Research Training Award toolkit: Information for program participants

2020

Collaboration
Innovation
Integrity
Quality
Respect

MITACS

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Welcome

On behalf of Mitacs and the Research Training Award team, welcome to the program!

The following toolkit exists to provide answers to many of the questions that participants may have throughout the program. These guidelines should be your first stop when seeking information about the program. If you can't find your answers here, please contact a Mitacs representative at rta@mitacs.ca.

Mitacs is committed to your success in the program and to providing a beneficial and rewarding experience to all participants. Thank you for your participation and your commitment to supporting research in Canada.

Acknowledgements

The Research Training Award is made possible thanks to the Government of Canada and supporting government offices. A special thank you goes out to our Full, Associate and Honourary academic partners for their input and support.

Program context

In partnership with relevant stakeholders (including universities, colleges, and others), Mitacs has built on its existing network, infrastructure and processes to provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to undertake short-term paid research experience at a host institution, thereby building new skills to supplement academic programming and creating potential new pathways into graduate education or to the labour market to support private sector research and development needs.

The **Research Training Award (RTA)** is a 12- to 16-week summer research training program. RTA will provide undergraduate and graduate students with the opportunity to develop a research project spanning the summer months and will build their skill sets in project development, project management, communication, negotiation, and technical knowledge and expertise. This exposure to a hands-on research internship at academic institutions is an effective means of complementing academic programming to build the practical skills needed for Canada's future economy.

Program overview

RTA is a student-led program; students will design and propose a research project spanning a 12- to 16-week duration in order to develop their research skills. **Projects must start by August 31**, **2020,** and cannot exceed 16 weeks in duration.

Academic institutions contribute $3,000 for a total award of $6,000, which can be used for a student stipend. Participating member institutions will be allotted a select number of awards according to their Mitacs membership status (Full, Associate, Honourary). Institutions will need to determine how many projects they can financially support under the funding structure.

Students must name an academic supervisor to provide oversight and support for the project duration. Students will meet with their supervisor on a weekly basis to ensure that the project stays on track. Virtual meetings are acceptable.

Training and development

As part of the program, students will have access to Mitacs's online e-campus, EDGE. The training courses available have been designed to supplement the hands-on learning that students will experience over the course of their project.

Program objectives

The RTA program aims to:

- Enable students to develop connections and collaborations with faculty members or academic supervisors
- Provide students with hands-on research and training experience
- Build students' research skills
- Increase awareness of potential educational and career pathways for students
- Identify new research connections or directions, potential for further collaboration, or project continuation through other Mitacs programming

Program outcomes

As a result of participation in this program, Mitacs expects the following outcomes:

- Increased participation of students in research and educational opportunities
- Enhanced skills amongst participating students
- Improved employability of students in their fields

Program application review

The student application will be reviewed twice: first, by the academic institution in accordance with the criteria found below, followed by a Mitacs review for eligibility and completeness. In addition to reviewing for eligibility and completeness, academic institutions will also review the project for quality and adherence to program objectives.

The review criteria for academic institutions are as follows:

- **Benefit to the student:** Is there potential benefit to the student by participating in the project with regards to skills development or new career opportunities?
- **Project design and rationale:** Is the project design clearly presented? Are the project activities clearly articulated and reasonable for the timeframe specified?
- **Project significance and impact:** Are the planned activities and final deliverables clearly linked to the broader community? Is the significance and impact to society, the community, or the global community clearly presented?
- **Development of new skills and knowledge:** Is the proposal tied to new research skills development for the student?
- **Interaction and final deliverable:** Are the interactions with the academic supervisor clearly articulated and appropriate? Are the final deliverable and the potential for the utility of this project beyond the project term clearly explained?

Eligibility

Academic institutions must:

- Have a signed Mitacs funding agreement
- Be a Full, Associate, or Honourary Member

Students must:

- Be a registered undergraduate or graduate student at an eligible academic institution
- Not be an active participant in another Mitacs project

Academic supervisors must:

- Be eligible to hold Tri-Council funding
- Be available for virtual or in-person meetings over the summer term and into the fall, where applicable

Program timeline

May – June: Call, academic institution review/submission to Mitacs, Mitacs approval
The call for project proposals will go out from partner institutions in May. During and following this period, academic institutions will undertake a review of the submitted proposals to check for eligibility, completeness, and project quality.

