B.C.-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA)

Student Recruitment and Management
Policies and Procedures

Policy Synopsis

This policy explains the context for student participation in BALTA research projects including SSHRC requirements on how we can employ and compensate students. It provides guidance for informal (non-paid) student involvement in BALTA-affiliated research and more extensive guidance on formal recruitment, hiring and management of students.

Specific policy sections address:
- ➢ The Role of Students within BALTA
- ➢ Approval of Hiring of Students
- ➢ Hiring of Students
- ➢ Payments to Students
- ➢ Coordination and Support of Student Research
- ➢ Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

Context – SSHRC's Policies on Students and Supervising Personnel

BALTA's funding for hiring and support of students is provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). SSHRC policies on the hiring and support of students impose specific requirements on BALTA. Therefore, our policies and procedures are designed to meet both SSHRC's expectations and our own needs.

SSHRC provides funds to BALTA for student research assistanceships to enable students to participate, *as a learning experience*, in research conducted by BALTA-affiliated academics and community-based researchers. SSHRC funds can be used to support students in several ways:

- ➢ To pay students to be involved in specific research activities/projects;
- ➢ To cover student travel, principally to attend relevant BALTA meetings, but also for relevant research activities;
- ➢ To cover other research related costs (e.g. supplies, communications), though our funding for this is limited and we are anticipating that in most cases partner organizations will provide such support as an in-kind contribution to BALTA.

The Role of Students within BALTA

Student researcher involvement may include employment as a student research assistant. In other cases, students may become involved on a more informal and limited basis, e.g. through student projects for particular courses. It must be stressed that student involvement in BALTA research is supported by SSHRC as a means towards **student learning of research skills**. In all cases where students are involved in research projects/activities, there must be an academic or community based researcher (or group of researchers) leading that research. Provision must be made for clear supervision of the student(s). Student learning through the research activity/project, including any relevant training, must be ensured. There must also be a clear

process for monitoring and evaluation of students regarding both their research activities and the learning that occurs on the part of the students.

Student involvement in BALTA-affiliated research may be relatively brief or may become more involved over a longer period of time, serving within a series of research projects/initiatives.

NB: The balance of these guidelines are addressed to requirements and procedures for hiring of students, rather than for the more informal involvement of students, e.g. through course assignments. However, it is recommended that the spirit of these guidelines still be applied in an appropriate, albeit more modest, fashion, specifically:

> ➢ While individual contracts or agreements with each student may not be appropriate, relevant terms of reference (TOR) for any research role involving a student or group of students should still be specified in writing within a relevant document (e.g. a course assignment description). It is suggested that a copy of such TORs be filed with BALTA's Coordinator to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of BALTA's overall program. The BALTA Coordinator and Student Program Coordinator should also be given the names and educational programs of all students involved in BALTA related research.
> ➢ All research conducted under BALTA's auspices must conform to ethical research standards, including research activities involving students. Please see the BALTA document, *Ethical Review Process - Simplified*, for further information.
> ➢ Provision must be made for adequate supervision and suitable learning opportunities for students within the research activity.
> ➢ Provision should be made for appropriate monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the activity and students involved to enable BALTA to track project progress and report to funders. Please consult with the BALTA Coordinator to determine an appropriate approach.
> ➢ Provision should be made for appropriate documentation and dissemination of any research results with the BALTA Coordinator.

Approval of Student Research Positions

The starting point for approval of the hiring of a student is normally approval within BALTA of a specific research project/activity (see document, *Development and Approval of SERC Workplans and Project Proposals*). Given BALTA's limited financial resources, it is only possible to consider student hiring for projects/activities that have been approved as a priority for BALTA. (NB: This does not preclude students being involved informally in research or being hired by BALTA affiliated institutions using non-BALTA financial resources.) All student positions should be identified and described (with anticipated responsibilities) within the project plan.

Approval for hiring student researchers will normally involve these steps:

1. Development and approval by a SERC of its annual workplan and specific research projects. Any requests for BALTA funded student researchers must be identified.
2. Steering Committee ratification of a SERC's workplan will include approval of specific student hiring.
3. Project lead researchers will work with BALTA's Student Program Coordinator to recruit a student or students for the project (see next section on Recruitment & Hiring of Students).
4. Once a student is selected, a contract will be developed by the project lead and the BALTA Coordinator using the template provided by BALTA. The finalized contract will go to BALTA's Coordinator and Lead Investigator for approval and signature.
5. The BALTA Coordinator will inform the Steering Committee and SERC Co-Chairs of the hiring.

In some cases, where a project proposal arises outside of an annual workplan and is believed to be a high priority, there may be an opportunity for the project to be approved. Approval of the project by the Steering Committee (or its designate) will be required before any hiring can occur.

Recruitment and Hiring of Students

The recruitment path for a student to work on a project may take a variety of forms, for example:

- ➢ The project lead(s) may already have identified a specific student to work on the project prior to project approval, e.g. a graduate student being supervised by a project lead;
- ➢ A student who has already been working on other BALTA research may be directly recruited to work on a new project;
- ➢ A student may be identified as part of general BALTA 'pre-selection' recruitment postings and be selected from this pool of already available candidates;
- ➢ A targeted recruitment effort, e.g. within a specific institution, may be used; or
- ➢ A general job posting may be used, with a competitive interview process being used to select the successful candidate.

Any of these, and other, approaches may be appropriate in specific circumstances. The project proposal should identify the specific recruitment strategy to be used and this will be approved by the SERC and Steering Committee as part of the project approval.

Once approval has been given to proceed with student hiring, the project lead will work with both the BALTA Coordinator and the Student Program Coordinator to see through the recruitment and hiring process. Where recruitment will involve a job posting or selection from an existing pool of students, the project lead should develop a job description, providing as many details as possible to the Student Program Coordinator. This should include the **skills required, timelines and approximate pay for the position**. The Student Program Coordinator can provide examples from earlier postings to assist project leads.

