

Application Guide: Fall 2023

Thank you for your interest in the UBC Sustainability Scholars Program. This document outlines important program information, eligibility criteria, and the application procedure. Please review the information outlined below before applying.

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<https://sustain.ubc.ca/scholars>

Program Information

About the Sustainability Scholars Program

The Sustainability Scholars Program is an innovative paid internship program offered through the UBC Sustainability Initiative. We match UBC graduate students with on- and off-campus sustainability partners throughout the lower mainland and B.C. to work on applied sustainability-related research projects.

Each Scholar works under the broad guidance of a mentor and is immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing the partner organization's sustainability goals. The program provides a unique educational experience for UBC graduate level students (including JD) from all academic disciplines. This year . . .

- The **summer program** runs for 15 weeks from **May 1 to August 15, 2023**.
- The **fall program** runs for 22 weeks from **October 16 , 2023 to March 15, 2024**.

Projects are scoped to be completed on a part-time basis over **250 hours**. Scholars receive **\$6,250** for a 250-hour project.

Commitment

Successful candidates commit to:

- Attend a program orientation session on May 1/Oct 16
- Work the specified number of project hours (part-time¹) between the dates specified on the project description.
- Develop a Project Plan (in consultation with the project mentor) outlining the tasks to be undertaken, including a list of objectives to be achieved and associated deliverables.
- Complete the agreed upon deliverables by the specified project end date.
- Participate in any mandatory workshops, including the end-of-program presentation event(s).
- Complete an exit survey to help us improve the program for the next cohort.

¹ Successful candidates will work directly with their project mentor to determine an appropriate work schedule, including the balance of on- and off-site work hours. Please take note of the eligibility criteria below; and the time commitment section in the individual project descriptions, which provides details on the number of hours, the duration, and preferred work schedule.

Successful candidates will be provided with an orientation package outlining further details of the program once they are hired.

Application Procedure

The online application form will ask you for the following:

1. Your contact information, preferred pronoun, and UBC graduate program details.
2. Affirm that you meet the eligibility criteria (details are outlined in the next section).
3. Upload **one file** containing your cover letter, resume, and your references **for each position** you are applying for.
 - Your cover letter, resume, and references **must be saved together in one PDF file** in the format: **Project number_First name_Last name.pdf** (e.g., 2023-025_Jenny_Smith.pdf). You can find the project number listed on the [Apply](#) page and in the file name of the pdf version of the job posting.
 - Your **cover letter** should identify the position you are interested in, and how your background, skills, and experience align with the project objectives and the requirements of the position (maximum one page formatted as a letter).
 - Please keep your **resume** to under three pages. We prefer resumes, although CVs are acceptable as long as they are less than three pages.
 - Provide the name and contact details of at least **two references**—one academic, one professional.
4. You may apply for **up to three projects**. Each position requires a separate cover letter, resume, and list of references saved together in one PDF file. You may use the same references for each project.
5. If you are not shortlisted for one of the three projects and would like to be considered for other projects, you have the option of identifying additional projects that you feel best qualified to complete. You will not need to provide a resume or other application materials unless requested.

Program Eligibility (this is important!)

To be eligible to participate in the Sustainability Scholars Program you must meet **ALL** of the following criteria:

1. Current, full-time UBC graduate student.
2. In good academic standing (not on academic probation).
3. Convocate/graduate after August 15, 2023/March 15, 2024 (or later).
4. Confirm that you can work the required hours by checking the guidelines of any graduate student funding you hold.
5. Have a valid Social Insurance Number (SIN).
6. Confirm that you student visa/work permit that is valid for the duration of the internship (if you're an international student).
7. Be physically located in Canada throughout the term of the Program.
8. To participate in the summer program, you must be available to perform your work during standard business hours Monday to Friday. To participate in the fall program, you need to be available to attend meetings and perform certain aspects of the project work during standard business hours. This means:
 - a. you cannot hold full-time employment elsewhere;
 - b. you cannot be employed in other UBC positions that, in combination with your Scholars appointment, would exceed 40 hours a week or 8 hours a day;

List of Opportunities

<https://sustain.ubc.ca/teaching-applied-learning/sustainability-scholars-program/apply>

Resources

Below are links to several useful resources to help you with your resume and cover letter (there are many more online). Some of these resources also provide information on preparing for your interview.

