

Agreement for research in UBC Baby Learning Lab Undergraduate Research Assistants

Part I. Welcome to the Lab! and What you can expect from Dr. Emberson (Lauren).

- My role as the Principal Investigator (PI) of the lab. I have a unique role in the lab and that means that I have a different set of responsibilities from other researchers in the lab (e.g., graduate students, postdocs, staff members, undergraduates). In general, I conceive of my role as being the person who is responsible for the lab as a whole and who determines the direction of the lab. My personal analogy is that I am the host of our research party. I decide on the invite list, I am responsible for the overall theme (perception, learning, development, the infant brain!), I try to make sure the party has everything it needs (snacks! decorations! Or maybe grant funding, a new lab coordinator, more undergraduate RAs). I am responsible if we get too loud, and the neighbours complain. If a guest is problematic, I am also responsible for showing them the door. But, the party is for all of us. **We are here to push the boundaries of human knowledge through research, to learn and grow as individuals, to share what we find and what we do with others through outreach and education, and to have fun (in our geeky/nerdy ways!). Welcome to the research party!**
- I will work hard for the good of the lab. The success of each member of our group and the lab as a whole is my top priority. This work involves supporting individual members, the whole community as well as individuals that we are connected to outside of the lab (colleagues/collaborators at our institution, at other institutions, granting agencies). Another key part of my role is building and maintaining the financial and administrative infrastructure of the lab, as well as connecting you to opportunities outside of the lab (e.g., in the department and in the field).
- Feel free to call me Lauren. Outside of the lab, I prefer undergraduates to call me Dr. Emberson (Dr. E) or Prof Emberson (Prof E) but, once you are a member of the lab, we have a different relationship, and I will be very comfortable and even prefer if you call me by my first name: Lauren. That's what the graduate students, postdocs, lab staff et al will call me, so you can too. Relatedly, properly pronouncing everyone's name in the lab is a high priority for me. I may ask you to teach me how to say your name (likely more than once).

Being a helpful and supportive mentor

- You will mostly be working with other members of the lab. The research world is fairly hierarchical in structure. This means that PIs work directly with a proportion of the lab members (usually postdocs, grad students, full-time lab staff) and have less direct contact with other lab members (usually undergraduates). For the research world, our lab is fairly non-hierarchical but, it still is hierarchical. Thus, we try to reduce/remove/be explicit about the negative aspects of that and increase the positive aspects of this reality. A positive aspect of this organization is that it allows for a division of labour where different people have different roles and that allows us to do more research (e.g., I can't meet weekly with everyone in the lab, I simply wouldn't have the time, so I will meet regularly with your direct supervisors and they in turn will meet with you). A negative aspect of that is that we won't meet regularly. See below for opportunities for us to connect and how we can create a meaningful relationship, should you want one.
- Everyone in the lab is important. One negative aspect of a hierarchical structure that we actively work against is the perception that folks in certain positions (e.g., more admin positions or more junior or entry-level positions) are less important or should be less valued than others. That is not the case and please let me know if you are made to feel this way. I started my research career as a volunteer undergraduate research assistant (at UBC in Kenny in fact!). You being in your position and me being in my position is largely a quirk of history (I was born before you! And have been doing this longer and made this the focus of my working life) and not because I am inherently better or different than you. As you will see below, in my ways, undergraduate researchers are THE MOST important folks in the lab.
- Everyone's voice will be heard vis a vis decision making. Decision making for the lab largely happens behind closed doors, so to speak. I have regular meetings with lab staff (e.g., the lab coordinator) and this is where major decisions regarding recruitment, lab direction, undergraduate RAs etc are made. I see this lab staff as representing both their views and also those who they work with. I trust them to be the

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eyes and ears of the lab. If you have an idea or think we should do something differently, and feel comfortable doing so, please talk to those who you work with (i.e., your supervisors) and they can represent that in meetings with me. **If you don't feel comfortable communicating it with them, we have the equivalent of a comment box for anonymous comments.** You are also welcome to bring it up with me directly if you feel comfortable.

