

Summer 2026 Sustainability Scholars Program Internship Opportunity

The UBC Sustainability Hub is pleased to offer current UBC graduate students the opportunity to work on sustainability internship projects. Successful candidates work under the guidance of a mentor from the partner organization, and are immersed in real world learning where they can apply their research skills and contribute to advancing sustainability across the region. The pay rate for the summer 2025 program is \$31.25/hour or \$7,812.50 for a 250-hour project.

- Visit the [Sustainability Scholars Program website](#) to learn [how the program works](#) and to [apply](#).
- Be sure to review the application guide on the Apply page to confirm your eligibility before applying.

Applications close at 11:59 pm on Sunday February 1, 2026.

Project title: Technical, institutional, and strategic feasibility of integrating a hospital with a district energy system (City of Surrey)

Project Background

District energy (DE), also known as community or neighbourhood energy, distributes thermal energy—typically hot water—from a central energy centre through a network of underground pipes to residential, commercial, and institutional buildings.

The City of Surrey owns and operates the Surrey City Energy (SCE) system, which plays a pivotal role in reducing community-scale greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by providing low-carbon heat to the growing City Centre.

Over the next three decades, City Centre's energy demand is expected to quadruple, requiring new low-carbon energy sources to meet this growth sustainably. The Surrey Memorial Hospital represents a key opportunity for integration, offering potential both as a major heat user and a low-carbon energy source.

Project description

The City seeks to explore a potential partnership with Surrey Memorial Hospital, located in the southeast section of City Centre, to assess opportunities for district energy integration.

Initial planning identified potential for the hospital to contribute up to 15 MW of thermal energy to the SCE system. Given the hospital's year-round heating demand and ongoing campus expansion, there is strong potential for mutual benefits through co-planning and infrastructure integration.

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The UBC Scholar will research the technical, institutional, and strategic feasibility of integrating the hospital with the district energy network through a mix of literature review, stakeholder engagement, and system analysis.

Project Objectives include:

1. Understand hospital energy systems, including why their thermal loads are high and how steam is used for clinical operations.
2. Assess compatibility between hospital steam systems and modern hot-water district energy networks.
3. Identify local and international examples of hospitals integrated with (or transitioning toward) district energy.
4. Evaluate the feasibility and strategic benefits of integrating Surrey Memorial Hospital with a future hot-water DE system.
5. Provide recommendations for phased decarbonization and potential DE–hospital collaboration.

Project scope

To meet the project objectives, the project will consist of the following three primary tasks:

1. **Literature Review: Hospital Energy Demand, Steam Systems, and DE Compatibility:**
The purpose of this task is to develop a strong technical foundation for understanding hospital operations and the District Energy System (DES), and the implications of integrating with an existing high-temperature hot water DES. The student will explore studies to summarize relevant information such as: typical thermal loads for hospitals, processes driving energy consumption, typical annual heating and cooling loads, high-level process for steam generation and energy consumption within hospital's buildings, need for steam in hospital processes, emerging trends in hospital energy systems, identification of waste-heat streams that could be captured for a district energy system. The deliverable is a summary report synthesizing the research conducted in this task.
2. **Case Studies of Hospitals Connected to District Energy Systems**
The purpose of this task is to learn from real-world examples of successful hospital-district energy integrations and understand what factors contribute to a successful or unsuccessful integration. This task entails background research on relevant hospital-DES integration case studies and supplemental research through interviews conducted by both the project mentor and the Scholar. With assistance from the project mentor, the student will conduct 2 to 3 semi-structured interviews with representatives from local district energy utilities from the examples below:

The deliverable is a report that summarizes findings from interviews and case-study research and lessons learned.

3. **Surrey Hospital and District Energy System integration:**

The purpose of this task is to apply findings from the case studies to Surrey Memorial Hospital to evaluate feasibility, readiness, and strategic alignment with Surrey's district energy system and sustainability goals. In collaboration with the student, the mentor will prepare interview questions to conduct with available staff, who could be hospital's energy managers, facility operators, and/or other relevant subject matter experts (1 to 2 interviews). The student will summarize discussions with SMH which may lead to further research (time depending).

The activities for this task include:

- Research Surrey Memorial's long-term expansion plans in next 10-30 years, sustainability plans and efforts for decarbonization, planned updates to mechanical interviews
- Explore whether SMH is planning to convert steam distribution to hot water and any plans to use lower-temperature equipment such as heat pumps or electrification
- Identify if there is space permitted to house district energy integration equipment or plans within hospital's footprint

The deliverable for this task is a summary report detailing opportunities, barriers, and recommended next steps for collaboration between the City of Surrey and Fraser Health Authority.

Deliverables

- A final report for the online public-facing [Scholars Project Library](#).
- Summary report for the three tasks described above.
- A final report summarizing the full scope of work and key recommendations for implementation.

Time Commitment

- This project will take 250 hours to complete
- This project must be completed between May 1 to August 14.
- The Scholars is to complete their hours between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday, approximately 17 to 20 hours per week.

Required/preferred Skills and Background

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability

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- ☒ Experience conducting stakeholder engagement events, including facilitation skills, is an asset
 - ☒ Community engagement experience
 - ☒ Strong analytical skills
 - ☒ Ability to work independently
 - ☒ Deadline oriented
 - ☒ Chemical/materials/mechanical engineering background (asset, but not mandatory)
 - ☒ Demonstrated experience in sustainability, low-carbon technologies, and mechanical engineering
 - ☒ Comfortable interacting with strangers to conduct public/in person surveys
- Interest in or familiarity with district energy systems, an asset
- ☒ Understanding of building-scale energy systems, including HVAC and heat recovery systems is an asset, but not required

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Apply here: [Click here to apply](#)

Contact Karen Taylor at sustainability.scholars@ubc.ca if you have questions

Useful Resources

We are holding a special **resume preparation workshop for prospective Scholars** on January 19, 2026. [Click here for details and to register.](#)

Below are some links to useful resources to help you with your resume, cover letter and preparing for an interview (there are many more online).

<https://students.ubc.ca/career/career-resources/>

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