

How to approach a research supervisor

1. Understand award expectations and criteria regarding research supervisors:

- You are responsible for finding a research supervisor.
- Supervisors may support three student submissions in AwardSpring (Central Application System) per academic year but will be awarded up to a maximum of two studentships.
- Full-time academic UCalgary staff are eligible to be supervisors.
- Supervisors can be from your own faculty or a different faculty.

2. Determine your research goals:

- Identify which research topics excite you. Is it how junior high students learn in remote environments? Or how a phrase changes depending on vocal tone? Which insects live in Calgary?
- What are your goals, and how will your research help support the achievement of those goals? Are you looking to pursue a master's in psychology? Seeking a research-based career after graduation?

3. Discover which supervisors you may want to approach:

- Network
 - Connect with your current or previous professors by taking advantage of office hours or by arriving early or staying late at lectures. Remember to be respectful of their time.
 - Chat with your TAs on your research areas of interest and ask if they have any recommendations on supervisors you can approach.
 - Other undergraduates who have research experience are invaluable. Network with your peers and ask questions.
- Explore UCalgary
 - Visit department websites for a list of professors, their contact information and research summaries/areas of interest.
 - View current research themes and topics with explore.ucalgary.ca.
- Keep an open mind
 - Search UCalgary researchers beyond your academic unit or faculty.

4. Before you connect:

- Prepare ahead of time by reading about the supervisor(s) you want to approach. Search the library catalogues for their publications, understand what research topics and methods they engage with, and determine whether they are a good fit with your research goals.
- Research the supervisor(s). Have they supervised undergraduate students in past? Are they going on sabbatical soon? Connect with department administrators, TAs, and other students who have conducted research to learn more about the supervisor(s).



5. Take the leap and contact a potential supervisor:

- Contact supervisors with enough notice. If an award application deadline is in early February and you contact a potential supervisor in late January, there may not be enough time for a faculty member to respond.
- Keep the first contact with a supervisor brief via email.
- Make an appointment for a longer conversation. Arrange a Zoom or phone call during office hours or at a specific date/time to discuss why you reached out to the faculty member.
- Some faculty members may request a CV, cover letter and/or resume. Keep updated versions ready to send if requested.
- If they don't respond after a week, send a friendly reminder.

6. What to expect when meeting a supervisor:

- Remember: this isn't just about a potential supervisor interviewing you – you're interviewing them, too!
- Faculty members will want to know why you reached out to them specifically. Be prepared with answers on why you are pursuing research, how your research goals align with their current research, why you are interested in conducting research with them, and what research term you're seeking (8, 12 or 16 weeks).
- Prepare some questions of your own ahead of time. Examples include:
 - What roles do you see undergraduate students having within your research project/area of interest?
 - How would you describe your research supervisor/management style?
 - What skills would be valuable for an undergraduate conducting research in your research project/area of interest?
- If the supervisor is unfamiliar with the summer studentships program or other awards, provide a brief overview and encourage them to visit the award's website for more information. You may want to mention:
 - Supervisors submit a reference **after** you have submitted your application; supervisor references are due seven days after the student application deadline.
 - Supervisors may be asked to adjudicate other applications.

7. Next steps:

- After meeting with a potential supervisor, send a thank you email expressing your appreciation for their time, and include next steps that were potentially discussed in your meeting.
- If, after approx. 5-7 business days, a potential supervisor hasn't made a firm decision on whether they would like to supervise you, send a friendly follow-up email.
- If a potential supervisor says no... don't panic! Faculty members may not have the time to supervise a student or they may not think that your research goals align with their research. This isn't a bad thing – it means that you can continue reaching out to other potential supervisors who can help you reach your research goals.

