

# Gaining Research Experience Workshop

Facilitators: Michelle & Maria

Psychology Undergraduate Mentorship Program (P.U.M.P.)  
@ York University

# Meet your facilitators :)

Michelle Au

MA 2 student in Developmental  
Psychology



Maria Orlando

MA 1 student in Brain Behaviour  
and Cognitive Sciences

# Overview

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1. Why get involved with research?
  2. What does being an RA look like?
  3. What are my research interests?
  4. How to find research opportunities?
  5. How to apply/make contact with profs?
  6. How to make the most of the experience?
  7. Resources
  8. Q & A!
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# Why get involved in research?



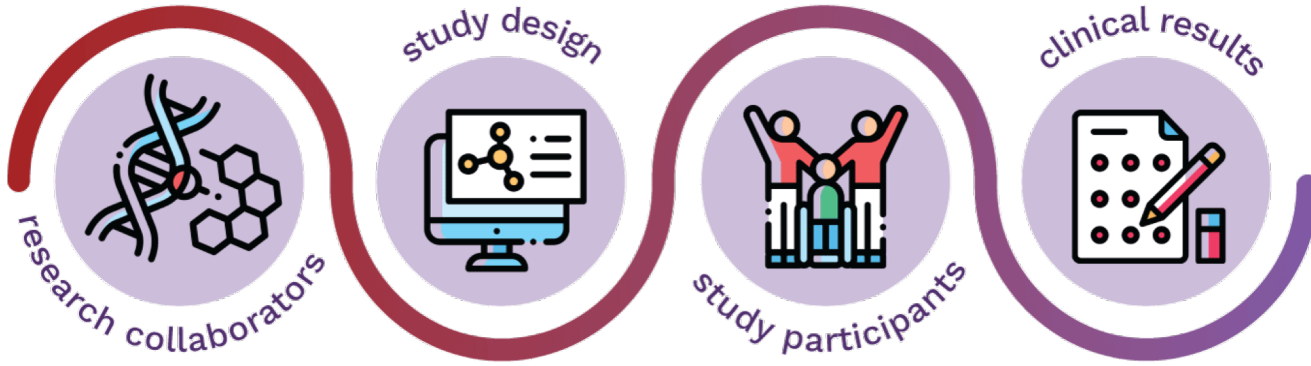


# Why should I get involved?

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- Gain exposure and appreciation for academic research
- Research experience is a must for most graduate programs (clinical AND experimental)
- Get a sense of what graduate school is like
- Helps narrow down and explore your research interests
- Learn a variety of important skills
- Build connections with individuals at different levels of academia
- Can lead to future research positions
- Compensation (volunteer, paid, or course credit)

# What does being an RA look like?



# What does being an RA look like?

## **Responsibilities**

- Commit about 8-10 hours/week
- Recruit participants
- Collect data (testing or interviewing participants)
- Transcribe interviews
- Data entry
- Analyze data
- Assist in creation of experimental stimuli and paradigms
- Conduct a literature review
- Attend lab meetings


# What does being an RA look like?

## **Skills**


- Develop "people" skills working with different populations
- Refine organizational skills
- Learn different software tools (e.g. Microsoft Office, E Prime, Qualtrics)
- Learn coding and statistical analysis skills (e.g. R, SPSS, MATLAB)
- Gain exposure to other research techniques (neuroimaging, eye tracking)
- Gain experience presenting and improve public speaking skills

# What are my research interests?

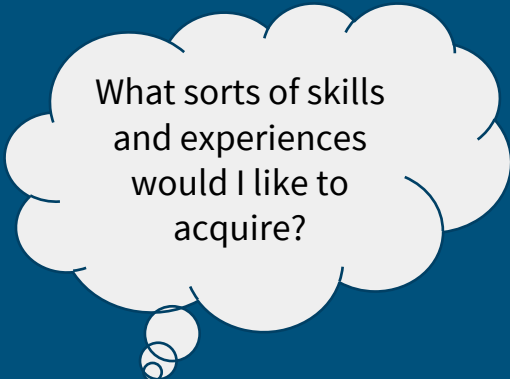


A white thought bubble with a black outline and a small tail at the bottom left.

Were there any  
research studies I  
found particularly  
interesting?


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What were the  
most interesting  
topics to me in  
PSYC 1010?

