Why this document?

It is important to me that you know what to expect from me, that you know what I expect from you, and that we all work together to achieve our goals. I believe that expectations are better when they are explicit rather than tacit.

Our overall goal

Our goal as a lab is to improve the lives of people who interact with the health care system and who have to make health decisions. We pursue this goal in a variety of ways. Those who are new to this area can get started by reading the papers in our Lab Reading List {link removed for public version}.

My overall goal for everyone in our lab

My overall goal is to support you in achieving your career goals, whatever those may be. I expect all trainees to have, at minimum, a career plan A and plan B. I will periodically check in with you to discuss how you are progressing toward your career goals and whether or not your career goals have changed.

I expect all staff and trainees to be proactive about identifying what additional training may be helpful for you to achieve our research goals and your individual career goals. To the greatest extent possible, I will support you in accessing such training, including providing funding for your participation. For graduate students, we will complete the faculty's Plan de formation 2e et 3e cycles annually. For all graduate students and postdocs, I expect you to identify where you are and where you would like to be in each element of this framework and to be proactive in seeking out what you need to move to where you would like to be. I am happy to review it with you at your request.

Lab culture

A key goal for me is that everyone feels valued and welcome. We have a diverse group of people who bring different skills, background, and strengths. I am happy all of you are here, I care about you as human beings, and I want you to feel happy to be here.

I expect us all to be respectful of each other. We do not tolerate harassment, belittlement, or discrimination of any kind.

We are aware and respectful of the fact that we live and work on unceded territory that is the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat people as well as of the Abenaki, Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) & Haudenosaunee peoples.

I am not a perfect person and I make mistakes. If something is bothering you about something I have done or said, or not done or not said, I hope you will feel comfortable bringing it to me. If you are not comfortable bringing it to me, I encourage you to consult with {names removed for public version}, or with the services that are available to you (see next section).

Need help?

If you are not able to talk with me/others in the lab for whatever reason, including if you would simply rather talk to someone else, please remember that Université Laval has free services available for trainees and for employees.

Work-Life Balance

We do extremely creative work. This kind of work requires time away from the lab. We all have times in which we are in a crunch and need to work evenings or weekends, but this should not be the norm. Please take time to spend with your friends and family and do activities that make you happy. Get outside and get some exercise. Make sure to take vacation time and please do not check email while you are away.

I try to follow my own advice. Sometimes I am successful at doing so, sometimes not so much. It is a continual work in progress. When I am away with my family, sometimes, I am in the backcountry or in the land of dial-up and cannot be reached. I will always let you know in advance when I will be away.

It is convenient if we all take vacation time at the same time, but my scheduled weeks off aren't convenient for you, that's OK. Please check with me about dates when you plan to take time off so that we can plan around that. I have never refused a request for time off, but it may someday occur that we are in an 'all hands on deck' situation in which I would ask you if it's possible to rearrange your plans. Postdocs have an official allocation of 20 vacation days per year as per the collective agreement (on top of statutory holidays and annual university closure Dec 24 - Jan 2). For graduate students, I have not found an official policy. If my grants are funding your studies, my policy is that you get the same as postdocs.

When you are sick, stay home. Unless you have an extremely important deadline coming up, please just let me know you are taking a sick day, stay off your computer, get some rest, and get better. Please remember that in addition to my concern for your health, this is also important to me because I have a chronic illness that makes it more dangerous for me to get sick, and we also have lab members who have friends or family members who are fragile and who don't want

to bring home illnesses. You are being a good team member by taking care of yourself and keeping your illness away from our workplace. This same approach applies to those of you who have children or others for whom you provide care. Take care of yourself and your family.

Lab meetings & sector meetings

Lab meetings and sector meetings are important aspects of our scientific life. These meetings are on Thursdays at 11 a.m. (sector) and at a time that works around lab members' classes (lab). I expect you to attend both lab meetings and research sector meetings if you can. Even if the topic of the sector meeting is not particularly relevant to our work, we attend to support other members of our sector and to strengthen our network. Sometimes other aspects of our lives interfere, which I understand, but if you cannot attend, please let me know in advance by posting in the #cal channel on Slack.

