

How to Talk to a Professor About a Research Position

12 December 2023

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Territory Acknowledgement

As we gather here today, we acknowledge we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the traditional Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

The Undergraduate Research Initiative is committed to reconciliation in our research, scholarly, and artistic work. This means always learning and relearning, supporting work that is led by Indigenous peoples and communities, and committing to work that is beneficial and accessible to Indigenous communities.

Session Outline

What is a Research Position / Student Assistantship?

1. What is Research
2. What are Research Jobs?
3. What do Student Assistants do?
4. How do I find a job as a Student Assistant?

Finding a Supervisor

1. Research
2. Prepare
3. Email
4. Meeting / Next Steps

What is a Research Position?

Defining Research

*Research is defined as the **creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings.***

https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/researchers/preparing_a_grant_application/def_definition_of_research

Signature Areas of Research



Agriculture

Food and Bioproducts for a Sustainable Future



Energy and Mineral Resources for a Sustainable Future

Developing Clean Energy Solutions and Working for Equal Access for All



Indigenous Peoples

Engagement and Scholarship



Synchrotron Sciences

Innovation in Health, Environment and Advanced Technologies



One Health

Solutions at the Animal-Human-Environment Interface



Water

Health, Equity, Access, Security and Sustainability of our Planet's Freshwater Resources



Communities and Sustainability

Exploring the Interrelatedness of Human Communities and Natural Ecologies



Health and Wellness

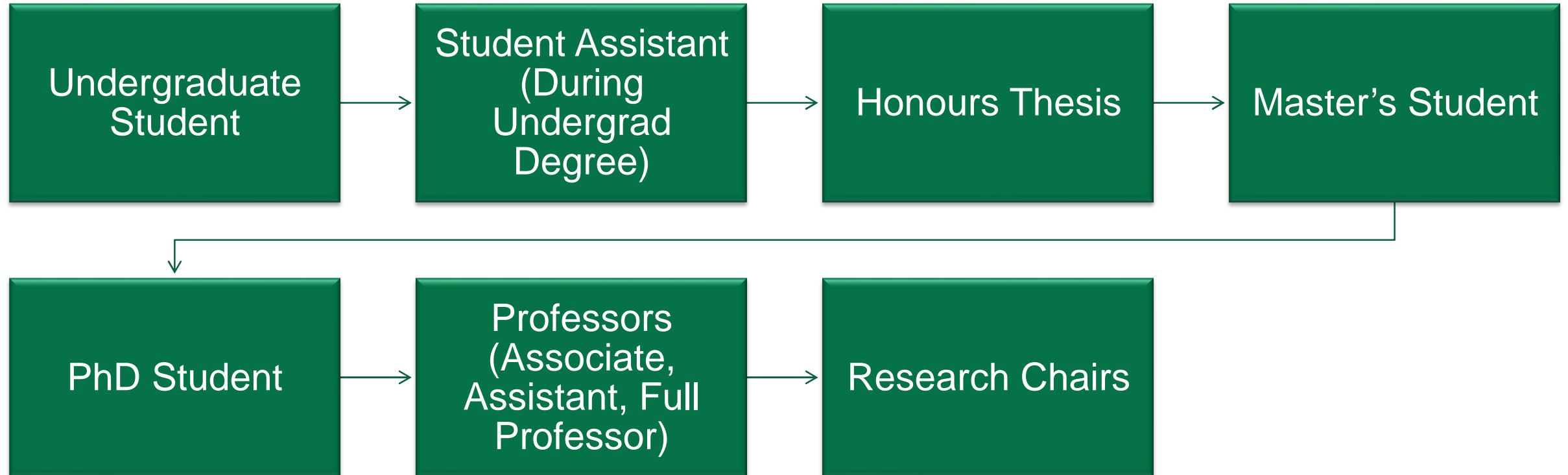
Combining the Arts, Social and Hard Sciences to Make Canadians Healthier



Quantum Innovation

Creating Big Changes from Tiny Particles

Research Opportunities at the University



Why Consider Research Now?

- It can help you to understand the university.
- Research skills are applicable and beneficial for any career.
- Research skills are different than memorizing information.
- Can help you decide if you like research / it's something you want to continue.
- Meet other students and professors on campus.

“I think entering into a research or scholarly project is a great idea for undergraduate students. Not only is it incredibly rewarding, but it is also a great way to learn more about a subject matter that you are interested in.”

