I. Contact

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II. Important Dates

Fall
- September – early October: interview students
- September – October: students begin working on research
- First week of October: URS Contracts due
- 5pm – 6pm Wed.: URS weekly seminar
- Mid-December: Fall semester grade report (email)

Spring
- February: Undergraduate Symposium abstract review and approval
- April: Undergraduate Symposium
- April (end): URS Banquet
III. The URS Course: Key Information

A. Purpose of the course
URS (listed as Inter – L&S 250) is a two-semester course for first and second year undergraduates to participate in the research and creative work of faculty and staff campus wide. Students are expected to stay with their mentors throughout the academic year.

URS is designed specifically for early undergraduates who have little to no background or experience, but are motivated to participate and grow through their efforts. Each year approximately 200 students take URS, participating in areas of investigation as diverse as molecular biology, physics, art history, economics, theatre, sociology, archaeology, genetics, textile art, political science, engineering, psychiatry, dance, social work and much more.

B. Course design

1) The core of URS is the partnership forged between student and mentor through the student’s research experience. Developing this partnership depends on how you guide the student as his/her mentor. Mentors guide students in learning many aspects of a research process including but not limited to:

1. Data gathering techniques
2. Critical reading of literature
3. Developing a thesis, question, and/or hypotheses
4. Research design
5. Presenting research results; communicating research
6. Careers in research
7. Research writing (proposals, writing for research in process, etc.)
8. Research ethics

URS course evaluations and exit interviews show students find their experience in URS a major influence in shaping their educational and career paths and helping them succeed in the crucial transition to college. Compared to their peers, URS students declare their majors earlier, finish
their degrees at a higher rate, and finish with higher GPA’s even though many enter UW-Madison with comparatively lower ACT and other test scores. For these and similar reasons URS is recognized as a high impact educational experience. We attribute this successful impact to your involvement and commitment as a mentor.

2) All URS students attend a weekly 1-hour seminar. There are 9 seminar sections, each with about 15-18 students. Each section is led by two Fellows, upper-level undergraduates with research experience who are trained and supervised by URS staff. These peer-led seminar sections comprise the “classroom” component of URS. They foster a diverse, close-knit learning community among students. Note: the seminars are mandatory, meeting every Wednesday from 5:00pm – 6:00pm each semester (see p. 1, “Important Dates”).

The sections are diverse by virtue of students’ research areas, intellectual interests, and background and experience. Students are exposed to each other’s research, thus to how research happens in various areas and modes of inquiry. They practice writing and presenting their research/creative work. They develop their critical thinking regarding research-relevant societal issues beyond the immediate research project. Students must complete required writing and presentation assignments including but not limited to:

- Response papers to critically analyze their own research/creative work, that of their classmates, and research in different fields
- Position papers to develop their thinking in regard to research- and arts-related societal issues
- Presentations during the fall and spring to practice integrating and articulating the research, develop a presentation style, and share work across fields/projects
- A research abstract as part of the spring semester application to the Undergraduate Symposium
- A final research summary/report, due at the end of the spring semester

Peer leadership fosters an atmosphere of frank discussion without attempting to impress or get
the right answer. Fellows lead in part by encouraging students to develop and articulate their own ideas and arguments through academic engagement (theses, types of evidence, chains of logic, etc.). Fellows also encourage students to explore curricular tracks, post-graduation options, and more.

3) During the spring semester (April) each URS student will present his/her research in a talk, poster, or roundtable session at the campus wide Undergraduate Symposium. You must approve the student’s research abstract to ensure his/her acceptance to the Symposium (see p. 1, “Important dates”). This abstract will be published in the Symposium program. Please work with the student as he/she develops both abstract and presentation. It will likely be the student’s first formal research presentation, needing substantial guidance to be a successful and rewarding experience.

C. Admission to URS

URS is a two-semester experience. Admitted students enter in the fall semester and register for URS research credits that fall and the following spring. All freshmen and sophomores are eligible for URS, as well as new transfer students who might particularly benefit from being involved in the program during their first year at UW-Madison. URS purposively recruits students from underrepresented populations (e.g. students of color, women in science and engineering, first-generation college students).
IV. What You Need to Know About Working with the URS Student

A. Interview and Contract: how students begin working with you

1) Interview. Each student begins URS at an orientation meeting during or before the first week of class. At this orientation the student identifies 2 opportunities of interest from a binder containing all opportunities Faculty and Staff have submitted. (We do not make these opportunities available to students outside of URS.) Please let us know the maximum number of students you would like to contact you.

The student contacts potential research mentors, usually via email, to make interview appointments. Throughout September, please look for emails from interested students asking to set up an interview with you. Both you and the student have a choice about working together. The decision should be mutual. The interview process should be geared toward learning about interests, what the project entails, your expectations, aspects of the research process the student will be exposed to (see list p. 2), etc.

You may have several students to interview and choose from. Please choose as early as is feasible. This will help the remaining students find other opportunities quickly and efficiently. If you have any questions in the process contact the Assistant Director immediately.

2) Contract. Every URS student must work out the expectations and duties of the research or creative project with the mentor. Mentor and student must write these details on the URS research contract. Both you and the URS student must sign and date the contract, and the student must submit it to URS by the first week of October.