Acceptable reasons for missing a lab/sector meeting:

- You are away (e.g., on vacation, at a conference, sick, etc.) and you have let us know by posting in #cal
- You are in a class during the meeting time and you have let us know by posting in #cal
- You have another meeting that is more important than our meeting (rare) and you have discussed this with me in advance
- You are in the lab part time and Mondays/Thursdays are not your pre-established workdays

Unacceptable reasons for missing a lab/sector meeting:

- You have a lot of work to do
- You have agreed to attend another meeting without discussing this with me in advance

1-on-1 Meetings

Every week, I block 4 hours on the lab calendar marked "HOLD for student meetings". I don't take other meetings during that time. If you want to meet with me and we don't already have a meeting booked, let me know and I will reserve time for you. The default meeting time is 30 minutes, but if you think you need more time or if the proposed time block doesn't work for you, please let me know. I may also initiate meetings if I think we should meet or if you haven't requested a meeting recently. As a regular routine, I expect to meet with trainees approximately weekly. When you are in a period of heavy course load (e.g., your first year of MSc or PhD) or if you have special circumstances (e.g., clinical duties) we can, of course, reduce that frequency but I want to see you at least once a month to check in.

At these meetings, I want to discuss things that are on your mind, usually related to your project(s), but if other things are bothering you, please feel free to let me know.

I emphatically do not want an account of what you've done in the past week/month. You are intelligent adults. I know you can handle your work. You don't have to itemize your effort for me. Let's talk about ideas you have, interpretation of data, questions on your mind, etc. I recommend this list:
http://www.avasthilab.org/2017/03/14/what-to-bring-to-a-meeting-with-your-advisor/

I keep Google docs for everyone, titled "meetings with [Name]". I share these with you & when I think of something I want to discuss with you, I jot it down there for our next meeting. Please do the same. **IMPORTANT: After each meeting, I need you to make sure the document contains a brief point-form summary of any decisions we made and any To Do's on which we've agreed.**

Committee Meetings

A guide for what to prepare for meetings with your thesis/dissertation committees or « jury », inspired by this post:

1. What is your research question?
2. Why does this matter?
3. What is already known?
4. Where are the gaps in the existing knowledge?
5. What do you plan to do about it & how will you do it? OR What are you doing about it & how are you doing it?
6. Your progress to this point.
7. Any challenges you have encountered and what you are doing about these.
8. Your next steps.
9. Your future plans.

Remember that this is a rare opportunity to have the focused attention of multiple faculty. Enjoy it, and use it to make your project as good as it can be.

Conferences

It is important that you have the opportunity to present your work to others in your field. Once you start to have data, you should be submitting abstracts to conferences. Even before you have data, you should be presenting your protocol locally; e.g., at the research days for the Department, the Faculty, and the research centres.

I happily fund trainees and staff to attend conferences whenever funds allow it. I will also help you apply for conference bursaries. When traveling, I expect us all to try to keep costs down, both because it helps stretch funds that are finite, and because research funds are public dollars. We respect the effort that people went to to fund our work and our presentation of that

work. This means taking the train or bus if the conference is nearby (Montreal, Ottawa), booking flights well in advance, and sharing rooms if possible. Sharing a room is not required if you are not comfortable with it, no questions asked. However, if there is another member of the lab or a friend you know from the sector or your program, and you don't mind sharing, it helps defray costs considerably. I try to share rooms at conferences I attend regularly and I also stay with people I know in the city whenever feasible.

My feedback to you

One of my main challenges is finding time to give everyone thorough feedback quickly. To help me return feedback to you as promptly as possible, it's helpful when you are specific about what you need. I am happy to have a conversation with you about difficulties you are having but please remember that working through problems is part of your training. I am here to mentor you through that process, not to do it for you.

Expect to wait 1-3 days for feedback on short documents, 1-2 weeks for long documents. I will always prioritize sending you feedback, but if I am traveling or away, you might wait longer. Please incorporate this into your planning. If you need feedback more quickly, please let me know and I will adjust my timing as best as I can to accommodate your needs. In such cases, you may get less thorough feedback. If you only need feedback on a particular section, let me know, as that speeds up the process considerably.