Once approved, partner institutions will submit their list of approved student projects to Mitacs in an Excel spreadsheet with student first name, last name and email address listed. The Office of Research Services (ORS) will sign off on the list of projects. Partner institutions will also notify the student applicants of their decision and send approved students a link so they can upload their project proposal into Mitacs's online Registration and Application Portal (RAP).

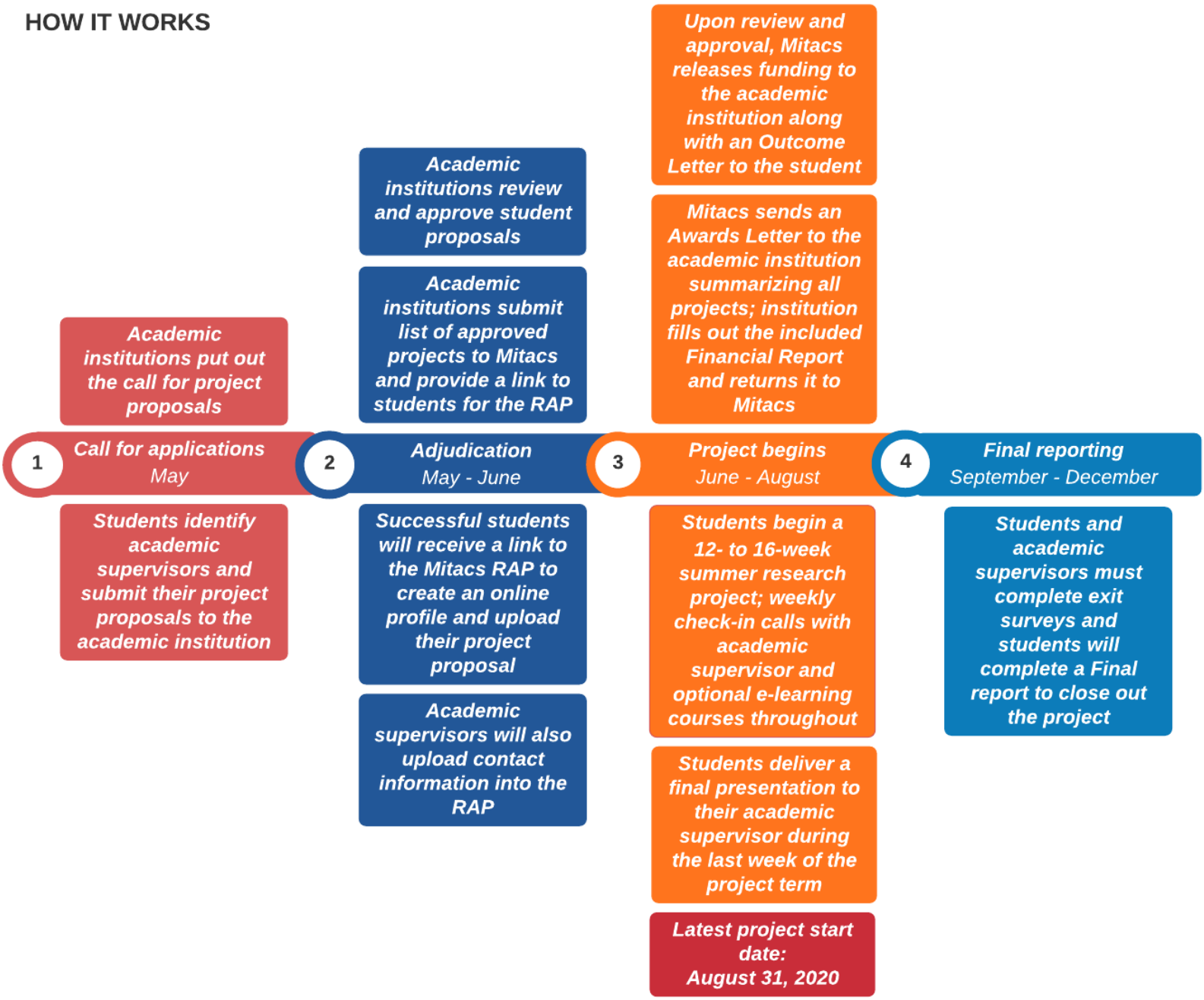
Once students have uploaded their project proposal, academic supervisors will also be electronically notified to sign into the RAP to input their contact information and sign off on the project. Mitacs will review the uploaded project proposal for completeness and approve. Upon approval from Mitacs, students will receive an Outcome Letter notifying them of the approval. Once the Outcome Letter has been sent, Mitacs will also release $6,000 in funding.

