

Emily Carr University Research Assistant Guidelines

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Note: Appendices in this document are provided as reference versions. Fillable templates for supervisor use are available on the [Research + Innovation Hub](#) SharePoint site.

1. Overview and Purpose

Research Assistantships at Emily Carr University of Art + Design (ECU) are both employment opportunities and structured learning experiences. They enable students to develop research skills, receive mentorship, and build professional confidence, while supporting faculty in advancing projects that align with ECU's academic and strategic priorities.

The purpose of these guidelines is to establish a consistent and transparent framework for Research Assistant (RA) hiring and supervision. They ensure fairness, accountability, and equity across all RA roles, while recognizing that RAs are both workers entitled to fair pay and employment rights, and learners entitled to mentorship and professional growth.

These guidelines also align with ECU's [Strategic Plan 2024–2030](#), and [Strategic Research Plan 2023–2028](#), both of which emphasize student success, equity, and research excellence. RAships are a key contributor to institutional objectives and student retention: they provide meaningful engagement, skill-building, and mentorship opportunities that strengthen students' connection to ECU and their readiness for future academic and professional pathways. They also advance key performance indicators from both plans — including student participation in grant-funded research projects, expanded professional opportunities for students, and stronger community and institutional research partnerships — while enhancing ECU's capacity for creative inquiry and knowledge mobilization.

2. Intent and Scope

The intent of these guidelines is to support consistency and quality in RAships across the university, and to act as a resource for both supervisors (faculty, staff and Principal Investigators) and student RAs:

- Supervisors are given clear tools and institutional backing to manage RAs effectively, fairly, and respectfully.
- Students receive equitable access, transparent expectations, and meaningful professional development.
- ECU achieves reliability, transparency, and accountability in its RA hiring frameworks.

Scope: These guidelines apply to all internally and externally funded RA positions at ECU, including positions funded through Tri-Agency programs and external partnerships. They do not apply to postdoctoral fellows, technical staff, or professional employees, who are governed by other human resources frameworks.

These guidelines are primarily designed for RAships held by enrolled ECU students. In cases where RAs are appointed prior to enrolment or through other institutional processes, only relevant sections (e.g., onboarding, supervision, mentorship) apply. Hiring processes in these cases may follow alternative procedures aligned with institutional practices.

(See Section 4 for ECU's required practices related to equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in RA hiring).

3. Role Design and Posting

The design of RA roles should be intentional and transparent. Well-structured positions ensure equity in hiring, clarity for students on processes, and alignment with both project needs and impactful student learning experiences.

- **Role Types**

Undergraduate RAs generally support foundational tasks such as literature reviews, transcription, and data collection. Graduate RAs take on advanced responsibilities, including research design, data analysis, writing, and dissemination.

In an art and design context, undergraduate and graduate RAs may have overlapping technical or studio skill sets that can support research-creation activities working under the guidance and direction of researchers.

- **Eligibility**

RAs must be ECU students in good academic standing (minimum GPA of 2.0 for undergraduate students and 3.0 for graduate students). They must reside in British Columbia and hold valid work authorization.

- **Compensation (2026 rates)**

Research Assistants are paid hourly in accordance with ECU's established student employment rates. Current rates are published on the [ECU Student Employment Hub](#) and are updated annually.

2026 Total Hourly Rates for Reference:

- **Undergraduate RA:** \$21.16/hour
- **Graduate RA:** \$26.53/hour

NOTE: Rates are inclusive of 4% vacation pay and 4.4% statutory holiday pay.

Postings should include:

- The total hourly rate; and
 - A note indicating that this rate includes 4% vacation pay and 4.4% statutory holiday pay.
- Faculty do not need to calculate these percentages separately — as noted above, the stated total hourly rate already incorporates them. This clarification helps ensure transparency for students when reviewing postings.

- **Job Posting Requirements**

Every posting must include:

- Research project title
- Summary of the overall project
- High-level description of activities related to the role
- Eligibility criteria
- Supervisor contact information
- Compensation and hours
- Project and hiring timelines
- Position type (in-person, remote or hybrid); preferred skills/qualifications
- Application instructions
- And the following disclaimer:

“This position is contingent on external funding and may be delayed or modified depending on grant or partner commitments.”