While you're waiting for feedback, don't stop working on your document! When you have new thoughts or time to work on your document again, feel free to tell me you're going to make some more changes and send me a new version. **Don't consider a document frozen just because you've shared it with me.** You can continue to work on it. Working primarily in Google docs will help with this. (See software.)

Language

- Université Laval is a francophone university and we comply with policies accordingly.
- My mother tongue is English, which offers you the opportunity to learn more English than you would likely otherwise get in Quebec City. You can take that opportunity if you choose. If you are anticipating a future career in research, I advise you to take this opportunity, as it will serve you well.
- I will support you writing your thesis or dissertation in whichever language you prefer. If you choose to write a thesis or dissertation in English, we need to file additional forms. It is reasonably straightforward.
- Whichever language you choose, if it is your non-native language, I will provide editing services to ensure that your text is well-written. If writing well in English and/or French is a challenge for you, this is a skill we will work on during your time in the lab. Whatever your career goals, writing well is a valuable skill.

- Except under very rare circumstances (e.g., we specifically want to make sure that health professionals in Québec will all be able to read this particular paper) manuscripts must be in English. We will get a wider readership in English. Your first full draft of a manuscript should therefore be in English. However, I am happy to review and discuss outlines in French. Throughout the writing process, you should feel comfortable writing comments or questions in French when you are unsure how to express something in English.

Writing & language

- See our Witteman Lab English Writing Guide

Contacting me

Urgent issues:
Contact me right away by: visiting my office, texting me at {number removed for public version}, or sending me an email with {details removed for public version} (the email system will then send me a text).

Non-urgent issues:

- Relevant to a project? Tag me in a post in the project Slack channel.
- Not project-specific, but shareable? Tag me in a post in the relevant Slack channel (e.g., #cal for meetings, #gradstudents for grad school forms, #ourpapers if it's about a paper)
- Not shareable (e.g., personal issues, funding issues)? Send me a direct message on Slack.

Email:

- I typically check email once a day. I will see your email but I won't respond quickly.
- Please do not email me and then post on Slack that you've emailed me. You're making extra work for yourself and for me.

If I'm not available:

- See {names removed for public version}. If they aren't available, see {names removed for public version}, other lab members, or {names removed for public version} next door.

If you need me to do something

Put it in Priorities for team {link removed for public version}.

Software

- **Writing**: We will prepare most documents, especially manuscripts and grants, in Google Docs. We work in large teams; Google Docs makes it much easier to incorporate comments from many co-authors. Collating changes from 22 people across 7 different versions of a Word document is painful. Let's avoid that pain.
- **Reference management**: We use Paperpile for reference management. Paperpile works well with Google Docs and using a common reference manager makes all of our lives easier. I will pay for your licences.
- **Statistics**: I expect your analyses to be done in R. If you are in epidemiology you will likely need to use SAS for your courses. It will serve you well to redo them in R. I would like us all to become more comfortable with Markdown so that we can write the results sections of papers right there and have reproducible code.
- **Code**: *To be determined. We are reviewing our methods for managing and sharing code now that we are transitioning into a new phase of work.*

Project short codes

I must approve project short codes before they are finalized. We will use them for document names and also for Slack channels. Here is our current short code list {link removed for public version}.

Document names

Standard format: **shortcode_document_YYYY-MM-DD_initials**

- shortcode : project short code {link removed for public version}
- document : flexible, depends on document
- YYYY-MM-DD : date this version was created (**not relevant to google docs**)
- initials : initials of the person commenting but not creating a new version (not relevant to google docs)

Versioning :

- In Google docs : use File -> Version history -> Name current version to give a version a name. Do this before sending a link to co-authors, etc.

Rules :

- No accents anywhere in document names!!

- No spaces in document names (use_underscores_if_you_must)
- Add your initials if it is not a new version but you have made any changes or comments.
- Change the date if it's a new version.
- In general, if you are sending me something, it should be a new version.
- Types of documents:
    - Protocol: Use the word **protocol** (ou en français, **protocole**) in the name of the document
    - Manuscript or paper: use the word **article** in the name of the document
    - Data: use the word **DATA** (in caps) in the name of the document (please do not use données or db, it makes the file tough to find)
    - Stats: use the word **STATS** (in caps) in the name of the document
    - Abstracts: use the word **abstract** in the name of the document along with the **conference name** (e.g., msl_abstract_ISDM_2019-01-19)
- If you aren't sure, please do your best to ensure that the document is identifiable. I have way too many files named things like "manuscrit" or "projet4" or "version3" in my folder of students' work.

