

2024 Sears Undergraduate Summer Studentship Research Training Award

Application Deadline: Friday, March 15, 2024

ABOUT THE AWARD

The *Sears Undergraduate Summer Studentship (Sears Studentship)* provides financial support to enable an undergraduate student to work full time for at least 12 weeks on a research project involving data generated by the CHILD Cohort Study, under the supervision of an investigator working with CHILD data.

Sears Studentships provide capacity-building opportunities to undergraduate students interested in biomedical, health, social and/or natural science and engineering research focused on asthma, allergy, related immune/inflammatory processes and diseases, cardiometabolic disorders such as diabetes and obesity, other chronic non-communicable diseases, neurodevelopment, and in the Developmental Origins of Health and Disease (DOHaD) more generally.

Sears Studentships aim to foster interest in DOHaD research among students at the undergraduate level of study by enabling them to work with CHILD research teams. It is hoped that this experience will spark an enduring interest in health research and/or clinical practice among these students and potentially lead them to pursue advanced studies in related areas.



Dr. Malcolm Sears with four CHILD Cohort Study participants at AllerGen's 2019 Research Conference.

The *Sears Studentship* was created in 2019 to honour Dr. Malcolm Sears, the Founding Director of the CHILD Cohort Study, who led the planning of the Study from initial discussions in 2004 and served as its Director from its inception in 2007 until passing the leadership to Dr. Padmaja Subbarao in July 2017.

Dr. Sears has demonstrated leadership in asthma research for over 40 years and is globally recognized for his work. Beyond founding and leading CHILD, he is widely known for his involvement in the Dunedin birth cohort study in New Zealand and for his “paradigm-shifting” discovery that regular use of a once-commonly prescribed asthma treatment worsens rather than alleviates severe asthma. Among many other honours, in recent years he was awarded the prestigious *J. Allyn Taylor International Prize in Medicine*, the Asthma Society of Canada’s *Award for Leadership in Health Research*, and the Canadian Thoracic Society’s award for *Outstanding Contributions to Respiratory Research*. Dr. Sears is Professor Emeritus of Medicine at McMaster University, where he holds the AstraZeneca Chair in Respiratory Epidemiology. He is also a researcher at the Firestone Institute for Respiratory Health at St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton.

The [CHILD Cohort Study](#) (CHILD) is a national birth cohort study involving 3,455 families from four urban sites (Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Toronto) and one rural site (Morden and Winkler communities in southern Manitoba). The primary objective of CHILD is to better understand the genetic and environmental factors driving the global epidemics of allergy, asthma, obesity and other chronic disease, to better predict, prevent and treat these conditions in future generations.

The [Allergy, Genes and Environment Network](#) (AllerGen) is a former Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) that supports research, networking, commercialization, knowledge mobilization and capacity-building activities that contribute to reducing the morbidity, mortality, and socio-economic impact of allergic and related immune diseases. The CHILD Cohort Study is one of three legacy projects supported by AllerGen since its inception.

1.0 Eligibility

To be eligible for a *Sears Studentship*, an applicant must:

- be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, or an international student with a valid student visa;
- be enrolled in a full-time undergraduate degree program in Canada;
- have completed at least one year of undergraduate study at the time of the award AND, if he or she has completed the requirements of an undergraduate program, be enrolled in a graduate or professional degree program in Fall 2023; and
- propose to work on a CHILD-related project with a researcher who is working with CHILD data in a Canadian institution and who holds a related MITA (Materials and Information Transfer Agreement).

2.0 Value and Duration

One (1) award will be issued, providing a stipend of up to \$6,000. *An award will only be issued if an application of sufficient quality is received that fully meets the Studentship's eligibility requirements.*

Sears Studentships entail a minimum commitment of 12 full-time weeks between May 2 and August 31, 2024.

3.0 Conditions of Funding

The successful applicant will be expected to work full time for a minimum of 12 weeks on a CHILD-related research project under the supervision of an investigator working with CHILD data with an active CHILD Materials and Information Transfer Agreement (MITA) and Research Ethics approval for the project.

The successful applicant's host institution must agree to administer the Studentship and must have a confirmed supervisor at the university **prior to** applying for funding.

Students may submit only ONE application each cycle.

The *Sears Studentship* may not be held for an Honours project or research-based course for which academic credit is concurrently being obtained.

Other awards may be used to supplement ("top-up") the *Sears Undergraduate Summer Studentship*, provided this does not conflict with the policies of the secondary granting agency. All Studentship awardees will be required to submit a Final Report within 10 days of the project end-date, demonstrating progress towards the milestones and deliverables outlined in their application.

4.0 Evaluation Process

Applications will be evaluated by CHILD's Executive Committee, which will rank applications based on the following criteria:

Excellence of the Applicant	Applicant's achievements, including transcripts, publications, presentations and past experiences
Excellence of the Project	Quality and scientific merit of the proposed research, including the strength of the hypothesis, research objectives, methodology and anticipated outcomes
Quality of the Training Environment	Supervisor's research and training environment (<i>e.g.</i> , publications, grant support, number of trainees supervised, <i>etc.</i>)

The applicant's research proposal must be relevant to biomedical, health, social and/or natural science and engineering research in one or more of the following areas: developmental origins of health and disease (DOHaD); asthma; allergy; chronic non-communicable disease (*e.g.*, diabetes, obesity, cardiometabolic disorders) or related immune or inflammatory processes/diseases; neurodevelopment; and/or sleep.

5.0 Research Project Proposal

The maximum length of the project proposal is 750 words and must include:

- Expression of Interest (maximum 250 words): explain your interest in working with the CHILD Cohort Study
- Research Description (maximum 500 words): describe the proposed research project and focus; hypothesis; project objectives (maximum two); selected research methodology and its appropriateness; and anticipated research outcomes, clearly defining what will be achieved through the studentship.

6.0 Application

Applicants must complete an [online application form](#), and upload the required supplementary documentation.

A completed application must contain:

- Application form (see [Application Form Guidelines](#))
- Applicant's CV, including any applicable publications (e.g., abstracts, posters, manuscripts)
- Supervisor's CV (last 5 years, full)
- Official transcripts of all years of undergraduate study (including GPA)
- Letter of support from supervisor

Applications must be submitted electronically via the [online portal](#) no later than 11:59 pm in the applicant's time zone on Friday, March 15, 2024.

The [Application Form Guidelines](#) can help you prepare your application materials and content in advance of accessing the online portal.

Applications will be reviewed by the CHILD National Coordinating Centre for completeness and conformance to all eligibility requirements. Incomplete applications will be eliminated from the competition without further consideration.

Applicants will receive notification of award no later than April 15, 2024. *An award will only be issued if an application of sufficient quality is received that fully meets the Studentship's eligibility requirements.*

For more information contact:

CHILD Cohort Study's National Coordinating Centre
child@mcmaster.ca

Please carefully read all instructions and include all necessary documents in your application package. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the materials have been successfully submitted.