

Guide to Research Experiences in Psychology

“How do I get involved in research?”

Welcome! We are glad you are thinking about how to obtain research experiences in psychology. These experiences can help guide your own intellectual exploration and discovery of different psychological fields, develop important research skills, and provide mentorship as you decide upon future paths after Haverford.

First, a note that our **Psychology curriculum prioritizes research training**. As a Psychology major, you will already *automatically* complete the following research experiences. These are rigorous and in-depth undergraduate research training opportunities that provide a strong foundation for success in applications to graduate school, medical school, law school, and other career pathways.

- PSYC 200 Psychological Statistics and Research Methods lecture plus lab
- Two upper-level lab courses
- Senior thesis project that will provide intensive research training with the option to complete a year-long empirical thesis within a faculty member’s lab.

The following information is about additional research experiences at Haverford beyond the major curriculum:

1. Please know there is a **limited number** of research assistant positions in our department’s labs. We are, unfortunately, not able to accommodate every student who reaches out with interest.

This is a reflection on the nature of our discipline and the intensive faculty supervision required in psychology and neuroscience that may differ from lab norms in other fields. Additionally, the funding for psychology RAships is limited and is awarded competitively to faculty through College and external grants. Unlike some other KINSC departments, Psychology does not have an endowed fund that supports a core number of research assistantships every year.

2. We welcome bright, hard-working, and motivated students as research assistants in faculty labs. These positions provide **valuable research support for faculty members’ ongoing programs of research**, and are not designed as opportunities for students to pursue their own independent interests (which is what the curriculum is designed to support).

These limited positions are typically **paid research assistantships**

- These positions are *highly competitive* and typically go to students who are rising juniors/seniors who have already gained some training through coursework and/or through other kinds of experiences.
- During the academic year, expectation of hours/week varies depending on the lab and should be worked out with the professor. Paid at the College's hourly student rate.
- During the summer, there are part-time, half-time, and full-time positions. Paid at the college student stipend rate.
- The application process for all summer paid RAships is a uniform one for all Psychology faculty members. An announcement goes out from the department about all available positions through the Psych-all listserv in early-mid February. Interviews and hiring take place in March.
- Academic year paid RAships are announced by individual faculty members at differing points of the academic year through the Psych-all listserv.

Less common research experiences *at the discretion of faculty members* include:

a. Independent study credit during the academic year

- Faculty do *not* receive teaching credit for independent studies which become an overload responsibility for faculty. Faculty may opt to take research assistants through this mechanism if students are engaged in supporting the faculty member's program of research. The word "independent" can be misleading as students are not expected to propose an idea for a student-initiated project.
- Can be for one-semester or two-semesters.
- Can be for 0.5 credit (6-8 hours p/week) or 1.0 credit (12-14 hours p/week) that shows up on the transcript.
- Requires a final project

b. Volunteer positions

- Similar to independent studies (see above), the choice to take on a volunteer research assistant is entirely at the discretion of a faculty member and is considered an overload responsibility for faculty. A decision to take on a volunteer research assistant is secondary to a faculty member's other advising responsibilities for thesis students and paid research assistants.
- Be prepared to learn from the ground up.

There are also opportunities for RAships at institutions other than Haverford.

- We encourage students to look into opportunities at other institutions based upon personal interests.
- During the academic year, students sometimes hold RA positions at institutions in our area, including at Bryn Mawr, Penn, Temple, Drexel, and CHOP.
- During the summer, students may look even more broadly in terms of geographic area depending on where they are located.

Please look at the Haverford Psychology Department website which includes:

- a [Student Resources](#) page with helpful links for off-campus research opportunities and programs
- and [instructions for joining the Psych-all Listserv](#) which is how research assistant positions are announced in our department.