- All postings must also include the following equity statement:

“We encourage applications from students of all backgrounds, identities, and experiences.”

Job postings should indicate that use of generative AI (GAI) in the RA role is subject to [ECU GAI guidelines](#) and any project-specific requirements.

For funding acknowledgement templates and an example job posting, see [Appendix B: Example Job Posting](#).

- **Hiring Timelines**

Postings should be circulated at least four weeks before the anticipated start date and should be publicly posted for a minimum of 10 business days to ensure broad access.

Offers (and contracts, where applicable) should be finalized no later than one week before the RA begins work. This ensures students have adequate time to apply, and onboarding processes can be completed smoothly.

- **Posting Distribution**

To ensure fairness, postings should be circulated widely through the appropriate ECU channels. This may include [The Leeway](#), Graduate Studies, Dean’s Assistants, classroom announcements, and relevant social media.

For posting support and employer connections, contact [Career Development + Work-Integrated Learning](#).

For graduate RA contexts and contacts, please reach out to gradstudies@ecuad.ca.
For wage rates, student hiring procedures and payroll forms, see the [Student Employment Hub](#).
[Employer posting guidance for ECU's opportunity board is here.](#)

4. Hiring and Interview Process

The RA hiring process must reflect ECU's values of fairness, transparency, and accessibility. Informal recruitment methods that exclude or disadvantage students are not permitted. The Research + Industry Office reserves the right to audit RA hiring processes for positions connected to Tri-Agency funding to ensure alignment with these outlined processes. Please keep appropriate records at all times.

- **Application Materials**

Applicants should provide a résumé or CV, a transcript screenshot, and one open-ended written response (which may be guided by a prompt, replacing a traditional cover letter). A portfolio or sample of work may also be requested if relevant.

- **Interview Practices**

Interviews must be scheduled fairly and conducted in accessible formats. For all interviews, copies of questions should be provided to the candidates before or during the interview. Short assignments or opportunities to show relevant work in the interview may also be used to authentically assess skills.

- **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Commitments**

The following practices support equitable, bias-reduced, and accessible hiring processes for all candidates. Supervisors must:

- Post positions broadly to reach diverse applicants.
- Use transparent evaluation criteria (e.g., a rubric or other structured assessment approach).
- Value lived and volunteer experience alongside academic credentials.
- Share questions in advance when appropriate and relevant to role assessment.
- Provide candidates with a copy of interview questions at the beginning of or during the interview, for clarity and accessibility.
- Conduct interviews with more than one evaluator to reduce bias.
- Ensure any short assignments used are brief, directly relevant to the role, and designed only to assess skills, not to generate project outputs.
- Provide accommodations (adjustments for disability or accessibility needs) through [Accessibility Services](#) when requested.

- **Funding Transparency**

Supervisors must restate during interviews that positions may depend on external funding when applicable.

University policies are listed here: [University Policies](#).

Wellness supports for applicants and students are available via [Counselling + Wellness](#).

5. Onboarding and Orientation

Onboarding ensures RAs begin their roles with clarity and appropriate support.

- **Payroll Requirements**

All student hires must complete the [Payroll Forms Package \(Student Hires\)](#) before starting work. This includes:

- Confidential payroll information, email pay advice, and TD1 federal and provincial tax forms.
- If these forms have already been submitted for another position in the same calendar year, they do not need to be resubmitted.
- Research Finance will support the hiring process and confirm any required payroll documentation. Supervisors are not responsible for providing payroll forms.

- **Orientation**

- Institutional orientation is delivered through HR onboarding processes and includes:
 - Emergency communication registration: information about the [Emily Alert Notification System](#) and maintaining current contact information.
 - Mandatory safety training: online safety orientation, active threat response orientation, and Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) training where required.

Supervisors should direct RAs to institutional onboarding and safety training and ensure completion of any role-specific safety or ethics training, as applicable.