June – August: Student projects underway
Students may start working on their project following the receipt of their Outcome Letter any time up until August 31, 2020. Students and academic supervisors should meet weekly to discuss the project progress to ensure deliverables are met.

Mitacs will send out an Awards Letter to each academic institution to summarize the project awards. There will be a Financial Report Template included which academic institutions will need to complete and return to Mitacs.

September – December: Projects complete, submit final report and survey
Upon project completion, students will be required to submit a Final report and give a presentation to their academic supervisor outlining the project deliverables and outcomes. Both students and academic supervisors will be required to complete a Mitacs exit survey. Mitacs will also receive a copy of the student's Final report.

HOW IT WORKS


Academic institutions put out the call for project proposals
1
Call for applications
May
Students identify academic supervisors and submit their project proposals to the academic institution
Academic institutions review and approve student proposals
Academic institutions submit list of approved projects to Mitacs and provide a link to students for the RAP
2
Adjudication
May - June
Successful students will receive a link to the Mitacs RAP to create an online profile and upload their project proposal
Academic supervisors will also upload contact information into the RAP
Upon review and approval, Mitacs releases funding to the academic institution along with an Outcome Letter to the student
Mitacs sends an Awards Letter to the academic institution summarizing all projects; institution fills out the included Financial Report and returns it to Mitacs
3
Project begins
June - August
Students begin a 12- to 16-week summer research project; weekly check-in calls with academic supervisor and optional e-learning courses throughout
Students deliver a final presentation to their academic supervisor during the last week of the project term
Latest project start date:
August 31, 2020
4
Final reporting
September - December
Students and academic supervisors must complete exit surveys and students will complete a Final report to close out the project

Roles, responsibilities and expectations for program participants

Academic institutions: partner in program administration and program delivery
The partner academic institution is responsible for promoting the RTA program to its students and faculty and providing the appropriate documentation and information to interested applicants. The mechanisms of this will be left up to each individual institution.

The academic institution is responsible for:

- Providing $3,000 in funding for a total award of $6,000
- Putting out a call for project proposals to their student population
- Reviewing submissions for quality and eligibility
- Submitting a list of approved student projects to Mitacs
- Signing off on the project through the ORS (or equivalent)
- Providing the link to students for the Mitacs Registration and Application Portal (RAP)
- Completing and returning the Financial Report included in the Awards Letter from Mitacs

Students: leaders of the project
The student is responsible for:

- Designing a 12- to 16-week research project proposal
- Identifying an academic supervisor to oversee the project
- Creating an account by inputting their contact information into the Mitacs RAP and uploading their project proposal
- Inputting academic supervisor information into the RAP
- Signing off on the project
- Completing an exit survey, a Final report, and a presentation outlining their project experience
- Creating an EDGE account to access Mitacs training courses

Academic supervisors: oversight and support
The academic supervisor is responsible for:

- Inputting their contact information on the Mitacs RAP once they receive the link through the student application
- Signing off on the student project
- Completing the Mitacs exit survey following completion of the project

Mitacs: program design and evaluation
Mitacs oversees the design, delivery, and monitoring of the RTA program. Mitacs is responsible for:

- Developing program delivery templates and tools for academic institution use
- Reviewing applications for eligibility and completeness
- Managing and administering courses through the Mitacs online learning platform, EDGE
- Performing quality audits on a random sample of approved student project proposals to ensure compliance with program criteria

Starting the program

Applications and adjudication

The academic institution will identify students and projects for this initiative throughout the month of May. Academic partners will collect and review all submissions prior to submitting their choices to Mitacs. Once approved, academic partners will work with Mitacs to release funds to the appropriate students as per the funding information section below.