- Opportunities for us to interact. While the majority of your work will be directly supervised by others in the lab, we have opportunities to get to know each other through lab meetings and other meetings where we are both present. So please feel free to speak up and join the convo. That is a great way to add your voice and for me to get to know you and your point of view. We also regularly have lab social events, that's another great place for more informal conversations. Also, if you want to talk about your career directions, other opportunities you are interested in (inside or outside the lab), research ideas that are not part of your current projects and which you don't have an opportunity to discuss in other venues, feel free to email me and/or set up a meeting using my online scheduler (see my email signature). Because I have a lot of folks that I'm responsible for (both at UBC and outside) and a lot of meetings, I prefer for these meetings to be as efficient as possible. Please come with a prepared agenda or a specific idea of what you want to talk about (e.g., I'm interested in graduate school in X area, what should I do to get there?). Also, feel free to stop by my office if the door is open for unscheduled meetings or more informal chats. If I'm busy and not available for an unscheduled chat (e.g., writing), I will close my door. If you have a meeting scheduled and my door is closed, please knock. You are on my calendar and thus are my priority! ☺
- I will listen. At each meeting, tell me what you want to discuss, what you've been thinking about, and what's on your mind. I know how important it is for an advisor to listen. I will do my best to hear you out and have informed discussions about research, the lab, your career goals, etc. Note that I will push back on your ideas or decisions if I feel there's validity to my perspective. **I will push my ideas as if I'm right and listen as if I'm wrong. This is my training as an academic and a scientist.**
- I will strive to be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful to you and everyone in the lab. If I am not acting in this way, I welcome for you to communicate that to me, respectfully but directly if possible. If that feels uncomfortable (and I entirely understand that), please find another way to let me know. Either through communicating with someone else in the lab who can share it with me (they can do that anonymously) or through the comment card (see above).
- I will help you in your career goals. One of the most important things about undergrad is that it is a time for you to explore your interests and find your path. As an undergraduate, I worked in several different labs before finding my research niche (and even then I kept exploring). This position is meant to contribute to your career trajectory and goals. So please, communicate to myself and your supervisors/advisors as these are unfolding. Don't worry if that goal is not staying in our lab for your entire career. We are happy to connect you to opportunities outside the lab (even in other labs). For example, "I've loved my time in the lab, but, for next year, I'd like to do more social psychology work as I'm very interested not just in learning but in social learning. I've looked into some of the social labs and I could use your advice on XYZ." A positive outcome of your time in the lab is you gaining more experience and understanding of your interest in research (even if that is knowing that research isn't your thing) and gaining skills to take you where you want to go.
- I will lead by example and facilitate your training in the skills necessary to be a successful scientist.
- I will provide honest letters of evaluation for you whenever you request them. Writing letters is an important part of my job as it supports you and your career development. Since I rarely work with undergraduates directly, I may write it in combination with others in the lab who you worked with. So when you ask for me to write a letter, please remind me who those individuals would be. Letter writing can be unnecessarily burdensome on faculty members because of the time involved. I have many people to write letters for (I am still writing letters for folks that I advised at the University of Rochester back in the early 2010s!). Moreover, there are seasons of letter writing where I have many, many due each week from many different people. So, please give me as much advanced warning as possible (it honestly can't be too early! I'll just put in in my plan and on my calendar) and include all the information you think I might need. Please also be organized with a list if you have multiple letters that includes deadlines, any

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particularities of each letter, how they will be submitted (email, URL request). I will submit all the letters at once as it is easiest for me. So do your best to not make additional requests after the fact and have all the requests waiting. I will write you when I've submitted so you know. I try not to leave them to the last minute as I know it can be stressful (I remember refreshing the page every day to see if my recommenders submitted!), but I am also juggling a lot so this might not always be possible. If it is urgent and you've already emailed to remind me and not heard back, get in contact with the lab manager/coordinator (they will text me) or text me if I've given you my cell phone number. If you are stressed, feel free to communicate that to me and remind me. I've only once had a student remind me too much (and I just told them what was happening and everything was fine!).

- I am committed to mentoring you, even after you leave my lab. I will gladly advise and guide your career development – to the extent you wish – long after you leave. I will happily write you letters as long as they are useful to you. Never hesitate to contact me any time in the future for help. If you want to maintain contact with me after you've left the lab, please do. I like staying in touch. Often through sporadic emails. However, don't feel obligated and if it doesn't feel genuine, don't sweat it. You can always ask me out of the blue to do something to help you out even years down the road. There is no need to maintain contact to ask me for further support. Recent example, two undergraduates that I mentored in 2013-2015, wrote me this year to ask for letters of recommendation as they wanted to apply for graduate school in research and didn't have any letters in the interim period from an academic mentor. I was happy to write them letter (or update ones from the past). No need to keep in touch just to ask for support (that you are entitled to) in the future.
- Assist in managing conflict or differences among members of the lab.

A positive, healthy lab culture.