- Project orientation is delivered by the Supervisor and includes:
 - A brief description of the project's goals and the RA's primary tasks.
 - The main communication platform (e.g., email, Teams, shared notebooks) and how often the supervisor and RA will check in.
 - How work will be assigned, how progress should be shared, and key deadlines or milestones.
 - Any project-specific requirements related to confidentiality, data storage, or access to shared drives or folders.
 - Use of generative AI (GAI), including the requirement that, in accordance with existing [ECU GAI guidelines](#), RAs must not upload, input, or otherwise disclose any research information or project materials — including interview data, research findings, analysis, or prototype development materials — to publicly available GAI tools. The use of GAI for any research project work is prohibited unless explicitly approved in advance by the relevant research project leadership.
 - Any project-specific expectations related to intellectual property, authorship, or ownership of outputs.

Supervisors should also share information about [Student Services](#) and [Counselling + Wellness](#) during orientation.

- **Consent and Media Release**

Supervisors must provide consent forms at onboarding. (See [Appendix G: Consent + Media Release Form](#) for details.)

- **Research Ethics**

Research involving human participants requires prior approval from the [Research Ethics Board \(ECU-REB\)](#) before any participant recruitment, interaction or data collection begins. Supervisors should ensure RAs are aware of relevant procedures before engaging in any participant-facing work.

6. Supervision and Mentorship

Supervision should balance accountability with mentorship. RAs are expected to conduct themselves professionally and in alignment with the role they have been hired to do, and supervisors play a key role in helping RAs develop core skills. Supervisors are also responsible for guiding students' contributions to research while fostering their growth as emerging professionals.

- Supervisors should meet with RAs regularly, ideally weekly or bi-weekly.
- Communication norms, including response times, should be established at the outset.
- Supervisors and RAs should set project and learning goals at the start.
- A midpoint review is recommended to evaluate progress.
- An end-of-term debrief is expected to support closure, reflection, and forward-looking feedback.

Professional Development

Professional development is an expected part of every RAship, supported jointly by supervisors and ECU. Supervisors should:

- Encourage attendance at research-related workshops, symposia, or artist talks.
- Provide opportunities for students to contribute to presentations, publications, or exhibitions whenever possible.
- Introduce students to aspects of grant writing, ethics applications, or knowledge dissemination.
- Support students in developing professional materials such as résumés, portfolios, and references.

([Appendix I: RA Learning and Development Agreement \(Start-Of-Term\)](#) is recommended for planning and documenting development goals).

7. Conflict Resolution, Communication, and Duty of Care

Conflicts should be addressed fairly, consistently, and as early as possible. Whenever conflicts arise, research team members are encouraged to first deal directly with the other person(s) involved and to respectfully engage in dialogue to achieve resolution.

Conflict Resolution Framework

Many conflicts can be resolved or minimized by discussing the situation in an open and respectful manner, as the other party may not be aware that a concern exists. These discussions should focus on:

- Clearly articulating the issue and how it is affecting your work or interactions.
- Expressing empathy for the other person's situation or perspective.
- Making reasonable requests about what might help resolve the concern.
- Exploring what each person can do to move toward a resolution.

These conversations should aim to resolve the issue constructively and support a productive working relationship. Active listening, clarifying questions, and a calm, respectful tone can help build mutual understanding.

If conflicts cannot be resolved directly within the research team:

Responsibilities of Research Assistants

- Step 1: Raise the Concern
 - RAs should first raise the concern with their Supervisor.
 - This includes situations where the concern involves the Supervisor, provided the RA feels safe doing so.
- Step 2: Escalate if Needed
 - If the issue is not resolved through discussion with the Supervisor, the escalation pathway is: Supervisor's Academic Dean or, where not applicable, the AVP Research → Human Resources.
- Exceptions
 - If direct conversation is not appropriate (e.g., concerns about bullying, harassment, discrimination, or safety) RAs may contact either their Academic Dean or HR directly without first involving the Supervisor. This option is intended to ensure safety and confidentiality, not to bypass normal resolution steps unnecessarily.

Responsibilities of Supervisors

- Address concerns raised by RAs in good faith and work toward resolution.
- Document discussions for transparency, especially in cases involving:
 - Performance issues
 - Repeated concerns
 - Formal complaints
- If unable to resolve the issue, follow the escalation pathway: Supervisor's Faculty Dean → Human Resources.
- RAs must be informed of institutional supports available through Accessibility Services and Counselling + Wellness.