In general, the Student Program Coordinator will provide assistance with the recruitment process, including ensuring that the posting is distributed widely and appropriately. However, project leads are also expected to make an effort to disseminate the posting within their departments/institutions/networks.

The project lead has the authority to shortlist applicants for a position and to select the student to be hired. However, **for employment agreements of more than 12 months in length, the Steering Committee will need to approve** the student being hired. The project lead is also responsible for notifying all interviewees as to whether they are hired or not.

Students hired with SSHRC funding must meet one of the following legal statuses: Canadian citizen, permanent resident, or holder of a valid Canadian employment visa or work permit issued by the federal government.

In most cases, students will be hired and paid by the BALTA secretariat (Canadian Centre for Community Renewal), but supervised by BALTA members within specific BALTA partner organizations. However, in some cases the student will be directly hired and paid by a BALTA partner. In this case, once the hiring of a student (or students) has been approved within BALTA, the BALTA secretariat (Canadian Centre for Community Renewal) will draw up an agreement with the specific institution or organization specifying the approved project and student hiring, the funds being paid and other terms. Upon signing of the agreement, funds will be disbursed to the institution or organization to cover the costs of the student(s) and any other approved costs.

The contract/agreement for each student hired should follow the relevant template (either CCCR hire or non-CCCR hire) for BALTA contracts. The templates are available from the BALTA Coordinator.

Payments to Students

In general, students cannot receive payment for involvement in research where they are receiving other direct credit/compensation for that involvement (e.g. course credit).

To be fair to both the student and the project, payments should be linked to the number of hours of work. The following salary levels should be applied to BALTA funded projects:

    Junior Researcher - Level 1   - $16.00 per hour
    Junior Researcher - Level 2   - $20.00 per hour
    Senior Researcher - Level 1   - $23.00 per hour
    Senior Researcher - Level 2   - $25.00 per hour

In determining the appropriate level of salary, the following should be considered:

- Junior Researcher - Level 1 - Basic research tasks under fairly close supervision. Typical of what a senior undergraduate might perform.
- Junior Researcher - Level 2 - More advanced research tasks under fairly significant direction. Typical of what a Master's level student might perform.
- Senior Researcher - Level 1 - More advanced and independent research, generally requiring some significant existing research skills. Some broad direction and supervision, but requires significant independent initiative. Typical of what a PhD or advanced Master's student might perform.
- Senior Researcher - Level 2 - Requiring advanced and complex research work and significant existing skills. Typically will have minimal direct supervision and may require supervising other students. This would usually be a PhD student.

Recommended salary levels will be reviewed on an annual basis. In some cases, students may be hired directly by a partner institution, which has its own rates, which would then apply.

Employer paid statutory benefits (CPP, EI, WCB, holiday pay) can be budgeted on top of the student salary, as can any non-discretionary benefits (e.g. insurance benefits that might be required for all employees of an organization as part of official policy – contact BALTA's Coordinator if you require clarification). For students that are receiving other SSHRC funding, please check with BALTA's Coordinator to confirm eligibility.

BALTA also has limited resources for student travel, mainly to facilitate some student participation in relevant BALTA meetings. Criteria will be developed for determining which students might be invited and have their travel costs paid. It is anticipated that support costs related to specific research projects (e.g. local travel, supplies) will generally be covered by the partner institution or organization employing the student as an in-kind contribution to BALTA. However, in particular cases where such costs are more onerous or the particular institution/organization is unable to assume such costs, exceptions will be considered by BALTA. These costs should be reflected in the proposed project budget. It should be remembered that BALTA's resources are limited.

Coordination and Support of Student Research

Overall coordination and monitoring of student involvement in BALTA is the responsibility of both the BALTA Coordinator and the Student Program Coordinator, who will assist with student researcher approval and recruitment, preparation of a job description and contract/agreement for employment, identification of any training needs and resources, monitoring of student learning, etc.

Leadership and direction to specific research projects/activities and the students involved in them will come broadly from the relevant SERC and from the specific SERC member(s) and/or other researcher(s) involved in the research. In addition to their roles with respect to approving student hiring, SERCs will monitor all research projects under their auspices and address any issues which may arise, bringing them to the attention of the BALTA Coordinator.

Project lead researchers and supervisors are responsible for identifying what support and training individual students may require and ensuring that proper orientation, support and training is provided, as well as supervising students during the course of the research. Where relevant and feasible, the BALTA Coordinator will meet with students as part of BALTA's monitoring and evaluation of student involvement in BALTA's work.

Both the BALTA Coordinator and the Student Program Coordinator will also assist with identifying opportunities for dissemination of research results and the Student Program Coordinator will identify other opportunities for student learning (e.g. through attendance at annual BALTA colloquia and other relevant educational events).

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

There are two aspects of this, which are relevant:
> ➢ Monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the research itself and research results;
> ➢ Monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the student's performance and learning.

The BALTA Coordinator will work with project leads to ensure that monitoring, evaluating and reporting expectations are built into research project plans and student employment contracts. Minimally, students and supervisors will both be expected to submit written evaluations at the conclusion of a research project. Other evaluation approaches may also be used in specific circumstances.

Further Questions, Information and Action

For general matters concerning students and questions related to student involvement, please contact the Student Program Coordinator:

Lena Soots
Student Program Coordinator
PhD Candidate
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
Email: lsoots@sfu.ca
Phone: 778-782-3972

For matters concerning student contracts, employment and evaluation, please contact the BALTA Coordinator:

Stuart Wulff
BALTA Coordinator
c/o Canadian Centre for Community Renewal
Port Alberni, BC
Email: balta@xplornet.com
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