

LETTER OF UNDERSTANDING

VOLUNTEERS & RESEARCH ASSISTANTS (RA)

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Volunteer & Research Assistant Responsibilities

Research Group Participation

- Attend regularly scheduled research group meetings (weekly).
- Actively participate in all scheduled research group meetings, including providing presentations as requested, contributing to discussions of ongoing projects, and offering constructive feedback to other research group members.
- Complete assigned readings and preparatory materials in advance of meetings, as appropriate.
- Advise the supervisor of planned absences **two weeks in advance**, whenever possible.
- Treat all research group members with professionalism, respect, and collegiality, and minimize disruptions within shared research spaces.
- Adhere to confidentiality requirements concerning research data, protocols, analyses, participants, and unpublished findings.
- Complete and maintain [TCPS2: CORE Certification](#) throughout the duration of their studies.
- Contribute to collaborative research activities and support fellow research group members when appropriate and feasible.
- Encouraged to provide a photograph, CV, and statement of research interests for the research group website but may opt out for personal or confidentiality reasons.
- Comply with all Dalhousie University policies and regulations related to research ethics, safety, academic integrity, plagiarism, misconduct, and responsible conduct of research.

Communication and Professional Responsibilities

- Inform the supervisor promptly of circumstances that may significantly affect research progress, degree completion, or academic performance (e.g., living arrangements, financial need, mental health, supervisor availability, quality/timing of supervisor feedback).
- Provide adequate time for review of grants, scholarship applications, conference submissions, presentations, manuscripts, reference letters and other materials requiring supervisor feedback.
- Respond to emails and other research-related communications from the supervisor within **48 hours on weekdays**, whenever possible.
- Recognize that routine research activities and email correspondence are generally not expected during evenings or weekends unless otherwise agreed upon.
- Maintain an up-to-date curriculum vitae and provide it upon request for reporting, funding applications, website updates, or other academic purposes.

Supervisor Responsibilities

Mentorship

- Provide in-person (or virtual) support regarding research design, theoretical and conceptual development, and statistical analysis.
- Meet regularly with volunteers and RAs through research group meetings and additional meetings as required.
- Be reachable through email within **two days**, unless away from the university or on vacation.
- Attempt to address concerns through discussion and feedback during multiple personal meetings before changes in volunteer/RA responsibilities.
- The supervisor reserves the right to terminate research group participation or employment if the student's responsibilities are consistently not met (e.g., at least two personal meetings indicate a problem).

Research Opportunities

- Provide opportunities, where available, to collaborate with other students in the research group on additional projects.
- In accordance with the extent of participation in the project, provide opportunities for co-authorship on relevant posters and manuscripts prepared by the supervisor.
- Support professional development and research skill development where feasible.

Additional Research Policies

Data Confidentiality and Research Conduct

- Data collected as part of research group activities is treated as highly confidential given its often sensitive nature, and should be stored in accordance with approved research ethics protocols and university requirements.
- Research data, analyses, study protocols, and unpublished findings generated through research group activities must be treated as confidential and may not be shared outside the research team without appropriate authorization and, where applicable, ethics approval.
- Research participants may only be contacted for purposes that are consistent with approved research ethics protocols and informed consent procedures.

Authorship and Scholarly Contributions

- At the supervisor's discretion, authorship may be considered for volunteers and research assistants who have dedicated significant time and effort to a research project.
- Authorship and author order for conference presentations and manuscripts should be discussed and agreed upon before the majority of the work has been completed whenever possible.
- Authorship on all conference poster or manuscript submissions is generally based on the overall intellectual and scholarly contribution to a project, including leadership in study development, data analysis, interpretation of findings, manuscript preparation, and revision (e.g., entire first draft written independently). Data collection or statistical analysis alone does not automatically warrant first authorship.
- Participation in data collection, recruitment, or development of study materials does not

necessarily warrant authorship; acknowledgement may be more appropriate where contributions do not meet accepted authorship criteria.

- The process of assigning co-authorship will follow the recommendations of the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors ([ICMJE](#)).

Signatures

The volunteer/RA and supervisor indicated below agree to participate in an advisory relationship in accordance with the aforementioned guidelines.

Student Name: _____

Supervisor: Dr. Caitlin McArthur

Student Signature: _____

Supervisor Signature: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____