

## **RA Titles and Roles - Volunteers, Practicum Students, Independent Study, GwD/Honors**

### Volunteers

Volunteer Undergraduates work in the lab for a minimum of 6 hours/week (not including lab meetings). Volunteers have the same procedures as practicum undergraduates.

If a student would like to get involved as a Practicum Student (refer to the below), they should speak with their Lab Manager and Project Lead prior to the semester's add/drop end date.

### Practicum Students

Practicum Students work in the lab for a minimum of 6 hours/week (not including lab meetings) for course credit. Students will receive 0.5 course credit (Pass/Fail) and need to be hired within/before the course add/drop end date. If students would like to work as a practicum student, they need to reach out to the lab manager and they can refer to this [website](#) to learn more about how to enroll and to sign up in the ECC Lab.

### Independent Study Students

Students who have been in the lab for one semester and who show exceptional initiative and research skills may choose to pursue an Independent study. Independent study projects can be undertaken either Junior or Senior year. Students can pursue independent study for one or two semesters, but they must commit to two semesters worth of work on the research project that is guiding their independent study.

Independent Study Students work in the lab for a minimum of 8 hrs/week (not including lab meetings) for one semester. Students will receive 1 course credit and need to be hired within/before the course add/drop end date. Prior to the semester's add/drop date, students need to fill out an independent study application. Students can also apply to an independent study grant (see below).

#### Resources

- [Independent Study Information](#)
- [Research Independent Study Information](#)
- [URS Independent Study Grant Information](#)
- [Procedures and Policies for Research Independent Study in Psychology](#)
- [Project-Based Independent Study Information](#)

### *ECC Lab Timeline for Pursuing an Independent Study*

Sometime in the semester or summer prior to the independent study semester, students interested in independent study should approach their project lead. The objective of this conversation is to determine whether the student has the necessary time and attention to devote to independent research, and also to discuss preliminary research questions of interest to the student which are aligned with the research aims of the ECC lab.

After this initial conversation, if the student is ready to pursue next steps they will meet with Dr. Kushnir. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss a research question of interest to them that falls within the scope of lab research activities, and a timeline for completion of the project. Project lead attends this meeting, but the expectation is that the student takes a lead role in shaping the agenda for this meeting.

### GwD/Honors Students

Students who have just started their junior year or at the end of their sophomore year, who show exceptional initiative and promise, and have been involved in the lab for at least two semesters as a volunteer or practicum student may choose to pursue an honors project in their Senior year. However, designing and executing a high-quality study with young children is resource and time intensive. **For this reason, the timeline to start an honors project in the ECC Lab begins earlier than Duke's typical timeline- it begins in Junior year prior to the honors year. Please review important details below for guidelines on how to pursue an independent or honors project in the ECC Lab.**

Duke requirements for the honors thesis begin in the summer before senior year. By that time, ECC lab honors students are expected to have 1) a specific research question, 2) a method for testing the question, 3) pilot data that validates the method. For more information on Duke requirements for the honors thesis, look at the Psychology Department Website ([Click](#)).

Honors Students work in the lab for a minimum of 8 hrs/week in the lab (~15 hrs/week total), depending on research goals for one full year. Students can apply for the VIP program in the summer before their senior year. This is an opportunity to get a head start for the honors thesis project, and funding is provided by the department over the summer ([Click](#)).

### *ECC Lab Timeline for Pursuing an Honors Thesis*

At the end of Sophomore year or the first semester of Junior year, students interested in honors should approach their project lead. The objective of this conversation is to determine whether the student has the necessary time and attention to devote to independent research, and also to discuss preliminary research questions of interest to the student which are aligned with the research aims of the ECC lab.

After this initial conversation, if the student is ready to pursue next steps they will meet with Dr. Kushnir. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss a research question of interest to them that falls within the scope of lab research activities, and a timeline for completion of the project. Project lead attend this meeting, but the expectation is that the honors student takes a lead role in shaping the agenda for this meeting.

### Work Study Students

Work study is a program that helps students get part-time jobs, primarily on Duke's campus. When a work-study student finds a job, financial aid pays a portion of his/her wages. For this reason, many on-campus employers will require a student to participate in the work-study program in order to be hired for a job. All students who apply for financial aid will be offered work study, regardless of financial need.

The ECC Lab has work study options for select undergraduates who have been involved in the lab for at least two semesters and who play a critical role in funded research. Work studies are approved by Tamar on a case-by-case basis and do not have a set protocol as it depends on the student's availability, set tasks to work on, and the lab's grants and funding.

#### *Details and Timeline for Requesting a Work Study in the ECC Lab*

Prior to requesting a work study, students should be involved in the lab as a practicum student/volunteer undergraduate for at least two semesters, then bring up the option to their project lead and the lab manager. The project lead will get back to the student if a work study is a possibility for them after speaking with Tamar.

#### Information on Work Study

- Two Types of Work Studies
  - Federally funded work study (Lab will pay 25% of students' allocated earnings)
  - Duke funded work study (Lab will pay 50% of students' allocated earnings)
- Summer Work Study
  - Only federally funded work study
  - Students have to be enrolled in classes to be eligible for a work study
- Students have an "allotment" and we will have to schedule them accordingly: we will have to pay 100% instead of 25-50% if the allotment is exceeded.
  - Students may have already used their allotment at another job, and this needs to be checked
  - Ask for their "work-study verification" to check for allotment
- Meghann Koffi (HR Staff) will help with hiring process
  - Send in student's name, email, rate of pay, start date, fund code
  - Meghann will post the job ad on JobX for the student to apply for and she will close the ad shortly after
- Manage their timecard and approve it on time, if not the lab has to pay 100%
  - Login to Duke@Work → My Team → Approve Biweekly Timecards

#### Summer Volunteer/Work Study Research

- In the summer, RAs who have been in the lab during the academic year can apply to work as either a volunteer or as a work-study student over the summer. Work study positions are advertised in the spring and depend on available summer funding.
- Hours/Dates for working in the lab over the summer are decided on a case-by-case basis.
- Summer work is often an extension of semester work on funded projects.

#### Other Summer Research - VIP & Fellowships

Duke offers many summer research fellowships for undergraduates who are working in conjunction with a faculty mentor on independent research projects. Applications are often due in the spring. RAs in the ECC lab who would like to apply for these fellowships should reach out to their project lead and Dr. Kushnir with ample time to work together on an application. For

more information about some of these options, see the websites below or ask current students who have applied for summer funding:

- <https://psychandneuro.duke.edu/undergraduate/current/research>
- <https://psychandneuro.duke.edu/summer-vertical-integration-program-vip>