

# Voluntary Research Assistant Scheme

Matt Green

This document describes the scheme, giving details of how to apply for a voluntary RA and what you can expect from a voluntary RA.

## What is the Voluntary Research Assistant Scheme?

Chosen students will work as RAs under the supervision of staff members or PhD students on research projects. Note that our scheme involves voluntary RA work and excludes paid RA work.

## How to advertise for a Voluntary RA

If you wish to advertise for a volunteer research assistant to work on your research project, please fill out the [Research Assistant Scheme Project Description Form](#) by **date**. Please note the projects from last year will not be consulted, so you will not have any project listed if you do not provide me project titles this time. Once I have collated all the projects, I will advertise them to students from Level 4 to Level 7 inviting applications.

## What you need to send

Short summaries of your research projects that you need RAs for, and your contact information. Please also provide key words about your methodology (including transferable skills, such as 'eye tracking' or 'statistics' if your project has a big statistics component) and research fields (e.g. clinical psychology, social psychology, neuroscience etc.) for each project. The additional information will help the students align their career development plan with the research activities.

## Recruitment procedure

RA applications will be received during a period of two weeks after the scheme announcement is placed on Brightspace. Each applicant should submit a CV and a short cover letter. Staff members are encouraged to interview all applicants if possible (though this is not desirable for very popular topics). Make sure that you will provide feedback for the interviews even if the applicants have not succeeded. This will provide these students with a valuable experience.

## Deadlines

- **date – date:** Project summaries to be sent to Matt
- **date – date:** Students will apply for RA positions. No interviews should be held or requested until this application week has finished.
- **date onwards:** Interviews may be arranged and held for positions, and candidates may be given positions.

## Research timeline

RAs that are recruited for the advertised projects will have the opportunity to assist with projects for a maximum of six weeks. The six-week period starts from the point at which they begin working on the project. To be clear, this does not mean RAs can volunteer for the equivalent of six week's full time over a longer (e.g., 12 week) period. Even if the volunteer works on a part-time or less than part-time basis, they can only engage in project related work for six weeks from the point at which they begin working on the project.

Multiple RAs can be recruited for projects. In cases where multiple RAs are recruited the start date for when the six-week period begins can be staggered to allow RAs to cover different time frames of the project (i.e. one volunteer can work for six weeks then a second can start after those six weeks have ended), this must be carefully organised by the project supervisor(s) to ensure that the six week maximum working period is not exceeded. RAs are only permitted to complete a maximum of 1 unpaid placement for the entirety of their registration period (e.g., 3-4 years for UG students)

## RA responsibilities

RAs will be expected to commit to spending approximately 4 hours per week of their time while flexibility is allowed, especially during reading weeks and exam periods. It is also important to note that supervisors should not involve an RA with a final-year project student's or a master's student's work because this will make the assessment of these projects difficult.

The scheme is open to all students from L4 to L7. L4 students are only expected to gain experience by shadowing and working alongside research work of staff members or of other

more senior students or RAs. L4 and L5 students are allowed to shadow research projects of L6 and L7 students, if all team members are happy about this.

Successful RA applicants should be encouraged to clarify their expectations from the scheme to the supervisors, such as development of specific skills. If possible, the supervisors will try to target these expectations in the training.

### **Can PhD students have RAs?**

PhD students are welcome to use this scheme to have RAs on their own projects providing they have the support of their supervisor. Whilst the PhD student will be involved with the week to week management of the RA, the PhD supervisor will ultimately be responsible for the RA. If an advert is sent for an RA for a PhD student, the supervisor must either be the one to send the advert, stating that they are sending the advert on the PhD student's behalf, or the supervisor must send the RA acknowledgement of the supervisor's support of the PhD student's advert.