- I have worked to create a lab that's full of generous people. My hope is that you will benefit from and contribute to this culture during your time in the lab.
- I will be a human shield and protect you from external forces that would negatively impact your research.
- I will provide a work environment that is safe and free of harassment. If you have experienced anything that has substantially upset you and that you think is harassment (of any form), there are many ways to reach out to me (see above) and you should reach out in the way that feels best to you. If you don't feel comfortable reaching out to me directly, you can also reach out to your direct supervisor or someone else that you trust in the lab and they can reach out to me on your behalf. We also have the anonymous comment box but just know that doesn't just go to me, it goes to a number of the research staff. There are also options for reporting at UBC but my preference would be for you to report to me first and we can decide the best route forward (including elevating the issue beyond the lab and to the department or UBC). You can also feel free to approach me about other problems of this nature that you may have experienced or witnessed outside of the lab.
- I will actively prevent and avoid unnecessary drama, because it reduces your quality of life both inside and outside of work. Drama affects everyone's ability to be at their best. Note that harassment and other negative treatment is not drama. I consider drama to be non-productively dealt with conflict or folks engaging in negative behaviour for attention, entertainment, etc.. Ideally, conflict and disagreement don't happen often, but they are natural and can be dealt with respectfully and productively. If you don't know how to do that in any circumstance, please reach out to supervisors, trusted people, myself etc. If in doubt (is something drama or not), reach out!
- I will try to help everyone - including myself - learn from mistakes.
- I will promote open science.
- I will provide a work environment that is intellectually stimulating and emotionally supportive.
- You will receive recognition for your work (authorship). Most undergraduates join the lab to get some research experience to help them decide what they want to do with their careers or to add to their resumes. Typically, undergraduates don't receive authorship on research projects they are involved in. This is usually because their involvement/responsibilities are at a different level than the other researchers involved. However, we want you to feel like your contributions are recognized, acknowledged

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and what you are getting out of the experience is being in the lab is equal (or greater) than what you are giving to the lab. This is partly in our recognition of the work that you do. But, there are many exceptions to undergrads not being authors. If you have gotten heavily involved in a project and taken a leadership role for some part of it (or have that opportunity), this is a great time to have a conversation about authorship, if you haven't already. Also, if you are interested in authorship and willing to give the time and take on the responsibilities that that entails, please let your advisors know.

Part II. Here's what to expect from our supervisors/direct mentors

- Consistent support. Your supervisor will be communicating with you regularly through various avenues (meetings, emails, messages on Teams) to communicate expectations, and being present to provide support to you when needed (e.g., answering questions).
- Supervisors will set expectations for your projects.
- Supervisors will deliver feedback. This feedback will be respectful, helpful and constructive.
- Renewable perspective taking. Your supervisor will be open to feedback on how they are supervising you and what you need. They understand that they have an imperfect understanding of how they are as a supervisor/mentor and are open to constructive (and respectful) feedback to improve.
- Understanding that you are a whole person. You are much more than a person who works in this lab. While we want you to focus on this professional opportunity and be highly professional, your supervisor will be open to understanding how this position relates to your goals (career and otherwise), your priorities in life, as well as how personal struggles may at times impact your work (e.g., if you're having a hard time outside of the lab and need extra support or accountability or need a break from these responsibilities).
- Treat you with respect. And show appreciation for your important and unique role in the lab. Giving you credit for your contributions to the lab and their research projects both in the moment and after the fact.
- Assist you to overcome any cultural difficulties with norms and expectations. This lab is at the intersection of many cultures and you might experience or encounter cultural differences at any or all of these levels: Vancouver (North American West Coast), Canada, academia, research, psychology, this lab culture and also interactions with families in the Greater Vancouver Region. These are topics that your supervisor will be open to discussing with you at any time.
- Assist in prioritizing your responsibilities given your limited time. Always feel free to communicate to your supervisor if you feel like you have too much on your plate. They can help you to make a plan and determine what to prioritize (and what might be able to given to someone else to do).

Part III. Here's what I/we expect from you

Take ownership of your time and your responsibilities in the lab.

- Acknowledge that you have the primary responsibility for your success. This success hinges on your commitment to your work. You should maintain a high level of professionalism, self-motivation, engagement, scientific curiosity, and ethical standards.
- Follow through on what you say you are going to do, in a timely fashion. Once a decision has been made (e.g., that you will do X and someone else will do Y), you will be largely responsible for making that happen. This is part of the independent spirit of academia. So please step up to this trust that we have placed in you and follow through on your commitments and do so in a timely fashion. If you can't (for whatever reason), please communicate that to your supervisors as soon as possible.
- Communicate as much as possible with those that supervise you and others in the lab – communication is essential to running a successful lab! And you are the main point of contact for many of the participants. Please make sure you are documenting necessary things and communicating necessary things to researchers and lab staff.
- Slow down. Research is complex and it is very important that we maintain a very high standard in all that we do. So, it's better to get half the work done and done well than to do it quickly and not well. There's a

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lot to know and remember. You'll become faster with time!