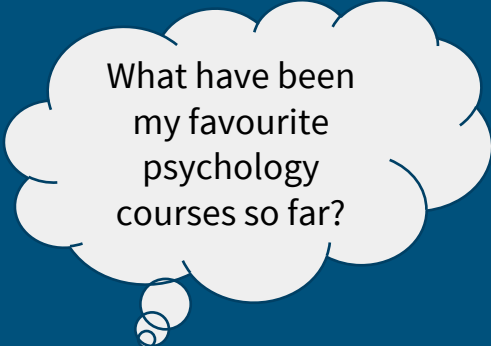
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What sorts of skills  
and experiences  
would I like to  
acquire?

**Ask yourself...**

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What would I like  
to learn more  
about?

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What have been  
my favourite  
psychology  
courses so far?

# What are my research interests?

## How to identify research articles you are interested in?

- Visit faculty members' profile page and lab website
- [York University Libraries](#)
  - ResearchGate
  - Google Scholar
  - PubMed
  - Database (e.g., PsychINFO, Medline)
- Can ask the prof and grad students for recommendations

# How to find research opportunities?





# How to find research opportunities?

**Identify some full-time faculty members you would like to work with:**

- Start with your professors and TAs!
- Search the institution's department webpage for a list of faculty members and their research interests (most common way)
- Sign up for psychology undergrad email lists
- Check official postings on social media (Facebook groups, Twitter, LinkedIn)
- Consider researchers outside of York

# How to find research opportunities?

## **Familiarize yourself with the researcher's current research interests:**

- Visit their lab website
- Read some of the lab's recent publications
- Read lab members' profiles to get a sense of ongoing projects, since these might be ones you would assist with if were to join the lab

# Research at York

## Individual Research Project (IRP):

- Course credit
- Typically for students in third year or above

## Research at York (RAY)

- Minimum rate of \$16.25 per hour
- To be eligible, full-term students must:
  - Enrolled in a minimum of 18 credits for Fall/Winter (min.6 per term)
  - Enrolled in a minimum of 9 credits for summer, OR 6 credits in previous winter term AND will be returning to undergraduate studies in the Fall/Winter
- Information on [how to apply](#)

# Summer Research Fellowships

## NSERC-URSA (Undergraduate Student Research Award)

- \$6000 over 14 to 16 weeks
- Eligibility to apply:
  - Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada
  - Registered in bachelor's degree program
  - a cumulative average of at least a B
- Selection process based on:
  - Academic excellence
  - Research potential
  - Expected quality of training and mentorship to be received

# Summer Research Programs in Toronto

- Sunnybrook Research Institute (SRI) Summer Student Research Program:  
<https://sunnybrook.ca/research/content/?page=sri-ed-summ-uni>
- SickKids Summer Research (SSSuRe) Program:  
<https://www.sickkids.ca/en/research/research-training-centre/summer-research-program/>
- Rotman Research Institute (RRI) Summer Student Program at Baycrest:  
<https://www.baycrest.org/Baycrest/Research-Innovation/People/Students-Trainees/Summer-Student-Programs>
- The Ward Family Summer Student Research Program at Holland Bloorview:  
<https://hollandbloorview.ca/research-education/bloorview-research-institute/train-us/ward-family-summer-student-research>
- Summer Student Research Program at Women's College Research Institute:  
<https://www.womensresearch.ca/trainees/undergraduate-summer-program/>
- CAMH: <https://www.camh.ca/en/science-and-research/research-students-and-fellows>

# How do I apply/make contact with profs?



# Things to Consider

- Compatible research interests
- Personal goals for the experience
- Time commitment (e.g., hours/week; semester/full year)
- Prerequisite requirements
  - Grades
  - Prior experience
  - Courses
- Compensation

# Who to contact

- Professors
- Graduate students (your TAs)
- Lab manager





# Making contact

- Introduce yourself (i.e., name, program, year of study)
- Introduce your goals and interests
- Why are you looking to work with this particular professor
- What are you asking for (to be a research assistant, summer student, etc.)
- Attach your CV and transcript\*

# Sample email

Dear Dr. \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Jane Doe and I am in the 2nd year of my undergraduate degree in the honours psychology program at York University.

I am fascinated by your research on the role of autobiographical memory in social decision making. For example, I really enjoyed reading your study, which examined whether vivid imagination increased individuals' willingness to be more cooperative. Overall, I am eager to learn more about these processes and think your work aligns well with my interests.