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/resumes-cover-letters-curricula-vitae>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/graduate-pathways-success>

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/cover-letter-cv-resume-templates-ubc-career-services>

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I'm still out of the country and won't have my study permit (or a SIN or a bank account) for a while. Can I still apply?

A: For now, you may go ahead and submit your application, but be sure to honestly and thoroughly answer all of the preliminary eligibility questions and provide details about when you will have your study permit and when you will arrive in Canada. Your situation will be assessed on a case-by-case basis once we receive your application.

There is some flexibility regarding your SIN and a bank account that can be addressed if you are offered a position, however your SIN is required before you start any work. Note that as of June 19, 2023 it can take 10 days to get a SIN when you apply for it online, you can get your SIN immediately if you go to a Service Canada Centre in person.

Q: What do you mean when you say I can apply for 3 projects, but I can rank up to 6 projects?

A: This issue specific to the summer program: You “officially” apply for three projects with a cover letter, resume, and references. If you aren't accepted for one of your top three and if we can't find candidates for the projects you have ranked as 4, 5 and 6 (and if you seem suitable) we may put you forward for one of the ranked projects instead. If we do, we will check in with you to make sure you're still interested and available. It isn't usually necessary, but you may provide a different cover letter and resume at that time if you want.

Q: I forgot to include my references. / My references haven't gotten back to me in time. What do I do?

A: If you forgot to include references or if they are not ready yet, please do not email them separately. Please provide them to the project mentor at the time of your interview (don't wait until after the interview).

Q: What is an academic reference, and what is a professional reference?

A: An academic reference could be your supervisor or another member of your faculty who knows you well and can comment on your academic ability and perhaps personal attributes as well. A professional reference is typically a previous employer for whom you have worked or someone who supervised your work in some way (this could even be in a volunteer capacity). *NOTE: we are only asking for contact information of references, not a letter of reference.*

Q: What if I don't have a professional referee?

A: Please list the referees that you do have. Don't forget that volunteer work and student jobs count towards your work experience.

Q: **Can my graduate supervisor be my professional referee? I am an international student and do not have any local work experience.**

A: The categorisation of your referees can be at your discretion. In addition to your supervisor, if you have any international work experience that you would like to list a referee for, you are also welcome to do so.

Q: **Can I submit my references after the application deadline?**

A: Yes. We only contact references if you are the preferred candidate and the mentor intends to hire you. If you are unable to finalise your list of referees by the application deadline, please provide it at the time the interview is arranged.

Q: **Do I need to provide two different references with each application?**

A: No, you may provide the same referees each time.

Q: **When you ask for a reference, do you want a reference letter?**

A: A reference letter is not necessary. Applying to the Scholars Program is not like applying to a graduate program. We want references (people) that we can contact by phone or by email to help us determine if you are the right candidate for the job.

Q: **Can I still apply if I have limited availability?**

A: You need to meet the basic eligibility requirements as noted above; however, we recognise that you may have other commitments while working on your Scholars project. The allocation of time over the term of the project is agreed upon between the successful candidate and their project mentor directly. In the application form there is a place where you can comment on particular limitations on your availability. On average, you need to be able to commit to a minimum of 17 hours/week during the summer program or 12 hours/week if you're applying to the fall program

Q: **I have restrictions on how many hours per week I can work due to scholarships and other funding source. What should I do when I apply?**

A: Please indicate your restrictions in your application. If your application is successful, you and your mentor will need to discuss your working hours in due course. Your availability might have an impact on the hiring decision; however, not disclosing relevant information can cause problems after you are selected as a Scholar.

Q: **Am I eligible to apply if I am an international student on a study permit that does not allow employment off campus?**

A: Yes, a current international graduate student with a valid study permit is eligible to apply. Because the student is hired by UBC to work with a partner organization on a specific project, it is considered employment on campus. If you don't have one yet, please be sure to get your social insurance number by the application deadline.

Q: **During the pandemic I was allowed to attend studies from off campus. Am I still eligible to participate in the Sustainability Scholars Program if I am located elsewhere?**

A: At this time students who will be living outside British Columbia for the term of the program are *not eligible* to participate in the program. You must be physically located in Canada while you are working on your project.

Q: **I have applied for a UBC graduate program, but have not yet been admitted. Am I eligible to apply?**

A: Positions are only open to current UBC graduate (Masters, PhD, and JD) students. You can apply once you are enrolled and have commenced your program.