- Be easy on yourself while you're learning – mistakes will happen! That's okay! Everyone makes mistakes and it's a lot to learn. As long as you are communicating what happened, we can always fix things. Please bring any mistake to my attention as soon as possible!
- Become comfortable with not knowing. A big part of research is not knowing. In fact, if you get deeper into research, you will start doing work with less and less certainty. This is how we push the edge of human knowledge: by getting outside our comfort zones and doing something no one has done before! So it is ok to not know. But you need to ask questions, learn, figure out what to do. Part of doing that successfully is admitting and feeling ok about not knowing. That is ok in this world. It is part of what we do!
- Be honest when you make mistakes. There's no need to feel embarrassed or worried. We have all made mistakes. We can address **any** mistake in a productive way, and it is best if it is done as quickly as possible. **No one will never shame you for bringing mistakes to their attention**. In fact, I try to congratulate folks for finding the mistake (often not easy to do! and shows that you are being diligent) and your bravery in correcting it.
- Take initiative – as you become more familiar with the lab and with the research, you'll become more familiar with the routine of the lab. If there's something you're interested in learning more about or getting more involved in, reach out to a lab member! If there's something that you know needs to get done in the lab and you know how to do it, feel free to do it! If you have free time, ask if you can help with something.
- Be knowledgeable of the policies, lab procedures, etc. relevant to you. If you need further training, please let your supervisor know.
- Ask questions – we want you to understand everything that you are doing and why you are doing it. We also want to hear your voice when we discuss research. Questions (asking and answering) is one of the most important things that we do as academics. So please feel free to ask yours! In your training, if you ask questions, you will be less likely to make errors and you will be more likely to help us modify and improve our procedures! We want this to be a valuable research experience for you. It may seem like there is a lot to learn, but you will pick it up quickly. You will pick it up much quicker if you ask questions when you don't understand something! We've all been there and we'd much rather you let us know that you're confused so we can explain the concept to you in a better way! Do not hesitate to ask if we can review something for the 100th time. It's always better to ask!
- Understand that there will be cyclical highs and lows. This job (i.e., being a researcher and academic and a student) is hard. Some days things feel unbearably slow and other days when you have a breakthrough can be thrilling. We have all been there. Feel free to communicate about both these highs and lows with the folks you are working with (including those that are mentoring/supervising you). Remember to always be respectful but it is ok to say "Man. I am finding this video coding so tedious right now. I'll get it done but I wanted to let you know how I'm feeling." And I anticipate that you will find an empathetic ear to listen and support you through this. ☺

Be generous. Be a team player.

- Attend and actively participate in all trainings, lab meetings, seminars, and talks. Participation in lab meetings does not mean only presenting your own work but providing support to others in the lab. Asking questions is just as valuable as giving presentations! If there is a reading for a meeting, read it and come prepared with things to say. If someone is presenting or giving you some training, pay attention and give all the feedback that you can. If you feel shy in group contexts, you can email (I often start an email to someone during the talk and use that to take notes and then send it to them afterwards). We can also brainstorm ways that can help you to more actively participate in these contexts.
- Strive to be the very best lab citizen. Take part in shared lab responsibilities and use lab resources carefully and frugally. Maintain a safe and clean lab space where data and research participant confidentiality are protected. Respect individual differences in values, personalities, work styles, and theoretical perspectives. If you treat a colleague with disrespect, or if you talk down to someone in an egregious way (regardless of your respective ranks or roles), we will have a problem.

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- Try to spend your time in the lab. There is no better way to contribute to the lab and to maximize learning than actually being there. If you have some time between classes, feel free to come to the lab and hang out in the common areas. Be respectful of those who are working but you are welcome here even when you are not working. Casual conversations in the hallway can be extremely helpful.
- Help others learn whatever precious knowledge you possess! Help mentor and train other more junior undergraduates – it's a crucial part of your professional development.

Develop strong research skills.