E.g. :

rcvc_QuestionnaireEnFr_2016-06-09
rcvc_QuestionnaireEnFr_2016-06-09_hw
rcvc_QuestionnaireEnFr_2016-06-11
rcvc_QuestionnaireEnFr_2016-06-11_scd
rcvc_QuestionnaireEnFr_2016-06-11_scd_hw
rcvc_QuestionnaireEnFr_2016-06-13

Papers

(Idea and one point from Michael Hoffman under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license, so feel free to make your own version and let us know! Twitter: @michaelhoffman @hwitteman)

Before you start

- Please read & reflect on: Preparing Manuscripts for Submission to Medical Journals: http://ecp.acponline.org/mayjun99/welch.htm (pdf version here)
- Please also read: How to write a scientific paper: https://conservationbytes.com/2012/10/22/how-to-write-a-scientific-paper/
- Ten Simple Rules for writing papers (great resource!) http://journals.plos.org/ploscompbiol/article?id=10.1371%2Fjournal.pcbi.1005619
- For qualitative papers: http://www.jessicacalarco.com/teaching-resources
- Open science: http://datacolada.org/69

Workflow (aka Keep Everything Together)

- I expect all manuscripts to be kept together as a single document until the very last step before submission. This means we keep tables, figures, appendices, title page with author names, etc. all in one file or linked within a file. This helps us not lose pieces.
- If you have to put the tables, figures, appendices, etc. elsewhere (e.g., they don't fit in the document) you must list them and link to them.

Template

- Most papers out of our lab will fit well in this template {link removed for public version}. Create a duplicate file (File -> Make a copy) and then edit as needed.

Outline (before your first draft)

- Before you start drafting, I would like us to review together:
    - A bulleted outline of your introduction
        - Pattern (answer these questions, see Template {link removed for public version}): Why is this topic important? What is missing/wrong in the existing literature? What objective did you set to fix it? Reference & more info on writing a good intro
    - A bulleted outline of your methods
        - Frequent methods subheadings in lab papers (not all subheadings apply to all papers, order may vary depending on type of paper, see Template {link removed for public version}): Study Design, Context, Intervention Design, Participants, Recruitment, Data Collection, Independent Variables, Moderating and Mediating Variables, Primary Outcome, Secondary Outcomes, Analysis
    - Any methods figures needed (e.g., flow diagram for experiments or trials)
    - Your results tables (standard Table 1 at least) and/or figures (e.g., PRISMA diagram for a systematic review)
        - Frequent results subheadings in lab papers (not all subheadings apply to all papers): Participant Characteristics, Primary Outcome, Secondary Outcomes
    - A bulleted outline of your discussion
        - Pattern (see Template {link removed for public version}): numbered list of principal findings, comparison to previous literature, limitations, conclusions, practice implications if applicable
- Have you reviewed at least 2 papers like yours published in that journal?
    - Please send these to me with your outline. For example, if you are reporting a systematic review, please send 2 systematic reviews published in that journal--the more recent, the better.

- What reporting standards apply to this paper?
    - Identify the relevant checklist at http://www.equator-network.org/ and put it somewhere at the end of your document. We will typically later split it out and submit it as an appendix.

Front page

- List the target journal and article type.
- List the requirements for that article type at that journal.
    - Make sure this includes word count limits for abstract & main text.
- Specify any special requirements required by journal (e.g., "what was already known, what this study adds" section.)
- List the following (required at nearly every journal):
    - Title of manuscript
    - Running title (a shorter version of the title)
    - Keywords (make sure to check to see which MeSH terms apply)
    - Word count
- Check at the target journal what data are required for each author and create a list with these data. Most journals will require each author to be entered into a database separately, with all of their institutions. Some journals require ORCiD. It is very tedious to go collect details in order to submit your paper, so make sure you (1) know what details are required for each author and (2) collect those details.
    - If in doubt, here is a pattern that will satisfy most journals. Make sure you get these data from all co-authors so that you save yourself hassle when it's time to submit the manuscript.

