This document includes:

1. Sample text for approaching potential referees for your ERA application. We suggest keeping the initial request simple rather than bombarding them with information – explain a little bit about the program, the expectations of the letter writer, the deadline, and send them a copy of your CV and possibly research highlights.

2. Sample text for the follow up to referees who agree to write letters. Note that referees are expected to provide evaluations of your proposal and HQP training plan, so you will need to provide your proposal and training plan to your referees. We strongly recommend that you prepare a bulleted summary of the highlights of your research background and proposal strengths, in the categories of adjudication. (Your letter writers will appreciate any guidance that you can give them, especially if it helps make it easier for them to write the letter.)

3. URS Recommendations for Arm's Length ERA Referees.
Sample text for approaching potential referees:

Dear Dr. XX,

(Optional: if this is someone who may or may not remember you, remind them who you are – e.g. It was so nice meeting you at Conference X in 20YY; I greatly enjoyed hearing your talk about ZZ/hearing your feedback about my work on AA).

I am working on an exciting new project and applying for an Early Researcher Award (ERA) to supplement my funding. I need letters of support from internationally-recognized, arm’s length referees (non-collaborators/co-authors) to support my application. Would you be willing to act as one of my referees? Your letter would be expected to comment on my research excellence and potential, as well as provide an evaluation of the proposed research with reference to the adjudication categories. (Optional: one-to-two sentence description of the project.)

I have attached my CV for your information, and included additional details about the ERA program below.

Please let me know if you would be willing to provide a letter of support. The deadline for letters of support is October 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2019.

Sincerely,

YY.

Information about the Early Researcher Awards Program:
The ERA program, established by the provincial government of Ontario, Canada, helps leading researchers in the early stages of their academic career attract talented people to their team. ERA funding ($100,000 cash over a period of five years) builds research teams of undergraduates, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, research assistants, associates, and technicians.

When making decisions, the ERA Board relies heavily on letters of support to provide objective evaluations of the researcher and the proposed research. Reference letters that only modestly describe a candidate’s potential and research excellence or that were insufficiently enthusiastic have been cited in the critiques of unsuccessful applications.

The Board looks for letters that enthusiastically support:

1. the research excellence and potential of the candidate;
2. the excellence, importance, promise, and impact of the proposed research project;
3. its training value and contribution to the highly qualified personnel (HQP); and
4. the strategic value of the project for Ontario.
Follow up email to referees who have agreed to write a letter:

Dear Dr. XX,

Thank you for agreeing to provide a letter of support for my Early Researcher Award application, due Wednesday, October 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2019.

To help you draft your letter, I have attached my ERA research proposal and training plan, CV, a highlights summary sheet, and suggested recommendations for ERA letter writers.

Please let me know if you have any questions about my research proposal or research history.

If you have questions about drafting your letter, or if you would like to have your letter reviewed confidentially by a research projects advisor at Queen's, please contact Jennifer Chen at jc290@queensu.ca.

Sincerely,

YY.

(Attach following as PDF – file is available on URS website)
Recommendations for Referees Supporting Applicants to the Early Researcher Awards Program

Please note that letters are due by **October 2nd, 2019**. If you have any questions or would like to have a draft of your confidential letter reviewed, please contact Dr. Jennifer Chen at jc290@queensu.ca.

Your letter will be reviewed by a multidisciplinary committee including individuals lacking expertise in your field. Therefore, please avoid using technical language, and explain any field-specific acronyms or abbreviations for the committee.

Please address your letter to:

ERA Selection Committee  
Early Researcher Awards Program  
Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade  
Research, Science and Strategy  
2 Queen Street East 3rd Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Please confirm your arm's length relationship to the candidate:

- Please indicate that you are providing a letter of support for <name of candidate>, and briefly describe the nature of your relationship, including how long you have known the candidate and/or their work.
- Please note that you have never collaborated or published with the candidate (if you have, please indicate that it was X number of years ago, that you are not actively collaborating and that there is no conflict of interest), and that you are not and have never been a colleague. *To ensure that there is no doubt regarding the arm's length nature of your relationship, please state clearly that you are confident that you can offer an unbiased opinion of their work and proposal.*
- N.B: Please do not overstate your familiarity with the candidate, as this may negatively impact the eligibility of your letter – a common criticism of unsuccessful applications is that reference letter writers were not sufficiently "arm's length".

Please comment on the candidate and their proposal in the following four categories (you may want to use the categories as topic headings in your letter):

1. **Excellence of the Candidate:**
   - Please tell the reviewers what in your opinion makes the candidate stand out from other early career researchers in your discipline: the reviewers are looking for evidence of excellent independent research, with a high degree of originality, significance and impact.
• Please comment on the candidate’s current and potential national and/or international standing: successful candidates are expected to have already established a reputation in their field as independent researchers and have evidence of a high likelihood of improving their standing based on their records (for example, high impact publications or projects, participation in your discipline’s societies, conferences, invited talks, high profile or significant public outreach).

• If relevant to your discipline, please comment on the candidate’s funding and publishing records: successful candidates will have superior records when compared to their peers.

• Please highlight any other relevant information that in your opinion indicates the substantial/exceptional contributions made by the candidate to your field (especially but not limited to those made as an independent researcher).

2. Quality of the Proposed Research
   • Please evaluate the proposed research, including its originality/vision, strengths/excellence of the proposal quality, and relevance of the methodologies – your letter will play a vital role in the scientific review of the application, given that the selection committee is multidisciplinary.

3. Development of Research Talent/Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP)
   • Please comment on the high quality of the training plan and environment for the trainees involved in the proposed research; successful applications will clearly outline how training is unique and leading edge

   • If applicable, please comment on the candidate’s track record of high-quality training.

4. Strategic Value to the Province of Ontario
   • Please comment on how the proposed ERA research and training plan have exceptional strategic value to the Province of Ontario in one or more of the following categories.
     o economic benefits
     o knowledge transfer
     o enhancement of the province’s profile in the global academic community
     o social/cultural benefits
     o other

Please email an electronic copy of your signed letter (on letterhead, if appropriate) to Queen’s University Research Services at earlyresearcheraward@queensu.ca by Wednesday, October 2nd, 2019.