University of Saskatchewan NSERC USRA Adjudication Committee
Terms of Reference

Updated October 2026

MANDATE

The USask NSERC USRA Committee (the Committee) adjudicates applications to the University of Saskatchewan's NSERC USRA competition and recommends funding decisions to the NSERC USRA Liaison Officer and the Research Acceleration and Strategic Initiatives (RASI) office.

MEMBERSHIP COMPOSITION AND ELIGIBILITY

The NSERC USRA Committee comprises Members and Committee Co-Chairs. Interested individuals may apply to serve on the Committee and are selected based on their expertise in natural sciences, engineering, and/or applied sciences research across a range of NSERC-fundable disciplines to ensure a representative and equitable Committee. At least 25% of Committee members should represent engineering-related disciplines, and another 25% should represent the natural sciences.

Committee Co-Chairs:

The Committee will select 3 to 4 Co-Chairs, ensuring representation of expertise from the natural sciences, engineering, and applied sciences. The Co-Chairs will work with the Liaison Officer to assign reviewers to applications. The role of the Co-Chairs is further outlined under Review Process.

Committee Members:

- Must qualify to apply for NSERC funding at USask, with a preference given to those who have held Tri-Agency funds.
- Demonstrate a commitment to mentoring and training undergraduate student researchers.
- Must be affiliated with the University of Saskatchewan in a tenure, tenure track, or term position.

The Committee should reflect the diversity of the community we serve and include researchers at all stages of their careers. The Committee values interdisciplinarity and welcomes researchers with experience with SSHRC and CIHR in addition to NSERC.

APPOINTMENT

Committee members are appointed for three-year terms, renewable upon approval by the Co-Chairs. One- or two-year term appointments may be made to maintain continuity and ensure that no more than one-third of the Committee is replaced in any calendar year.

REVIEW PROCESS

The Co-Chairs will work with the Liaison Officer to assign at least two Committee members per application to serve as adjudication reviewers. Applications will be reviewed using the provided rubric and evaluation instructions.

Committee members may not review or vote on applications from their department. If a member is applying for a USRA with a student from another department, they must also recuse themselves from reviewing or voting on applications from that student's department. In the case of applications received from the same College/School as a Committee member, a member may review or vote if deemed appropriate by the Chair.

In cases when the Committee is divided on whether to support an application, the Co-Chairs may solicit a third review from the Committee membership.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Committee Members must disclose any conflicts of interest, or perceived conflicts of interest, to the Co-Chairs.

Adjudicators may still submit student applications to the NSERC USRA process, but must excuse themselves from any Committee discussion related to their students.

MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES and MEETING SCHEDULE

The Committee meets between January and February to review the adjudication process and calibrate their application with the rubric. Members will have a minimum of one week to assess their assigned applications. A meeting will be held in February to discuss rankings and any contentious applications. If needed, a second meeting will be scheduled to finalize decisions. Meetings will be scheduled at least one month in advance whenever possible.

REVIEW

These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually by the Co-Chairs in collaboration with the Liaison Officer.