Q: **Can I provide additional supporting documents in my application?**

A: Only a resume, cover letter, and list of references are required. You may provide additional documents electronically provided you keep the total application file to approximately six pages. We prefer that you do not include portfolios or writing samples in your application unless you've been specifically asked to do so—you can provide additional document such as these if you're called for an interview.

Q: **I have been awarded a fellowship/funding which prohibits accepting other funding, am I still eligible?**

A: You will be paid \$6,250 for a 250-hour project. You will need to contact your other funding source to confirm that this is acceptable.

Q: **Are there any requirements about minimum GPA?**

A: No. However, there are UBC HR rules around academic standing for student appointments. Potential candidates cannot be on academic probation.

Q: **One of the requirements to be eligible for the program is to be in good academic standing. In that sense, do you want the applicants to include in their resume a summary of their grades, or would you check this information afterwards?**

A: Your academic standing is only a concern with respect to the Sustainability Scholars Program if your standing has changed to *On Academic Probation* or *Failed*. In these cases, you are ineligible due to UBC HR rules. You do not need to include your grades on your application.

Q: **What is the criteria for being a successful applicant?**

A: Applicant requirements vary depending on the needs of the project, but generally we are looking for bright, articulate students who can bring their education, experience, research, and writing skills to the work at hand. Please read the “How It Works” section of the website for more details.

Q: **Are there any online resources or documents to help me learn about the program?**

A: The best way to get a sense of the program is to read the [How it Works](#) section. Have a look at the [Project Library](#) as well—there you will see the array of sustainability projects that students have worked on in the past.

Q: **I am a law student, am I eligible to apply to the program?**

A: Yes, students doing J.D. (Juris Doctor) studies are welcome to apply to the program.

Q: **Who should I address my cover letter to?**

A: Please address your cover letter to the Sustainability Scholars Program Manager.

Q: **Can I use my project to meet my academic internship requirements?**

A: If you are the successful candidate for a Scholars position, your primary obligation is to meet the expectations of the project as outlined by your mentor and in the job posting. If you choose to do more work outside the scope of the project and the hours assigned to it in order to meet course requirements, that would be your choice, but any additional work must not affect the core project requirements in any way. In other words, your course requirements should not drive the project requirements or outcomes.

The UBC Sustainability Scholars program does not directly support students to meet their academic internship requirements, although many former participants in the program have been able to use their project to meet their internship requirements. Unfortunately, we cannot confirm in advance that you would be able to meet your academic requirements through participation in the program.

Q: **Can I be employed elsewhere and work as a Scholar at the same time?**

A: Most of the projects take 250 hours of part-time work to complete, which makes it possible to have other commitments such as taking a short vacation, writing your thesis, attending classes, caring for your child(ren), or working part-time elsewhere.

The exception to this is if you hold other UBC appointments. If you hold other *UBC* appointments, the combined total number of hours you work for UBC (including your Scholars appointment) cannot exceed 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week.

Some projects require more than 250 hours to complete. The required number of project hours is noted in the Time Commitment section of the job description. Projects of 500

hours in duration are considered full time. Scholars working on these projects should avoid taking on other commitments.

Students in *full-time* jobs are not eligible to participate in the program; however, you are welcome to hold a part-time job that doesn't interfere with your ability to participate in the program during standard business hours.

Q: Where can I get assistance preparing my application?

A: We encourage you to check out the many great UBC resources available to grad students (we've provided a few links below). There are also many other resources available online. Note that in fairness to all the applicants, the Sustainability Scholars Program Manager does not review or provide feedback on applications in advance.

Information and samples of resumes and cover letters:

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/resumes-cover-letters-curricula-vitae>

General career preparation information and workshops:

<https://www.grad.ubc.ca/current-students/professional-development/graduate-pathways-success>

Q: I have submitted a request to extend my study permit and I've been told by the International Student Advising office that my "implied status" means that I am legally allowed to continue to study and work in Canada until such time as I receive a decision on my study permit application. Am I eligible to participate in the Scholars Program?

A: Unfortunately, international students with "implied status" are not eligible to apply to the Scholars Program.

Q: I am an international student in my final term and I will be applying for a Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP). Can I apply to the Scholars Program?

A: It depends on when your letter of completion comes available and when you will receive your PGWP. Please send an email to sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca with information about when you will receive your letter of completion, the current expiry date on your study permit, and any other relevant details to find out whether you can apply or not.

More questions? Please email sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca