NSERC USRA Summer 2020 | Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- **Is the NSERC USRA program cancelled for Summer 2020 term?**
  No. The NSERC USRA program will proceed, with NSERC providing the full value of each award ($4500), even in the event of a shortened work term. UBC NSERC USRAs may proceed with specific accommodations for remote work, where possible, and/or shortened work terms. Shortened work terms may be less than 12 consecutive weeks.

- **Can research projects take place remotely?**
  Yes. If the student and supervisor want to pursue a remote research project, NSERC will support this. There are specific restrictions as to where students may reside while working remotely (please see the next FAQ).

  Proposed research projects that cannot be carried out remotely (e.g. lab work) may be modified to something that is suitable for remote work (e.g. analysis of existing data, literature reviews). Supervision is expected to occur via video chats, telecons, and email. Please inform the UBC Liaison Officer (nserc.usra@ubc.ca) before the start of the project if you plan to proceed with a remote research project and/or if the proposed research project changes significantly for Summer 2020. Remote research projects can be converted back to on campus projects, should the research curtailment be lifted.

  Please refer to [UBC’s HR guidance](https://www.hr.ubc.ca/hr/policies-and-guidance) for managers and supervisors, which includes a [Telecommuting Checklist](https://www.hr.ubc.ca/hr/policies-and-guidance/telecommuting), and UBC IT’s [online guide to working remotely](https://it.ubc.ca/telecommuting). The guide outlines resources when working remotely, including: how to access emails and files, tools for virtual meetings, and security requirements. When considering the use of personal devices, it is important to ensure that security and privacy requirements are met.

- **Where may students live while working on remote research projects as part of the NSERC USRA program?**
  NSERC USRA students are permitted to work remotely, in Canada, from a different province or territory. Those students who will be working remotely outside of BC must be registered as a worker in the province or territory where the work will take place. To do so, your HR Advisor/Department should alert UBC’s WSBC Claims Associate Aidan Gregory by email at aidan.gregory@ubc.ca. If students are residing outside of Canada, they will not generally be eligible to work remotely, as part of NSERC USRA. Please contact the UBC Liaison Officer (nserc.usra@ubc.ca) in these circumstances.

  For more information, please refer to UBC HR’s guidance [here](https://www.hr.ubc.ca/hr/policies-and-guidance).
• What if the research project is not conducive to remote work?
  If the research project is not conducive to remote work, a shortened work term (less than 12 consecutive weeks full-time) is permitted, should the research curtailment be lifted. Alternatively, a new match may be identified, so that the student can work on a different project, which would be conducive to remote work. Regardless, NSERC will honour the full value of the award ($4500). For the student’s salary, the minimum Faculty Supervisor top-up of 25% the award value ($1125.00) is in effect and BC’s minimum wage requirements must be met. (To meet BC’s minimum wage requirements, for full-time, 16-week award durations, the typical top-up for UBC is at least $3868.80).

• Is there a minimum number of weeks for shortened work terms, in order to receive the full value of the USRA ($4500)?
  No. NSERC has not specified a minimum number of weeks for a shortened work term in order to receive the full value of the USRA.

• If the student and Faculty Supervisor decide to pursue a shortened work term for Summer 2020, will I need to submit my Form 202 Part I and II application now?
  Yes. Students and Faculty Supervisors are expected to complete and submit their Form 202 Part I and II now, even if they plan to pursue a shortened work term should the research curtailment be lifted.

• What happens to the USRA if the student and Faculty Supervisor submit their application for the Summer 2020 term now (with the plan on pursuing a shortened work term) but then decide to defer the award to the Winter 2020 term?
  Please contact the UBC Liaison Officer at nserc.usra@ubc.ca as soon as possible should you decide to defer the summer award to one of the Winter 2020 sessions (Term 1 in September 2020; Term 2 in January 2021).

• Will projects be allowed to continue part-time into the Fall 2020 term?
  At this time, NSERC is not permitting students to continue their USRA research projects part-time into the Fall 2020 term. If students and supervisors wish to continue the project, this will have to be outside of the USRA program.

• Can USRA 2020 awards be deferred until 2021?
  Yes. Students and supervisors who receive an award for the 2020 - 2021 competition cycle may choose to defer their award to the Winter 2020 session (Term 1 in September 2020; Term 2 in January 2021) (provided all eligibility requirements are met at that time). As in the summer term, students are permitted to take a maximum of one course while holding a Fall or Winter USRA, and must devote full-time hours to the USRA project. Awards received from this year’s competition cycle cannot be transferred from one fiscal year to another.
• What happens if the research curtailment extends to the Winter 2020 session (Term 1)? NSERC will evaluate the possibility of shortened Winter 2020 session term 1 (September - December 2020). This information will be communicated to you before the start of the term.

• Has the student appointment (ePAF) deadline for the Summer 2020 term been extended? Yes. The deadline to submit student appointment(s) (ePAF) is April 30, 2020. The CSI&C will re-evaluate this extension if needed.

• What information do I need to provide to my finance/HR/administrator for setting up the student appointment (ePAF)?
  Please send the Appointing Students Information Sheet to your finance/HR/administrator. Also please ensure that the student’s Personal Data Form is attached to the student appointment. The PDF can also be found in the Faculty and Staff NSERC USRA webpage.

If you have additional questions, please email nserc.usra@ubc.ca or phone 604-827-2937, from 9 AM - 4 PM, Monday through Friday.