-Jeremy Irvine 4th Year Agronomy Student

<https://vpresearch.usask.ca/students/undergraduate/student-stories/entomology,-exploration,-and-embracing-setbacks-jeremy-irvine-on-undergraduate-research.php>

Working as a Student Assistant

Variety of entry-level jobs for students on campus

Research positions – working under the supervision of a professor on one of their projects or a project related to their expertise (depending on funding).

Positions can be casual, part time, or full-time work.

Positions are for non-union employees. Payment ranges from \$14 – 16.96 /hour plus benefits.

Where to Find a Research Position

Sometimes they are advertised!



USask Student Employment and Career Centre?

<https://careerlink.usask.ca/home.htm>



USask Careers website (click Staff and Faculty link)?

<https://careers.usask.ca/>



Your department/college announcements/website?

Sometimes they are not....



Often students get research positions because of networking!



The funding opportunities are advertised, but it is up to the student to find a faculty member to apply with.

Finding a Supervisor

Finding a Supervisor / Position

1.
**Do your
Research**

2.
Prepare

3.
Email

4.
**Meeting &
Follow-ups**

What are your goals / interests?

Write on a card!

Do your Research



What are your interests / what kind of position are you looking for?



Are there funding opportunities that you know of that you qualify for?



Who do you already know? Are there professors that you think you would like to work with and / or that you think would be a good mentor for you? Are there professors that you can go to for advice?



Look-up different professors in your department or in the research area that you are interested in. Pay attention to their research interests and if they include any information about supervising students. Some professors will have their own webpage for their lab.



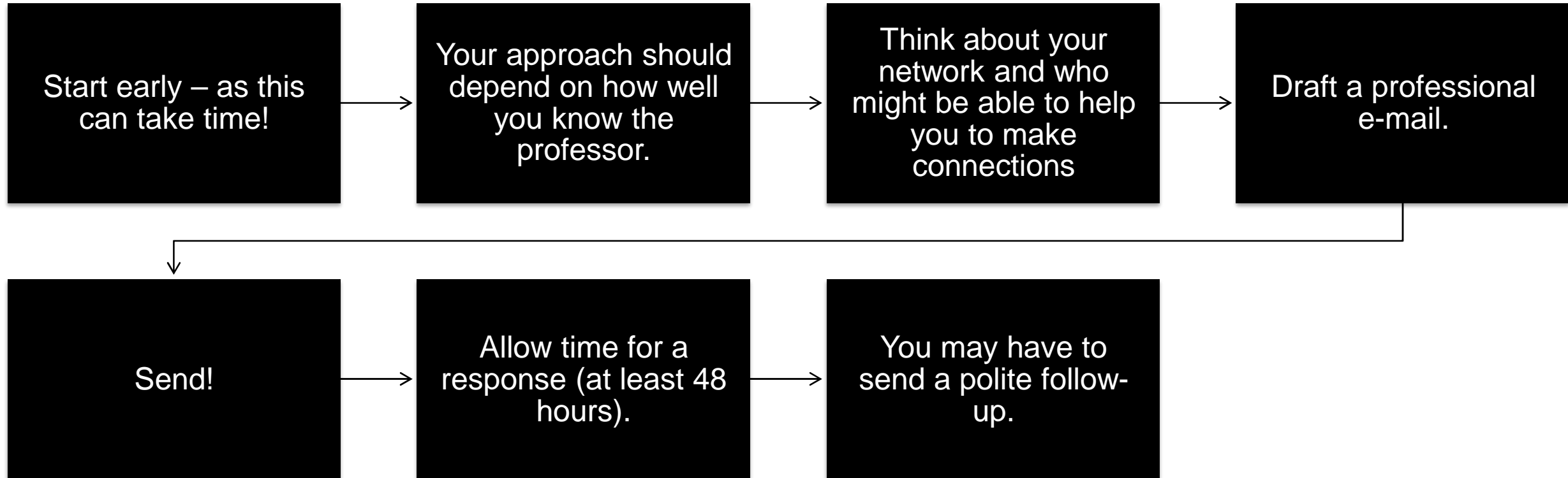
If you have a chance, talk to other students that have worked as a student assistant about their experiences.

Let's see if we can find a supervisor!

Prepare!

