca/biology/faculty/morbey/>

Project proposal: In the Morbey lab, we study the movement ecology of migratory birds and fishes. In 2026, Bio 4999E projects will focus on the ecology of small-bodied fishes in Medway Creek, on Western University's main campus. The main methods will include field work to sample fish from September through November, followed by ecological modelling.

**Dr. B. Neff**, Collip 204, Ext. 82532, [bneff@uwo.ca](mailto:bneff@uwo.ca)  
Website: <http://www.uwo.ca/biology/Faculty/neff/index.htm>

Project proposal: Behavioural and Conservation of Fishes.

**Dr. M. Pyne**, B&GS 2030, Ext. TBA, [mpyne3@uwo.ca](mailto:mpyne3@uwo.ca)  
Website: <https://scholar.google.ch/citations?user=i4LlrHYAAAAJ&hl=en>

Potential project: Engineering yeast for production of dauricine, a potential plant chemotherapeutic

**Dr. A. Percival-Smith**, WSC 305, Ext. 84015, [aperciva@uwo.ca](mailto:aperciva@uwo.ca)  
Website: <http://www.uwo.ca/biology/Faculty/percivalsmith/index.htm>

Project proposal: Phenotypic non-specificity of Transcription Factor Function in Yeast.

**Dr. V. Tai**, B&GS 2028, Ext. 86209, [vtai4@uwo.ca](mailto:vtai4@uwo.ca)  
Website: <https://www.uwo.ca/biology/directory/faculty/tai.html>

Project Proposal: The research in my lab focuses on environmental microbiology and bioinformatics. Potential projects include developing molecular and bioinformatic tools to investigate phytoplankton diversity. Other projects investigate the role of horizontal gene transfer in the evolution and ecology of bacteria, and soil microbial diversity in relation to sustainable agricultural practices.

**Dr. R. Thomas**, [rthoma2@uwo.ca](mailto:rthoma2@uwo.ca)  
Website: <https://raymondthomaslipidlab.com/>

Research Interests:

- o Nootropic and Functional Foods Innovation,
- o Lipid Bioinformatics/Novel Lipidomics Workflow/Method Development
- o Foodomics/Food metabolomics/Food Metabolism/Food as Medicine/Food Informatics/Food Arts
- o Brain Health/Neurolipidomics/Short chain fatty acids induced brain stress

- o Lipid Metabolism in Environmental Stress Biology, Boreal Agriculture/Ecosystem/Climate
- o Green Food grade extraction systems
- o Lipid metabolism in Boreal Forest reclamation/restoration
- o Food circularity, adaptative, sustainable food systems
- o Bioresource full utilization/Circular economy
- o Nanotechnology in boreal forest reclamation/sustainable food systems

**Dr. G. Thorn**, B&GS 3047, Ext. 88647, [rgthorn@uwo.ca](mailto:rgthorn@uwo.ca)

Website: <https://publish.uwo.ca/~rgthorn/>

Project proposal: Projects on the systematics of mushroom fungi, using phylogenetic analyses of rDNA (and possibly other) sequences.

**Dr. Timoshenko**, BGS 3032, Ext. 88900, [atimoshe@uwo.ca](mailto:atimoshe@uwo.ca)

Website: <https://www.uwo.ca/biology/faculty/timoshenko/>

Project proposal: Cell and molecular biology of tissue-specific galectins.

**Dr. L. Zanette**, CB 207, Ext. 88316, [lzanette@uwo.ca](mailto:lzanette@uwo.ca)

Website: <http://www.uwo.ca/biology/Faculty/zanette/index.htm>

Project proposal: How the fear of predators affects wildlife prey: from birds to African elephants.

### **Opportunities at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada:**

**Dr. Sangeeta Dhaubhadel**, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 519-953-6616  
[sangeeta.dhaubhadel@canada.ca](mailto:sangeeta.dhaubhadel@canada.ca)

Project proposal: Genomics of legume specialized metabolism.

Our research focuses on understanding how plants produce specialized metabolites that shape important traits like seed quality and stress resistance.

The USRA2025 project will involve utilizing omics tools to study pulse crops such as pea, and lentil, with the goal of improving their resilience and value for growers and consumers.

**Dr. Rima Menassa**, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 519-670-3519  
[rima.menassa@canada.ca](mailto:rima.menassa@canada.ca)

Project proposal: The project this summer will involve analyzing the immune response of chickens to a *Salmonella* vaccine candidate produced in plants.

**Dr. Frédéric Marsolais**, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 226-234-3450

[Frederic.Marsolais@agr.gc.ca](mailto:Frederic.Marsolais@agr.gc.ca)

Website: <https://profils-profiles.science.gc.ca/en/profile/frederic-marsolais>

Project proposal: Biosynthesis of sulphur amino acids in seed of common bean.

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