Communication Norms

All members of a research team should communicate with one another with respect and care. Supervisors hold both academic and employment supervisory roles and should take extra care to mentor and respect their RAs.

Duty of Care

Supervisors have a duty of care for their RAs, including exercising reasonable care, diligence, and prudence to avoid foreseeable harm to others. RAs are expected to fulfill the terms of their job description and to communicate clearly with their supervisor if they are unable to do their assigned work for any reason. If a Supervisor has concerns about their RA in relation to their performance, well-being, or safety, they should review:

- Student conduct expectations, which are set out in the [Student Conduct Policy](#).
- The [Incident Reporting](#) page for guidance on reporting concerning behavior / misconduct.
- Relevant health policies: [Aftercare Policy](#) and [Assessment + Treatment Care Plan Policy](#).

8. Feedback and Continuous Improvement

Feedback is essential for continuous improvement of RAships.

- **Institutional Surveys**

The Research + Industry Office will centrally design, distribute, and analyze RA surveys twice annually (April and October). Surveys will evaluate the hiring process, onboarding, supervision quality, skill development, and overall experience. Results will be anonymized and used for institutional reporting, planning, and funding applications.

- **RA Feedback and Consultation**

RA perspectives will inform updates to these guidelines and the development and ongoing design of institutional surveys. RAs may be invited to share input through consultations or focus groups, ensuring student voices actively shape future revisions.

Questions about RA surveys and data can be directed to the Research + Industry Office: research@ecuad.ca

9. Offboarding and Alumni Engagement

RAships should provide value beyond the immediate contract.

- Supervisors should encourage RAs to participate in post-project surveys and, where applicable, to update their contact information through Alumni Relations. RAs may decline without impact on their employment record.
- RAs should be encouraged to update professional profiles (e.g., LinkedIn) where applicable.
- Supervisors are encouraged to share high-level RA outcomes (e.g., contributions to publications, exhibitions, or career pathways) with Communications + Marketing, and Advancement and Alumni Relations to support student and alumni engagement, and institutional storytelling.

Offboarding Best Practices

Structured offboarding is essential. End-of-contract reviews and debriefs provide closure, allow RAs to reflect on learning, ensure knowledge transfer, and keep ECU connected with students and alumni. Offboarding typically includes:

- Final timesheet approval and return of ECU property or project materials
- Completion of an end-of-term review or debrief conversation
- Supervisor confirmation of project wrap-up and authorship / credit / IP discussions
- Sharing post-project survey links with RAs and, where applicable, directing them to Alumni Relations

For detailed steps, please see [Appendix H: Offboarding Checklist](#) and [Appendix J: End-of-Term Review Template](#).

For alumni engagement + updates, see [Alumni Relations](#) and [Update Your Information](#).

RA Outcomes and Alumni Tracking

To demonstrate the long-term impact of research assistantships and strengthen alumni engagement, the Research + Industry Office will maintain a central RA database to track aggregate RA outcomes, skills developed, and project contributions.

Data will be collected primarily through voluntary surveys completed by students and alumni. Records may also be supplemented, where appropriate, with publicly available professional information. Any information provided directly by students and alumni will only be collected with their consent. Publicly available professional information may be used in a limited capacity to support institutional understanding of career outcomes.

All information will be stored in compliance with ECU's privacy policies and obligations under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). This system will support ECU's accountability to funders and provide evidence of long-term student success.

10. Institutional Policies and HR Resources

ECU is building standardized tools to support RA hiring and supervision. These include secure systems for handling sensitive data, consistent processes for confirming student eligibility, and baseline expectations for all student employment.

Relevant Policies

RAships must comply with the following ECU policies, each directly relevant to RA work:

- [Research Ethics Policy 5.1](#): ensures ethical practices in projects involving human participants and [Research Ethics Board SOPs 5.1.2](#)
- [Workplace Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#): guarantees safe, respectful work environments.
- [Occupational Health and Safety Policy](#): protects student well-being in labs, studios, and digital spaces.

These policies ensure that RAships are conducted ethically, safely, and equitably, and that supervisors have institutional support in managing students effectively.

HR overview is here: [Human Resources](#).