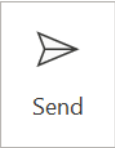
1. Update your resume / c.v. Pick a format that is best for your level of experience and the position you are applying for.
2. On your card, write out why you want to work with a particular professor or in their lab.
 - How does their specific research relate to your specific interests?
 - Are there skills that you want to build or practice?
3. On your card, write out what type of position you are looking for.
 - Is it a supervisor to apply for an NSERC USRA with?
 - Full time work as a student assistant
 - Part time or casual work as a student assistant
 - Volunteer experience?
 - Graduate Studies (such as an MA or PhD)

Email



Practice!

What do you think of this email? What would you change?

	From ▾	anitacareer@hotmail.com
	To	<input type="text" value="biology@usask.ca"/>
	Cc	
	Bcc	
	Subject	Summer Research Position

Hello!

I'm a 3rd year Biology student looking for a summer research position. I'm wondering if you know of any research positions within the Department. I am wanting to apply for NSERC .

Sincerely,
Anita
|

What do you think of this email? What would you change?

	From ▾	anita.career@usask.ca
	To	biology.professor@usask.ca
	Cc	
	Bcc	
	Subject	Supervisor for NSERC Application

Dear Professor,

How are you? I am a student in your BIO 210 class. I love science and have a passion for research. I am preparing to apply for NSERC USRA funding, and I am wondering if you would be interested in being my supervisor.

I have attached a copy of my resume. Let me know if you need anything else.

Thanks in advance!

Anita Career
3rd Biology Student
University of Saskatchewan
306.123.4567

What do you think of this email? What would you change?

 Send	From ▾	anita.career@usask.ca
	To	<input type="radio"/> professor.gray@usask.ca
	Cc	
	Bcc	
Subject		Student Interested in NSERC USRA

Dear Professor Gray,

How are you? I am a student in your BIO 317 Fundamentals of Animal Physiology class and was very interested to learn about the research you do at Gray Lab, your research on pesticides and the impact on insect behavior.

I am interested in applying for NSERC USRA for summer 2024 and continuing to build my research skills in this area of study. I was wondering if you are accepting new student assistants in your lab and if you might be interested in meeting with to discuss potentially being my research supervisor.

Would you have time in the next few weeks to meet before the NSERC deadline at the end of January?

Attached is a copy of my updated resume for you to review.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,

Anita Career
3rd Biology Student
University of Saskatchewan
306.123.4567

Email Template

Subject Line:

Dear/Hello **[Insert Professors Name]**,

Intro/Context: Who are you and why are you emailing?

The why: Why are you emailing this specific professor? Why are you interested in working with this professor? What skills/experiences would you bring and / or want to develop.

The ask: Be direct about what you are interested in (for example a supervisor for an NSERC USRA), but ask for a meeting as a next step.

Thanks in advance/Thank you for your time.

Salutation/Signature: Sincerely/All the best,
[Your Name]

Subject Line:

Hello Dr. Nye,

I am a student ... **[the who]**

I am interested in developing my skills as a researcher... **[the why]**

Would you be available to meet to briefly discuss my potential candidacy as a research assistant.. **[the ask]**

Thanks in advance.

Sincerely,
[Your Name/Signature]
2nd year Biology Student
University of Saskatchewan
306.123.4567

Using your USask Email

- ✓ Always use your NSID@usask.ca
 - ✓ This shows you are legit! And not a scammer!!
- ✓ You can set up an alias or forwarding email (see next slide)
- ✓ Consider adding an email signature:

Anita Career

3rd year Sociology Student
University of Saskatchewan
306-123-4567

Rathilasan

[REDACTED]
2nd-Year Mechanical Engineering Student

College of Engineering

Cell : (907) [REDACTED]

Email [REDACTED]@usask.ca | [LinkedIn](#)

 UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN | usask.ca

I acknowledge that the University of Saskatchewan is situated on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. I affirm my commitment and responsibility as a settler to amplify Indigenous ways of knowing and access to engineering in my work.

[Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action](#)

Confidentiality Notice: This message, including any attachments, is for the sole use of the intended recipient(s) and may contain confidential and privileged information. Any unauthorized review, use, disclosure, or distribution is strictly prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender by reply email and destroy all copies of the original message

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Email & Calendar 2

Search PAWS (eg. Registration)



