URCA FAQs for Students

1. What format can I use to write my project narrative?
The format of the write-up is not dependent on any particular accepted style. In other words, you do not need to use a particular style such as APA Style, MLA, Chicago Manual of Style, and so forth. However, the use of any of these formatting styles will help provide consistency and structure to your narrative and budget justification sections. Students should have prepared a narrative and a budget justification in collaboration with a mentor before beginning their application, as described in the URCA Student Instructions document. No letters of reference are required.

2. I received an URCA Award last academic year. Can I apply again?
- Yes, we will accept applications from those who have received an award previously.
- If you have not submitted a final report for the first award by the stated deadline for the cycle that you submitted the application, then you will need to do so by September 30th, 2024.
- If you are graduating in Fall 2024, you will need to submit the final report for the first award by September 30th, 2024 instead of December 31st, 2024.
- We will check to make sure that you have submitted a report and complied with the presentation requirement for the past award before we consider your application.

3. How much money can I receive?
There is a $1,500 maximum per project investigator, $2,000 maximum per project (for all costs), with undergraduate assistantships between $500-1,000 each investigator. Honors College students may apply for additional project funds of up to $500. However, no assistantship will be higher than $1,000.

4. What is the process for applying for an URCA?
- The first step is for the student and faculty mentor to read the URCA Application Instructions from the Undergraduate Research webpage.
- Next the **student(s) and mentor(s) should work together** to write the project description and budget request. It is important to adhere to the character and word count limits. We suggest that you compose these in Microsoft Word and then copy and paste the information into the Smartsheet Application Form.
- Once the project information is prepared, the student will submit their URCA application using this application link.
- After the application is submitted, it will be sent to your mentor's email via Smartsheet for review.

5. How do I know what my category is? Why is it important?
Most categories are clear, however, some are not as clear. For example, nursing is usually not a biomedical science, but a social science. Some Biology proposals are biomedical while others are STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). You could discuss with your mentor or talk to Director of Undergraduate Research, Dr. Tuan Tran, for clarification. It is important because the proposals are reviewed by discipline-specific reviewers.

6. **How can I be sure that my application has been accepted and approved by my mentor?**
   - After submitting an application a confirmation screen will appear, confirming that the application was submitted. After your mentor approves your application, you will receive an email notifying you of the approval.
   - If your mentor declines to approve the application, you will receive an email notifying you to contact your mentor.
   - If you submit an application that has exceeded the character count limits, you will receive an email notifying you that the application will not be reviewed. You may then revise and submit a new application that adheres to the character count limits. If you feel that you received this in error, please contact Dr. Tuan Tran at trant@ecu.edu immediately.

7. **I submitted my application before the deadline, but my mentor has not yet approved it. Will my application still be reviewed?**
Yes. As long as your application was submitted before the deadline your application will be reviewed for funding. In this situation, we will follow-up directly with your mentor to ensure that they approve of your application.

8. **When will I find out if my application has been awarded?**
Each URCA application is carefully reviewed by URCA committee members. Do refer to the timetable in the URCA Application Instructions.

9. **How can these funds be used?**
The short answer is that the approved budget is provided in the award notification and the funds should be used as indicated in your application budget. The budget can be adjusted with approval from the Office of Undergraduate Research by emailing Dr. Tuan Tran (trant@ecu.edu).

The long answer is that these are state funds and must be used in accordance with that policy. There are some purchases that are specifically not allowable from state funds. Examples include but are not limited to the following:
   - Alcoholic beverages, "setups", drinks, or food items;
   - Contributions and donations;
   - Food, coffee, tea, drinks, bottled water, candy, snacks, break refreshments, etc., except for those provided under university and state travel regulations. The State Budget Manual gives specific requirements and limitations for internal and external conferences.
   - Gifts or items of recognition
   - Paper products (cups, napkins, plates, utensils, etc.);
   - Personal clothing items or t-shirts which are not part of required uniforms, safety related, or required program-related;
   - Personalized or personal use items (Kleenex, hand sanitizer, desk name plates, personal memberships, wireless routers for home use, etc.).
   - Pre-payments;
   - Student registration fees unless on official state business;
   - Rental fees for non-State owned buildings for retreats, meetings, etc.

10. Can I use the funds to pay other students or professionals?
Generally, these funds cannot be used to pay others for work contributing to a project.

11. I have already paid for project materials. Can I be reimbursed?
Due to the administrative burden of processing reimbursements, we highly discourage students using URCA funds to reimburse themselves for project-related purchases they made prior to receiving the award. Departments may deny these types of requests.

12. I was awarded an Undergraduate Assistantship, but I have not received these payments. What should I do?
Please reach out to your mentor and the departmental funds administrator that was listed on your application. These must be paid out by the time you graduate or by mid-June, whichever is first.

13. How are spending deadlines determined?
- To allow some flexibility in spending, students can choose which semester (in the URCA application) they will be intending to work on their project. Extensions can be granted but cannot be granted past the students' graduation date or mid-June of the current year (whichever comes first).
- These are state funds, therefore the mid-June deadline is firm to allow for expenditures to be fully encumbered ahead of the June 30th fiscal year deadline for the university.
- **The actual purchasing deadline will be determined by the purchase type (technology, University Storeroom, etc.) and the purchasing method (Port, ProCard, etc.).** Please contact [Materials Management](#) for information on specific purchasing deadlines.
- **When completing Undergraduate Research Assistantship Contracts, the contract and EPAF will need to have been properly routed and completed in accordance with the HR deadlines to have all funds paid out by mid-June or the student's graduation date (whichever comes first).**
- Questions regarding Assistantship Contracts should be directed to ugassistantships@ecu.edu.
- Questions regarding EPAFs should be directed to Keisha Brown (brownla@ecu.edu)
- Any unspent funds after mid-June are not returned to our office, they are returned to the state.

14. Can I have an extension to spend the funds?
Please contact Dr. Tuan Tran (trant@ecu.edu). Extensions cannot be granted past mid-June.

15. What if I have additional questions?
Please contact Dr. Tuan Tran (trant@ecu.edu).