For reimbursements + purchasing forms, see [Financial Services Forms](#).

Appendix A: Job Posting Guide

Research Project Title:

Supervisor: [Name, title, contact information]

Project Summary: [Short description of project scope and goals. Include relevance to student learning.]

Eligibility:

- Current ECU student in good standing (minimum GPA 2.0 for undergraduate students and 3.0 for graduate students).
- Must reside in British Columbia and hold valid work authorization.

Compensation:

- Undergraduate RA: \$21.16/hour
- Graduate RA: \$26.53/hour

Rates are inclusive of 4% vacation pay and 4.4% statutory holiday pay.

Hours & Term: [Number of hours per week and contract start/end dates.]

Position Type: In-person, remote or hybrid

Responsibilities: [Specific tasks the RA will be responsible for, such as literature review, data collection, workshop support, or creative production.]

Preferred Skills/Qualifications: [List relevant technical skills, software knowledge, or transferable competencies such as communication, organization, or collaboration.]

Application Requirements:

- Resume or CV.
- Transcript screenshot.
- One open-ended written response (replaces cover letter).
- Portfolio or sample work, if relevant.
- Availability for interviews.

Please note that the use of generative AI in this role is subject to ECU GAI guidelines and project-specific requirements, which will be reviewed during onboarding.

Deadline: [Insert application deadline]

Funding Disclaimer: *This position is contingent on external funding and may be delayed or modified depending on grant or partner commitments.*

Appendix B: Example Job Posting

Research Project Title: Creative Futures Research Project

Supervisor: Alex Rivera, Assistant Professor, arivera@ecuad.ca

Project Summary: This project examines the role of creative practices in building community engagement. The RA will support research activities such as literature review, documentation, and workshop preparation. This role will provide the student with experience in applied research methods, collaborative project development, and translating creative practice into community contexts.

Compensation

- Graduate Student Rate: \$26.53/hour
- Undergraduate Student Rate: \$21.16/hour

Rates are inclusive of 4% vacation pay and 4.4% statutory holiday pay.

Hours & Term: 10-12 hours per week, July 1, 2026 – August 31, 2026

Position Type: In-person (remote or hybrid options are not available for this role)

Responsibilities

1. Collecting and analyzing visual references and conducting observational studies in public spaces
2. Assisting in the development and production of creative projects such as video, photography, sculpture, or sound recordings
3. Helping organize and facilitate workshops or feedback sessions with community members to collect insights

Preferred Skills/Qualifications

- Demonstrated ability to work independently and collaboratively in a team environment
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office and Adobe Creative Suite, with the ability to support document creation and layout in InDesign

Application Requirements

- Resume or CV
- Transcript Screenshot
- Please provide a short written response (max. 300 words) describing why you are interested in this project and what skills or experiences you would bring to the role
- Link to your portfolio or sample work
- Please provide your general availability for interviews

Applications should be submitted by email to Alex Rivera, arivera@ecuad.ca. Please include "RA Application – Creative Futures Research Project" in the subject line.

We encourage applications from students of all backgrounds, identities, and experiences.

Application Deadline: May 1, 2026

This position is supported by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). As the position is contingent on external funding, it may be delayed or modified depending on grant or partner commitments.

Appendix B.1: Funding Acknowledgement Templates

For RA positions funded by external grants, the following acknowledgements must be included in the job posting:

SSHRC (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council)

“This position is supported by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).”

NSERC (Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council)

“This position is supported by funding from the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC).”

(e.g., NSERC CCSIF or Mobilize grants)

Other External Funders

For positions funded through other agencies, foundations, or partner organizations, please include a comparable acknowledgement. Use funder-provided wording where available.

Appendix C: Sample Interview Questions and Equity Practices

Sample Questions

1. What interests you most about this project?
2. Tell us about a time you balanced multiple priorities.
3. Describe a collaboration you participated in and your role.
4. What skills or perspectives would you bring to this project?
5. What professional goals would you like to achieve through this role?
6. Can you share an example of relevant work (e.g., coursework, project or other experience) and walk us through your approach?