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USask Email

Edit

Address **bdk628@mail.usask.ca**

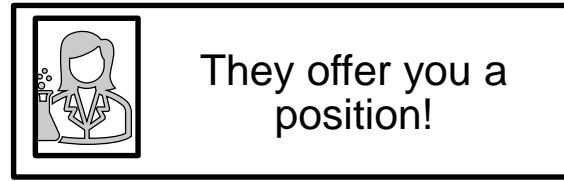
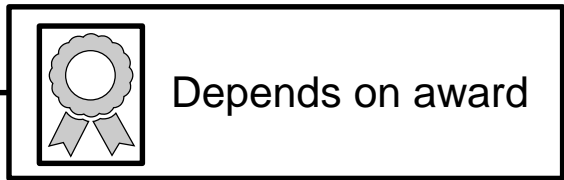
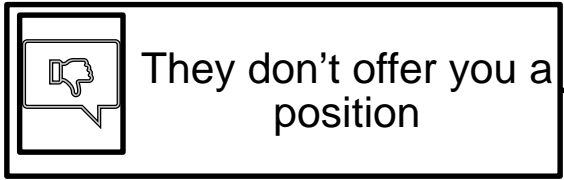
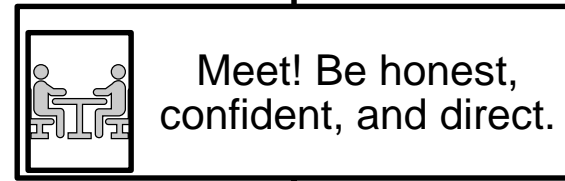
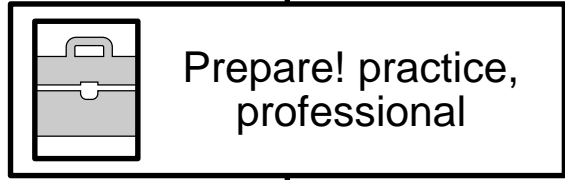
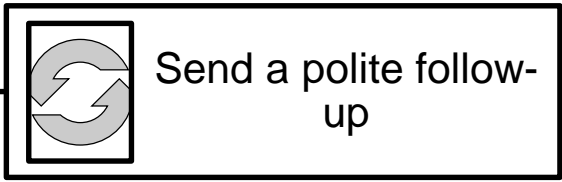
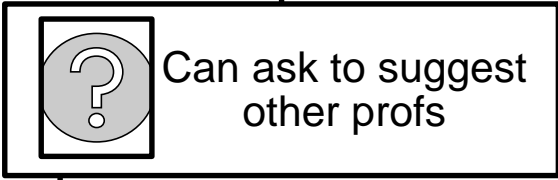
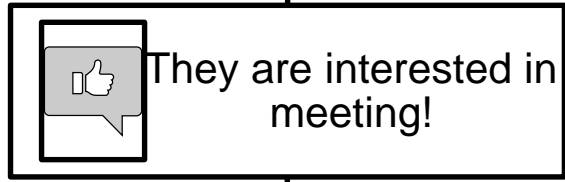
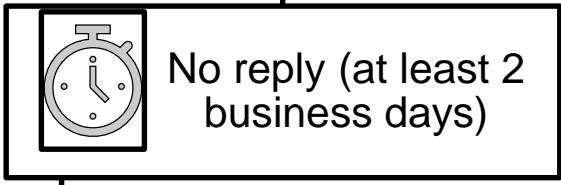
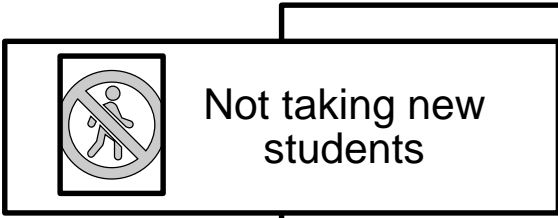
Forwarding **Not Set**

Auto Reply **Off**

Primary Alias **brette.kristoff@usask.ca**

+ 3 more aliases

Next Steps



Make a Decision

- Think about if the position is a good fit for you. Balance that with knowing that sometimes you need to start somewhere to get your foot in the door.
- How can we tell the difference between red-flags and being nervous about something new / different?

Next Steps

- ✓ Keep applying for jobs!
- ✓ Respectful persistence is important. Networking is about the long game.
- ✓ If you aren't successful, this year – try again next year.
- ✓ Ask for feedback.