      Author:
      First Name (and Middle Initials if used):
      Last Name:
      Email:
      Role:
      ORCiD:
      Degrees: PhD

      Institution Field 1: Department of ...
      Institution Field 2: Faculty of ...
      Institution Field 3: University
      Address Line 1:
      Address Line 2:
      City: Quebec City
      Postal/Zip Code:
      Country:
      Phone Number:

Fax Number:

Introduction

- Does your introduction start with a clear problem statement?
    - Make the case for why readers should care about this issue.
- Are you 100% sure that each and every one of your references supports the statement for which you are citing it?
    - Re-read them all to be sure. Check your annotated bibliography.
- Does your introduction end with a clear statement of your study's objective and/or research question?
- The introduction should be as tight and crisp as you can write it.

Tables

- Do your tables look like the most boringly-formatted tables you've ever seen? Good. If not, remove all the fancy formatting. Reviewers don't want to see it. Journal typesetters don't want to see it.
- Did this study involve humans? If yes, you need a standard Table 1 of study participants. This includes qualitative studies. For randomized studies we typically report by study arm. You should have one column per arm. For studies run with properly-named variables (i.e., using our standard sociodemo block in Qualtrics) you can make use of our new Table 1 script to automagically spit out a Table 1 with your analyses. Otherwise, we will typically report:
    - Gender: men/women/nonbinary/other: n (%)
        - Sometimes also Sex: male/female/other: n (%)
    - Age: mean (SD) or median (IQR) depending on distribution
    - Race & ethnicity: n (%)
        - For studies with US funding, we report 2 ethnic categories (Hispanic, Middle Eastern) and 6 categories that are considered racial for US funding purposes (American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian, White or Caucasian, Other)
        - For studies with Canadian funding we likely used different categories. Check the study protocol & questionnaire to make sure you're capturing all the categories assessed.
    - Education: n (%)
        - Remember that Cégep is not a thing in most places so studies that are done both inside and outside Québec needs particular attention to education categories
    - Language(s) spoken: mean (SD) or median (IQR) or n (%) depending on distribution and measure

    - Literacy & numeracy measures: mean (SD) or median (IQR) or n (%) depending on distribution and measure
        - Make sure the label in the table includes the full range possible
        - If you aren't reporting it elsewhere this is a good place to report Cronbach alpha
    - Relevant health characteristics

Methods

- Unless not stylistically allowed by journal, use subheadings to help orient the reader.
- Typical subheadings in our papers (these may or may not all apply to your manuscript):
    - Data collection
    - Variables
        - Independent variables
        - Covariates
        - Dependent variables
    - Analysis
- If your study involved both qualitative and quantitative data, remember that it is not a mixed methods study unless the analysis combined the two in some way. For example, if you triangulated between qualitative and quantitative findings to arrive at your conclusions, that may qualify as mixed methods. However, if you coded qualitative data and then analyzed it quantitatively, that isn't mixed methods, it's just mixed data types.

Results

- Results should use largely the same subheads as Methods.
- Table 1 needed? If yes, Table 1 included.
- Don't simply repeat things that are in tables. Highlight your most important findings.

Discussion

- A standard pattern if you aren’t sure what to say:
    - Paragraph 1: Our objective was ... We had X principal findings (summarize them briefly).
    - Paragraph 2: Principal finding 1
    - Paragraph 3: Principal finding 2
    - ...
    - Paragraph X+1: Principal finding X
    - Comparison to previous work
        - Put your work in context. Where does it align with previous work? Where does it depart from the existing literature? What does it add?

        - Unless you are 100% certain you have read everything in existence, be careful about claiming to be the first XYZ. Use, “To the best of our knowledge, this is the first XYZ …”
    - Limitations
        - Number them. E.g., Our study had three main limitations. First … Second … Third ...
    - Conclusions
        - What is the takeaway here? What is your main finding? If you had to sum this up in 30 seconds, what would you say?
        - Write 1 to 3 things that sum up your results
    - Practice implications
        - If applicable, what should health professionals consider doing or stopping?