As such, I am wondering if there are any opportunities in your lab for a research assistant or volunteer over the summer or during the year? I would appreciate an opportunity to discuss this with you and meet in person (or over Zoom) if necessary. I've attached my CV and unofficial transcript for your reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

# CV

- The CVs of many professors are available online. This is a great place to start to see what the format is like (and to daydream about what you will put on yours)
- **PUMP** has many helpful resources on their website (see comprehensive graduate school application resource package)
- **Career Centre at York** has many resources, including info about CV and samples ([https://careers.yorku.ca/student\\_topic/resume-or-cv-whats-the-difference](https://careers.yorku.ca/student_topic/resume-or-cv-whats-the-difference))
- Use google to find templates and helpful websites (e.g., [www.cvmkr.com](http://www.cvmkr.com))
- If your CV is required for an application (grad school, grant, etc.), ensure that it conforms to the guidelines that accompany your application

# CV

- Basic info (e.g., name, contact info)
- Education (start with postsecondary, most recent first)
- Work experience (e.g., part-time job, summer employment opportunities)
- Volunteer experience (especially roles that can showcase your abilities (e.g., responsible, organized, committed)
  - E.g., SPCA dog walker, fundraiser for Walk for MS
- Awards (does not have to be academic)
- Publications, poster presentations, talks (if you have them)
- Showcase your skill set
  - Directly: Coding skills, experience working with participants
  - Indirectly: Photoshop, speaking multiple languages
- References (2-3)

# CV Sample

## Jane Doe

123 Any Crescent  
Toronto, ON M3M 4M4

anyone@yorku.ca  
(416) 123-4567

## EDUCATION

**Specialized Honours Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology**  
York University, Toronto

2012

## Seminar Presentations

*Marital Conflict and Therapy*

March 2012

- Prepared a presentation on marital conflict and its causes, with an emphasis on marital conflict reduction and/or avoidance
- Interviewed therapists practicing different types of marital therapy; Was commended on my paper by a therapist where he expressed what a great job I had done
- Gained a solid understanding of marital conflict and the ways different therapies can be applied in couples therapy

*Rehabilitation for Veterans with PTSD*

November 2011

- Examined the different types of therapies that exist for veterans with Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder with an emphasis on the rehabilitation outcome of those therapies

*Emotion Focused Therapy for Couples*

March 2011

- Will conduct an analysis on Emotion Focused Therapy for couples to examine the etiology of human difficulty from the EFT perspective, what is targets to promote, as well as what the roles are of the client and the therapist in EFT therapy

*Mock Counselling Assignment*

March 2011

- Will be completing a mock counselling session thus enabling me to practice to be a professional helper and to establish an alliance with the client by listening carefully, non-judgementally, and empathetically

## Research Projects

*Honours Thesis Project*

September 2011- April 2012

*The impact of race-based pre-trial questioning on jurors' commitment to impartiality*

- Conducting an independent research project on jury decision making in the area of psychology and law
- Prepared a proposal on the research topic of interest that was accepted by the thesis supervisor with minor changes to be made
- Effectively put together the stimuli for the study along with testing 180 participants in 6 different conditions
- Independently input all of the participants responses' into SPSS and will be conducting statistical analysis to determine any statistical significance

*Intermediate Research Methods Project*

January 2009 – May 2009

*Odour Effects on Memory Recall*

- Performed an independent research project on how odour effects memory recall in the area of sensation and perception
- Learned the concepts of research design, conducting a study as well as writing, which resulted in a final grade of an "A" in the course along with success in conducting the research study

Name phone / e-mail

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## RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

### Distress Helpline Volunteer

November 2010 - Present

Spectra Community Support Services, Brampton, ON

- Provide attentive listening to 6-8 callers per 4 hour shift by displaying empathy and patience to all types of callers who are in distress as well as having the ability to explore options with the caller
- Make outbound calls to elderly clients, giving medication reminders along with conversing with them on various topics during for which many clients have expressed gratitude

### Tutor Volunteer

September 2010 – April 2011

York Students Offering Support, York University, Toronto

*Successfully tutored students in an Introductory Psychology course in addition to a Psychology Statistics course*

- Assisted students with their assignments and preparation for their exams and offered study tips which they successfully utilized
- Prepared a 3 hour PowerPoint presentation on specific chapters relevant to the exam; cumulatively received the highest rating on student evaluations
- Supervisor indicated that I gave exceptional examples for specific and tough concepts while presenting the information in an organized and patient manner on performance assessment