The contract helps ensure clear and up-front communication of expectations and what the student can hope to accomplish/learn (see final page). It should clearly outline:

a) tasks for which the student is responsible
b) number of hours/week the student is expected to work
c) aspects of a research process (see list p. 2) the student will be learning

d) *number of credits – 2 or 3 – appropriate for the student’s time invested

*If a student is expected to work with you 4-6 hours per week, 2 credits is appropriate. For 7-12 hours a week, 3 credits are appropriate. If you find during the semester that the student is averaging more or fewer hours than expected, please contact the URS Assistant Director and the credit load will be adjusted accordingly.

B. Mentoring the URS Scholar

We ask that you, or a post-doc or graduate student under your direct supervision, take an active role throughout your student’s research experience. The tasks you assign and the learning goals you set can help the student develop deeper understanding, engagement and excitement about research. It would also help to schedule regular conversations with your students about their progress during the course of the semester and year.
C. Evaluating the URS Scholar

Since URS can involve research experiences in areas from engineering to nursing and from music and to biology, the course is placed in the L&S Interdisciplinary Department. On the UW transcript, the course will appear as “Inter L&S 250, Undergraduate Research Experience.” The course title makes clear that students have participated in a research-based class.

The research component of the course – the work students do with their mentors – comprises 75% of the student’s grade. Towards the end of the semester you will be contacted by email and asked to submit a grade for the student(s) working with you. The scholar’s participation in the required seminar is 25% of the grade. The URS Assistant Director, Hannah Bailey, will submit the final grades to the Registrar.

We encourage you to meet periodically with your student(s) and make your grading expectations clear so that s/he will not be in for any surprises when a grade is reported. If at any time your scholar is not performing as expected, please contact URS staff so that we may address the situation. We suggest the following guidelines when evaluating your scholar’s grade at the end of the semester:

A  Exceptional. Student took initiative or performed all duties above and beyond expectations.

AB  Active engagement in research activity, completed all assignments, reported to work regularly and for expected number of hours, developed new skills and applied them appropriately.

B  Did not fully meet expectations. Somewhat engaged in research activity, did not always work expected number of hours, no evidence of new or improved ability for systematic inquiry.

BC-C  Below expectations. Minimal initiative and engagement. Poor performance in all areas.

Below C  Very Poor performance in all areas.
D. URS and Federal Work Study Policy
Students in URS are permitted to earn Federal Work Study (FWS) pay for part of the work they do as a research assistant in the URS Program if they are eligible for FWS funds and if the research mentor has funds to pay the “employer” portion of the salary. Students should not be paid for the hours they earn degree credit. The Research Mentor’s Departmental office is responsible for collecting the reports of FWS hours worked (time sheets) and for processing them so scholars are paid. Scholars may not earn more than their FWS allocation per semester. The Departmental office is required to have on file a description of the scholar’s work position paid for by the FWS funds. The Student Financial Services Office will assist you and your scholar in every way possible to work out this arrangement. Please note that the URS Program does not have FWS funds for URS Scholars.

Scholars may also earn pay for their URS related research if the Research Mentor has grant or other funding available to support student workers, though URS scholars generally only expect to earn credit for their work.

V. Global Scholars Research Award
The Global Scholars program is a new initiative through URS to help undergraduate students develop a research component of their experience abroad. It is meant to help offset the costs of research, but is not meant to be the primary source of funding. Awards are given to projects in all disciplines, and range from $500 - $2000 depending on length of stay and project costs. Research can be conducted during any time of the year. Some funds are still available. Please contact URS for more information.
URS Scholar/Research Mentor Research Contract

Scholar: Please copy this form, keep one copy and give the other to your URS Fellows by OCTOBER 3rd.

Scholar’s Name _______________________________ UW ID Number ______________________
Email ______________________________________
Date __________________________

Research Mentor (to whom the student directly reports)
Name _______________________________ Email _______________________________
Highest degree completed _______________________________
Title, Dept., School/College _____________________________________________________

Additional Mentor (who will assign the grade, if different from above)
Name______________________________ Email _______________________________
Highest degree completed _______________________________
Title, Dept., School/College _____________________________________________________

Project Title ________________________________

Hours/Week of Work (formal and informal meetings with mentor, independent and collaborative work, etc.) _______
Equivalent number of INTER-L&S 250 Credits (circle one): 2cr (4-6 hrs/week) 3cr (7-10 hrs/week)
Scholar’s URS Fellows ________________________________

Aspects of research in which the scholar will learn (check all that apply and add what is missing)

- Data generation/gathering techniques
- Developing a thesis, question, and/or hypotheses
- Presenting research results; communicating research
- Research writing (writing a proposal, writing for research in process, etc.)
- Research ethics
- Other(s): ________________________________

- Critical reading of literature
- Research design
- Data analysis/interpretation
- Methodology
- Careers in research

Any specific tasks for which the scholar will be responsible (list clearly, use back if necessary):

______________________________________________________________
URS Scholar Signature, Date ________________________________

______________________________________________________________
Research Mentor Signature, Date ________________________________