Equity Practices

- Provide interview questions in advance where possible.
- Replace cover letters with structured prompts.
- Use panel interviews to reduce bias.
- Value lived experience and volunteer work alongside academic credentials.
- Allow candidates to share examples of past work during the interview, rather than requiring a formal portfolio.
- Provide accommodation through Accessibility Services

Appendix D: Supervisor Onboarding Checklist

A fillable version of this template is available online.

Before Start Date

- ☐ Confirm the student meets the minimum GPA requirement for the position.
- ☐ Email Research Finance with the following:
 - Student Name
 - Student ID
 - Position start and end dates
 - Pay Rate (Level 1, Level 2 or Graduate Student)

At Start of Appointment

- ☐ Share project overview and expected outcomes.
- ☐ Introduce research assistant to research team and workspace.
- ☐ Review timesheet and payroll submission process.
- ☐ Review use of generative AI, and IP, ethics, and data management requirements, as applicable.
- ☐ Establish communication norms (platform, response times).
- ☐ Schedule first meeting and regular check-ins.

Within First Month

- ☐ Confirm required role-specific safety or ethics training is completed before applicable work begins.
- ☐ Hold goal-setting conversation with research assistant.

Appendix E: Midpoint Review Template

A fillable version of this template is available online.

Supervisor:	
Research Assistant:	
Project Title:	
Date:	

Tasks Completed (brief summary or bullet points):

Skills Developed:

Strengths Observed:

Challenges Identified:

Adjustments or Supports Needed:

Next Steps for Remainder of Term:

Signatures

Supervisor: _____

Research Assistant: _____

Appendix F: Timesheet and Payroll Instructions

- Timesheets must be submitted in accordance with ECU payroll processes and deadlines.
- Hours must be logged daily and submitted by the published deadlines.
- Supervisors are responsible for approving timesheets promptly.
- Final hours must be submitted and approved before the contract end date.
- Late or unapproved timesheets may result in delayed payment.

Appendix G: Consent and Media Release Form

A fillable version of this template is available online.

Name: _____

Consent to use of Name, Image, and Work

I understand that ECU may use my name, image, and/or work in ECU research documentation and communications. Providing consent is voluntary and not a condition of employment. I may withdraw or change my consent at any time without penalty.

Please select one:

Full use

☐ Use of name, image and/or work in reports, presentations, and communications.

Acknowledgment only

☐ Use of name and role only

No use

☐ No use of name, image, or work.

Signature

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Consent may be withdrawn at any time by notifying the supervisor.

Appendix H: Offboarding Checklist

Supervisor Responsibilities

- ☐ Approve final timesheet.
- ☐ Collect ECU property, data, or equipment.
- ☐ Conduct exit debrief or survey.
- ☐ Provide reference letter where appropriate.

RA Responsibilities

- ☐ Submit final hours by the published payroll deadline for the final pay period.
- ☐ Submit all relevant project files to the supervisor.
- ☐ Return ECU property and project materials.
- ☐ Optionally provide a non-ECU email for alumni tracking (voluntary).
- ☐ Update professional profiles (LinkedIn, portfolio).

Institutional Responsibilities

- ☐ Research Office shares post-project survey and supports alumni engagement, where applicable.

Appendix I: RA Learning and Development Agreement (Start-of-Term)

A fillable version of this template is available online.

Supervisor:	
Research Assistant:	
Project Title:	

Project and Role

Project Goals (Supervisor):	Research Assistant Responsibilities:

Learning and Development

Skills the RA would like to develop:

Resources or supports required (funding, time, access):

Expected Outcomes (e.g., portfolio, presentation, publication credit):

Communication Expectations:

- Primary channel: _____
- Meeting cadence: _____
- Response times: _____

Authorship / Credit / IP Expectations:

Signatures

Supervisor: _____

Research Assistant: _____

Appendix J: End-of-RAship Review Template

A fillable version of this template is available online.

Supervisor:	
Research Assistant:	
Project Title:	
Position End Date:	

Final Tasks Completed:

Skills Developed (key highlights):

Strengths Demonstrated:

Areas for Growth / Future Development (optional):

Supervisor Feedback (Summary):

Research Assistant Reflection (optional):

Next Steps (e.g., references, opportunities):

Signatures

Supervisor: _____

Research Assistant: _____