Release of funds

At the start of the program, Mitacs will send $6,000 to the home academic institution as a research grant in the academic supervisor's name. The academic supervisor will then release the funds to the student.

Documentation

Following the approval of the Research Training Award, the student will receive an Outcome Letter from Mitacs confirming acceptance into the program. The academic institution will receive an Awards Letter summarizing the projects and amounts and will need to complete a Financial Report and return it to Mitacs.

During the program

Program communications

Throughout the duration of the program, ongoing communications and requests for evaluation will be managed by Mitacs. All communications for the program will flow through the rta@mitacs.ca inbox or through an individual Mitacs Grant Management Specialist.

Program evaluation and participant feedback

As program participants, students and academic supervisors are required to participate in the ongoing evaluation of the program. The evaluation includes:

- An Exit survey **(students and supervisors)**
- A Final report **(students only)**
- Feedback surveys regarding training courses **(students only)**

Requests for feedback will be made via email and survey links. The input provided through these tools is invaluable for assessing the impact of the program, making improvements and ensuring the program's relevancy and usefulness for current and future participants.

Project cancellations

In rare circumstances, a participant may need to cancel their project. Mitacs must be informed of any cancellation. Please contact Mitacs as soon as possible to discuss the situation.

RTA PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

One-on-one interaction
Students will have one-on-one interaction with their academic supervisors and research groups to develop new skills and knowledge

Online training
Students will have access to supplemental online training through Mitacs's EDGE learning management system

Final presentation
Students will deliver a final presentation summarizing work completed to their academic supervisors during the last week of the project term

Final report
Students and their academic supervisors will submit exit surveys at the end of their project. Students will also submit a Final report outlining project outcomes

Launch
Students create potential new pathways into graduate education or the labour market!

At the end of the program

The end of the program is a time to acknowledge and celebrate the work completed and reflect on accomplishments and learnings for program participants. It is also an important time for Mitacs, as we gather exit surveys and feedback that will allow us to evaluate and further improve the RTA program. All students and academic supervisors are expected to complete the program exit survey. Students are also required to complete a short Final report for Mitacs which captures additional qualitative information and feedback about their experiences.

General inquiries and frequently asked questions

When should projects start?
Project work can start as soon as the proposal has been reviewed and approved by Mitacs and the students have received their Outcome Letters. Work should start no later than August 31, 2020.

When will the project funds be available? What is the expected turnaround time for Mitacs approval of projects?
The expected turnaround time for Mitacs approval is one week and funds should be available with the academic institution/academic supervisor shortly thereafter.

Is it possible to have multiple students per proposal?
Each student should submit their own proposal. Academic supervisors can oversee more than one project, or more than one student on the same project, as their schedule allows.

Should projects be submitted all at once or as they are approved?
It is up to the academic institution to decide the process for submitting to Mitacs.

Can academic supervisors supervise more than one project?
Yes, if the supervisor has enough time in their schedule to manage multiple projects, there is no limit to the number of projects they can support.

Can students do this program part-time?
The award funding covers 12- to 16 weeks, which means that students can stretch 12 weeks of work into 16 weeks to allow more time for other priorities.

Program contacts

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the program, please contact us at rta@mitacs.ca.

Who am I?	Why contact me?	Contact information
Research Training Award team	Questions or concerns about the program in general or Mitacs policies, procedures, or performance	rta@mitacs.ca
Your Mitacs Grant Management Specialist	Questions about funding, payments, invoicing, or evaluations	TBD by project after acceptance
Your academic supervisor	Questions about the confidentiality of your work, publishing, which information can or cannot be shared with Mitacs, other participants, or training facilitators	TBD by academic institution

Thank you for your interest in the Research Training Award program!