Steps of publishing

Step 1: submission
What you need:

- a manuscript, formatted as per instructions to authors
    - Steps to achieve this:
        - Make sure your google doc is correctly formatted and references are all up to date and correct. You may need to check each one by hand.
        - Download your google doc as a Word doc
        - Remove the field codes from your Word doc (for Mac: select all, then Command + 6; for Windows, I am guessing it’s select all then Ctrl + 6)
        - Remove all the hyperlinks in your Word doc.
        - Prepare any figures or tables as required by the journal. This may mean pasting them into your manuscript Word doc. More often it means making sure you have one file for each table and each figure.
        - Make sure your title page is correct and you’ve removed anything that isn’t to be submitted (e.g., notes about suggested reviewers; if it’s a blind review, you will need to remove author names)
- a cover letter
    - Why should the editor care about your paper? This needs to be more than just, ‘dear editor we are submitting a paper’. Why are you submitting here to this journal? Why is this of interest to the readership of this journal? See template for suggestions of how to structure this.
- Often: suggested names and emails of 2-4 reviewers (cannot be in conflict, this can be tough for us as I collaborate with many, many people)

At this point, if we can, we will also submit the manuscript as a pre-print. Pre-prints have long been common in my field of origin and are starting to take off in biomedical science and social science. There is no well-established pre-print server in our area of research and many journals

in our area don't have clear policies about whether or not they accept manuscripts that are already public as pre-prints but I expect that pretty soon they will all get with the program.

Step 2: editor's initial decision
What you need:

- a thick skin

The editor will decide whether or not to send the manuscript out for peer review. If we hear back quickly, that's usually bad news! Time to reformat for another journal.

Step 3: peer review
What you need:

- patience and a thick skin

If your manuscript goes out for peer review, expect to wait 3-6 months to hear back. Around 4-5 months it is not unreasonable to send one polite email of inquiry as to the status of your manuscript. Note that this is pretty rare and we try to avoid sending manuscripts to journals that are known to be very slow to respond.

Step 4: revise & resubmit
What you need:

- more time than you probably thought it would take
- a 'response to reviewers' document and/or plain text you can paste into a window
- a revised manuscript in track changes mode
- sometimes a clean version of the manuscript

Responding to reviewers' comments is painful and long, but in my experience it almost always improves the paper. I expect us all to respond well and thoroughly to all comments. I usually do this in unformatted text because not every journal allows you to upload a response to reviewers with a table but some people like to do this with a table. The formatting is not as important as the content of your response. Number all comments if they aren't already numbered and give a full response. I like to copy and paste the exact changed text; e.g., The previous text read, "bla bla bla." The revised text (pp. 5-6) reads, "la la la." This courtesy saves the reviewer having to hunt down exact changes.

Step 5: proofs & forms
What you need:

- a (metaphorical) fine-toothed comb
- the ability to drop everything and respond quickly
- co-authors' signatures
- to get in touch with the library to make sure you aren't signing away key distribution rights

If your paper is accepted (hooray!) you will get proofs and typically 48 hours in which to return them. This is your last chance to catch any tiny typos. You should not be making major changes. If you cannot respond in 48 hours, you can usually let the journal know and it's often fine. You may also need to sign forms to assign copyright to the journal. It is always useful to call on the

library at this point to make sure that you aren't signing anything that could make it difficult to use your own work as you wish in future.

Step 6: publication
What you need:

- time to celebrate!

Every paper deserves at least a moment of celebration. Having a paper accepted is exciting every time, so enjoy the results of a long process! You've probably been working on this for 1-3 years at least by the time you get here, so enjoy a well-earned celebration.

Step 7: repository CorpusUL
What you need:

- a copy of the accepted version of your paper

ULaval recently launched our institutional repository so we will be depositing copies of the accepted versions of articles. This is the corresponding author's job, so it's often me.

Peer Review

For those who are interested or motivated to participate in peer review, here is a good guide. I would add that it's often useful to authors to number your points.

Appendix: Resources {link removed for public version}