

Competition: Summer 2024

Version: 4.0

Date: January 2024

1.0 Overview of BrainsCAN

BrainsCAN is a neuroscience research initiative located at Western University that is transforming the way brain diseases and disorders are understood, diagnosed and treated. Through its innovative funding programs and core infrastructure, BrainsCAN is accelerating effective solutions for maintaining a healthy brain.

In September 2016, BrainsCAN received the largest research grant in Western University's history – a 7-year, \$66 million investment from the Government of Canada through the Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF). Through this grant, BrainsCAN is enabling Western researchers, along with national and international academic and commercial partners, to develop and deliver evidence-based assessments and interventions for the diagnosis and treatment of brain disorders. BrainsCAN research is currently underway for neurodegenerative conditions including Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Autism Spectrum Disorder, concussions, stroke and more.

BrainsCAN's goal is to reduce the burden of brain disorders, which affect nearly 3.6 million Canadians, diminishing quality of life and creating an enormous burden on society and on our health-care system. Through BrainsCAN, researchers across many disciplines of brain health are able to work together to radically transform our understanding of the brain.

2.0 BrainsCAN's Diversity in Neuroscience Summer Internship Overview

The Diversity in Neuroscience Summer Internship provides Western undergraduate students interested in cognitive neuroscience an opportunity to have an immersive experience in a research environment, along with gaining valuable skills needed to excel in academia and beyond.

The program will include participation in research projects assigned by the supervising faculty member with a senior graduate student or postdoctoral fellow overseeing the day-to-day supervision. Additionally, participants will have the opportunity to participate in virtual workshops focusing on the development of research and professional skills. All students will be encouraged to present their summer work at a local or regional conference (e.g., Neuroscience Research Day, London Health Research Day) during the calendar year following their internship.

2.1 Important Dates

- Application deadline: **March 27, 2024**
- Expected results: April 17, 2024
- Start Internship: May 2024

3.0 Funding Level and Term

This is an undergraduate summer research program involving up to a 16-week paid internship in the lab of a BrainsCAN-aligned researcher. Students will be provided with a stipend of \$11,065 (based on \$19.00 per hour plus 4% vacation pay).

4.0 Applicant Eligibility

Western undergraduate students entering their 3rd, 4th, or 5th year of studies in fall 2024, who are currently completing a degree in a STEM field that may lead to a career in neuroscience. To be eligible for this program students must identify as members of underrepresented groups in neuroscience including members of racialized groups, Indigenous persons, persons with disabilities, Black people, women, and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community. Undergraduates with intersecting underrepresented identities are particularly encouraged to apply.

5.0 Research Placement Process

During the spring of 2024, BrainsCAN will be forming a database of potential cognitive neuroscience projects. Successful candidates will be given access to this database and asked to select projects of interest to assist in the matching process. Alternatively, a candidate could have an existing relationship with a PI and directly seek a placement in their lab.

6.0 Application Process

6.1 Application Forms

Detailed instructions for applicants are provided in the application form found on the program website. The application consists of following components:

- *Research Interests*
- *Training Expectations*
- *Personal Experiences Statement*
- *Curriculum Vitae*
- *Official Transcripts*

Applicants are required to submit, as a PDF document, up-to-date official transcripts of their complete academic record.

- Up-to-date official transcripts are defined as transcripts issued by the Registrar's Office and dated or issued in the fall session of the year of the application (if currently registered) or after the last term completed (if not currently registered). Opening the envelope to scan the transcript will not render it unofficial for this purpose.
- If official transcripts are not available at the time of application, transcripts printed from the applicant's personal institution account will be allowed with official transcripts required before award finalization.

6.2 Submission to BrainsCAN

The completed application package, including all letters, must be sent to brainscan@uwo.ca by 11:59pm (Eastern time) on the day of deadline.

6.3 Equity and Diversity Survey

Please complete and submit the Self-Identification Survey found on the BrainsCAN website. The personal information collected by this survey will be used for educational, administrative and statistical purposes only and will be stored by the BrainsCAN Administration Staff to maintain confidentiality. The form is completely voluntary and will not be used in the evaluation of the application. The survey can be sent separately from the application to brainscan.edi@uwo.ca.

6.4 Troubleshooting

During the application development phase, prospective applicants are encouraged to contact the BrainsCAN team with any questions. *See section 10.0 below for contact details.*

7.0 Review Process

All applications will be reviewed by the BrainsCAN EDI Committee for “Fit to BrainsCAN’s Mandate”. Those deemed within the mandate will be scored and ranked by a review panel appointed by the EDI Committee. This panel will provide scoring to be considered by the EDI Committee during the award decision process.

7.1 Review Criteria and Weighting

- Research aptitude (65%)
- Training expectations (25%)
- Academic record (10%)

8.0 Post-award Processes

8.1 Award Acceptance

Once the award offer has been made, the candidate will be provided with the database of potential projects. The candidate, with BrainsCAN’s assistance, will have 2 weeks to finalize a placement. If an awardee is unable to find a suitable placement, they may choose to decline the award.

8.2 Funding Start Date

Successful applicants are expected to begin the award at the earliest possible date for the applicant once supervisor pairing has been established.

8.3 Recognition and Reporting

All BrainsCAN supported students should acknowledge the support of CFREF and BrainsCAN in all related presentations and publications. Successful applicants will be required to complete progress reports outlining how this grant enriched their research, contributed to transforming their research field, and developed their career. These reports will be coordinated through the BrainsCAN Project Manager.

8.4 Frequency of applications

Only one application per person is permitted per year and students are limited to partaking in one BrainsCAN internship during their time as an undergraduate at Western.

9.0 Contact information

The competition is administered by BrainsCAN's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDI Committee) (BrainsCAN@uwo.ca).