### Research Assistant Volunteer

September 2010 - Present

Psychology and Law Lab, York University, Toronto

*Work in a lab which examines the motivations of individuals to be unprejudiced when rendering their verdicts or making case evaluations in a stereotypical situation*

- Recruited participants and ran 4 conditions of the study by following ethical guidelines as well as successfully entering the data into SPSS
- Hired after volunteering for 2 months where I demonstrated commitment and reliability
- Surpassed my job responsibilities and assisted with a coding study thereby increasing the efficiency of work being completed in the lab
- Promoted from research assistant to honours thesis student thus completing my undergraduate thesis project in the area of psychology and law

### Research Assistant Volunteer

November 2009 – April 2011

The Psychotherapy Research Clinic, York University, Toronto

*Assisted a graduate student in watching couples therapy videos for three different couples and recorded their most vulnerable moments while in therapy*

- Offered to assist with a coding project demonstrating my enthusiasm for the research and as a result was given more than one hundred 5 minute clips to code
- Demonstrated initiative while volunteering to assist in transcribing clips to record the word-for-word exchange shared between a couple
- Was assigned additional transcribing clips to complete, illustrating my reliability and capability to complete an assigned task in a timely fashion
- Selected for extra responsibilities when one student could not transcribe their set of clips, thus increasing the efficiency of work being completed whilst saving time as there was a deadline to meet

# Interview

- Be prepared
  - Be familiar with their work (publications, major research interests, current projects)
  - Prepare relevant questions for interviewer
  - Know your time availability
- Reiterate your interest and goals
- Clarify important info
  - Expected time commitment (how many months, hours/week)
  - Who you will be working with
  - What you will be required to do
- Have a good attitude!
  - Show enthusiasm
  - Go in with an open mind
  - Be honest

# How to make the most of your experience?



# Get the Most Out of Your RA Experience

- Do not be afraid to try new things
  - Be open to new opportunities even if they seem intimidating or you are unsure if you will like it
  - Ask questions
- Be an active member in the lab
  - Show initiative
  - Attend lab meetings regularly
  - Participate in the discussion
  - Attend lab socials, conferences, symposiums
- Take the opportunity to connect with people in the lab
- Enjoy it and have fun!



# Resources (posted on PUMP website)

- PUMP website: <https://www.yorku.ca/club/pump/>
- List of York faculty and their research interests: <https://www.yorku.ca/health/psychology/undergraduate-program/certificate-research-opportunities-for-undergraduates/research-opportunities-for-undergraduates/faculty-research-and-teaching-interests/>
- List of York Psychology Research Labs and their websites: [https://www.yorku.ca/health/psychology/wp-content/uploads/sites/403/2021/05/PSYC\\_Research\\_Labs\\_2020.pdf](https://www.yorku.ca/health/psychology/wp-content/uploads/sites/403/2021/05/PSYC_Research_Labs_2020.pdf)
- York Psychology department's web page for certificate and research for undergraduates: <https://www.yorku.ca/health/psychology/undergraduate-program/certificate-research-opportunities-for-undergraduates/>
- York's research tips for Psychology students: [https://psyc.info.yorku.ca/files/2020/12/PSYC\\_Research\\_Tips\\_For\\_Students.pdf?x56987](https://psyc.info.yorku.ca/files/2020/12/PSYC_Research_Tips_For_Students.pdf?x56987)
- Scholarship and Award information from the Faculty of Health: <https://www.yorku.ca/health/scholarships-awards/>
- IRP at York: [https://psyc.info.yorku.ca/files/2020/04/2020-04-29\\_Individual-Research-Project-Application\\_2019\\_FINAL.pdf?x56987](https://psyc.info.yorku.ca/files/2020/04/2020-04-29_Individual-Research-Project-Application_2019_FINAL.pdf?x56987)
- RAY at York: <https://studyoptions.students.yorku.ca/opportunities-beyond-the-classroom/research-at-york-ray>
- NSERC-USRA: [https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/students-etudiants/ug-pc/usra-brpc\\_eng.as](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/students-etudiants/ug-pc/usra-brpc_eng.as)
- Career Centre at York's CV information: [https://careers.yorku.ca/student\\_topic/resume-or-cv-whats-the-difference](https://careers.yorku.ca/student_topic/resume-or-cv-whats-the-difference)
- Online CV resource: [www.cvmkr.com](http://www.cvmkr.com)
- UPSA external opportunities: <https://sites.google.com/view/upsayorku/home/external-opportunities?authuser=0>

# Q & A - Meet our panel!