Additional Links and Resources

How to Talk to a Professor

[How to Approach Supervisor.pdf \(usask.ca\)](#)

[How to Approach a Professor \(for a research position\) \(youtube.com\)](#)

SURE Resources

[Undergraduate Research Initiative - USask - YouTube](#)

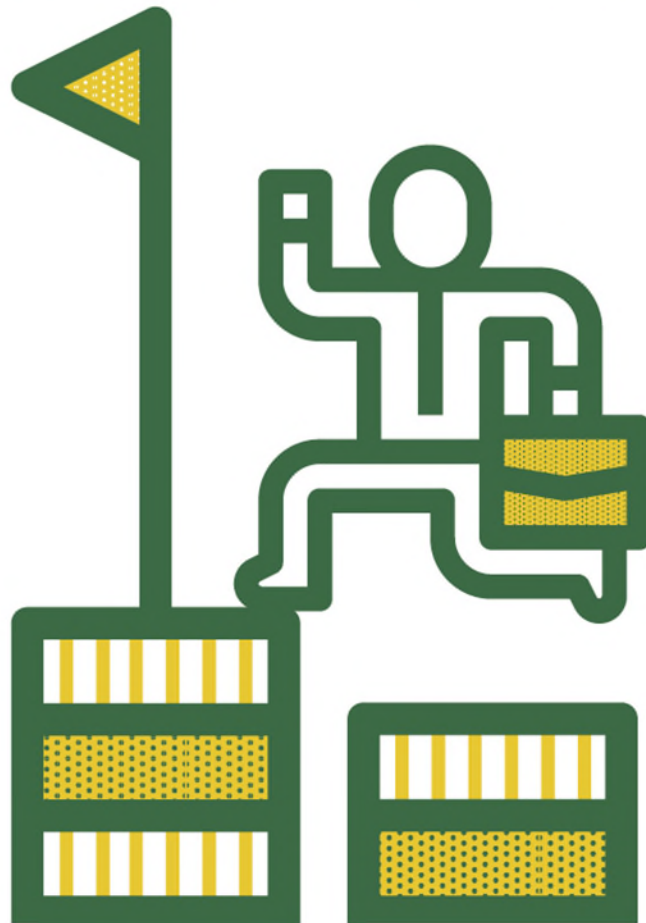
NSERC USRA Process for 2024

[NSERC USRAs - Office of the Vice President Research - Research | University of Saskatchewan \(usask.ca\)](#)

CAREER SERVICES

As a student or alumni, Career Services is here to help with every step in your career journey!

YOUR
CAREER
PATH
STARTS
HERE



[USASK.CA/
CAREERSERVICES](https://usask.ca/careerservices)



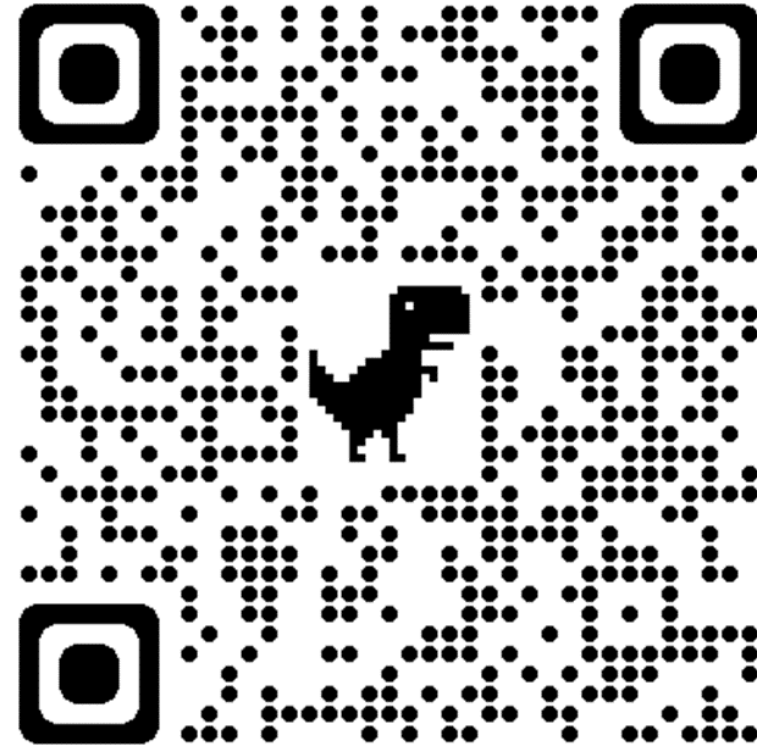
Undergraduate Research Initiative

Questions? Send an email!

Mandy Fehr

Coordinator, Undergraduate
Research, Scholarly, and Artistic
Work

Undergraduate.research@usask.ca



See the Undergraduate Research Initiative
webpage for more resources