



Selection Criteria for NSERC Undergraduate Research Awards and CSB Undergraduate Research Awards

The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) has a longstanding program of research awards for undergraduates. Information about the awards is available through this [link](#). You can go on-line from this site to complete an application form (Form 202).

The Department of Cell and Systems Biology has established a CSB Undergraduate Research Awards program to increase summer research opportunities for our undergraduates. These are only available to University of Toronto students.

This document is intended to explain the criteria by which the Undergraduate Affairs Committee of the Department of Cell and Systems Biology plans to compile a list of recommended candidates for the NSERC award and a list for the CSB award. Good luck.

Eligibility

For the NSERC award, eligible students:

- 1) are Canadian citizens or permanent residents,
- 2) are registered in at least one of the two terms immediately before holding the award,
- 3) have completed their first year,
- 4) have a **cumulative** GPA of 3.0 or better (Fall courses are included), and
- 5) are available to conduct research for 40 hours per week for 16 consecutive weeks during the summer

For the CSB award, eligible students:

- 1) have not previously held a CSB Undergraduate Research Award
- 2) are Canadian citizens, permanent residents, or international students with a valid student visa
- 3) are registered at U of T in at least one of the two terms immediately before holding the award,
- 4) have completed their first year,
- 5) have a **cumulative** GPA of 3.0 or better (Fall courses are included), and
- 6) are available to conduct research for 20 hours per week for 16 consecutive weeks during the summer

Choosing a Supervisor

If you wish to be considered for an NSERC USRA or a CSB Undergraduate Research Award, you must apply for these through the same supervising professor. We will be accepting only one application per student.

In CSB, we leave it to the student to find their own supervisor within our department. Advice on acquiring a research position is available through this [link](#). A list of potential supervisors and their research interests is available through this [link](#).

It will be unusual for any one laboratory to be granted more than one NSERC or CSB award. While you are talking over possible research topics with your potential supervisor, check to see if they have sponsored anyone else. If so, it might be better to apply under another supervisor's auspices.

Academic Record (i.e., Grade Point Average)

As with any merit-based award, the odds are that the higher your marks, the better your chances of being chosen for an award. However, cGPA is not the only criterion used in selection. Therefore, if your marks are high enough to qualify and you feel positive about other selection criteria, do not hesitate to apply. There is an option on the [CSB Combined Application Cover Page](#) for you to include any special circumstances that may have affected your academic achievement or research potential.

Prior NSERC or CSB Undergraduate Awards

We consider the NSERC undergraduate awards and the CSB awards to be a very important part of the development of future research scientists. Consequently, we would like to see as many students as possible have an opportunity to participate in what is a unique experience at the undergraduate level. **All other factors being equal, we would recommend a candidate for an NSERC award who has never had an NSERC award over one who has previously received an NSERC award** (however, previous receipt of a CSB award or a University of Toronto Excellence Award (UTEA) will not affect consideration for an NSERC award). **All other factors being equal, we would recommend a candidate for a CSB award who has never had any summer research award over one who has previously received any such award.** Students who have previously held a CSB award are not eligible to hold a second CSB award.

University Year

For the NSERC award, and with all things being equal, a third year student would be recommended over a second or fourth year student. For the CSB award, and with all things being equal, a second or third year student would be recommended over a fourth year student. Keep in mind that the applicant pool varies from year to year and the outcome varies as well. Therefore, if you are interested and eligible, apply; do not be put off by your year of study.

Multiple Applications

Whether or not you have applied for an award at another university, for an industrial award, or to two or more departments at the same university has no bearing on your recommendation from Cell and Systems Biology at U of T. However, we will accept only one application per student within the Department of Cell and Systems Biology.

The Combined Application

Within CSB, students use NSERC's Form 202 to apply for both of our award opportunities. In addition to Form 202, you will need to complete and submit the [CSB Combined Application Cover Page](#). It is on this form that you will indicate which awards you wish to be considered for.

If you indicate that you are applying for either of the awards, and your ranking makes you eligible for the NSERC award, then you will be offered the NSERC award. If you indicate that you are applying for either of the awards, and your ranking falls below eligibility for the NSERC award, then you will be considered for the CSB award.

Research Project Description

A brief description of your proposed summer research is required on Form 202. You should fully understand the contents of this outline and we assume collaboration between student and professor in preparing this part of the application. There **must** be a statement of your involvement in the project. Your research outline should include:

- A statement of the purpose of your research - i.e., what you hope to achieve.
- A statement stating the student's role in the project (the application is not complete without this).
- A statement of how your planned research relates to current work in your field.
- An outline of the possible methodology for your proposed research.

Paragraph

There are only a few criteria by which the selection committee can rank the NSERC or CSB award applicants. In order to have more to base a decision on, we ask each student to write a paragraph providing information about themselves. This is where you can inform the committee about why you want this award, your academic interests, and how this award will benefit your career goals. This is to be written by you alone, not in collaboration with your supervising professor. **It must be a maximum of 400 words and fit within the space provided on the cover page of the application.**