- Take advantage of your opportunity to work at a world-class university by developing and refining stellar research skills. There's high-quality science happening all around you. We will share opportunities with you, but please reach out if you're looking for more ways to get involved!
- Maintain detailed, organized, and accurate lab records.
- Recognize that this position can be a stepping-stone to further involvement in research and the lab. This relates to taking initiative: You do have a specific role but to a large extent your role in the lab is what you make it. If you want to get more deeply involved in research, do it! You can ask your supervisor, me (Lauren), and others how. You can volunteer. You can ask in the context of meetings if you can take on further roles or different responsibilities. As your responsibilities shift, we will accommodate accordingly.
- Be responsive to advice and constructive criticism. The feedback you get is intended to improve your work. Sometimes it can be hard to get this feedback but do your best to not take it personally. However, if you sense unfair treatment from anybody and to anybody, please tell your advisors, myself (Lauren) or communicate it some other way.

Your position as an undergraduate research assistant

- You are the face of the lab! Your job is so incredibly important. You are the person that families will most often associate with this lab. Take that seriously. We wouldn't have hired you if we didn't think you were up to the task.
- Be professional and kind, always. Don't panic under pressure. Always stay cool and calm. If something goes wrong, that's okay. We aren't performing brain surgery. First, is the family happy? Second, is there any way that we can collect the data for this study or another study?
- Always communicate to families how thankful we are to them and how happy we are to see them. Make small talk with them. If they are not willing to participate, we cannot do our research. PERIOD. Moreover, their lives are incredibly busy (with little kiddos!) and they are making the time to come and volunteer their time. This needs to be treated with the utmost respect and gratitude. Always make the families feel appreciated and heard, sometimes you'll get new, interesting perspectives!
- Please don't use your phone when you are in the lab with families and be aware of being on your phone other times. Parents are aware of the behavior that is being modeled in front of their children so we don't want to model a behavior that may be inconsistent with their views on phone use. It's also not respectful of their time. **Families are your #1 priority. If you cannot prioritize the families during your shift, this will be an issue for us to address together.**
- Dress appropriately for the activities you will be partaking in during your lab shift. You will often be playing with children on the floor, so it's helpful to be comfortable and casual. We also need to make sure everyone is comfortable including all the lab members, the families and the children who visit (e.g., no graphics on clothing that are not child-friendly, are revealing or very sexual, or very intense political messages that might not be shared by our families). You don't have to look professional the way you would in certain positions (e.g., semi-formal wear). It is also important to us that you are able to expressing your personal style and cultural norms in the lab. To make it concrete, bright green hair and cool hair cut totally ok! Pieces of clothing specific to your culture (even if it's not the dominant culture in Canada), absolutely ok and very welcomed! T-shirt with swearing or very strong political statements, alas not. Clothing that is very physically revealing or sexual in nature, not ok either. As with all of these, when in doubt or if any of this is concerning to you, please engage us in conversation. We will come to a respectful agreement of how to proceed and we want everyone to be comfortable.

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- Be aware of how you share information with others – we are responsible for keeping participant information confidential. We do not talk about babies with any identifiable information outside of the lab. For example, if you are talking with a non-lab member, you can say something like, “There was the cutest baby in lab today!” It would be inappropriate to say, “This adorable baby girl named Katie was in lab today!” When in doubt, don’t talk about babies outside of lab.
- Please maintain professional manners at all times – remember that this is a job! It is especially important in front of the families. I completely understand that during undergrad there are lots of ups and downs. If you don’t think you can maintain this professional conduct while at work, please let me/lab staff know! We all have days where we need a break and I’d rather you call in or leave early and take that break than act unprofessionally in front of the other staff and families. Of course, let us also know if we can give you support if you are having a hard time in or outside of the lab.
- If there is a conflict between you and someone at the lab, please work with your supervisors to resolve it. I (Lauren) is always here to assist as well. During resolution conversations, please maintain a professional manner. While it is my responsibility to ensure the lab is a productive and respectful environment for everyone, you can do your part in this effort by communicating directly and asking for support when you feel you need it. If you are consistently not contributing to this positive lab culture, you will be asked to leave. You will receive feedback and given opportunities for change before this point, when appropriate. If you or anyone else ever seriously oversteps boundaries (e.g., engage in harassing behaviours), you will both be asked to leave, and I will get outside advice as to whether there are further consequences for these actions at the university level. I am not saying this to threaten you but to show you how seriously I take issues of inter-individual respect and lab culture.
- Treat the job with the same respect as any other job – be on time for your shift, do not take excessive breaks, participate actively, and ask questions. When you aren’t working, please be responsive to emails, especially when they pertain to scheduling!

For us to add, items that are specific to our working relationship and your/my expectations/goals for our time working together:

1)

2)

Thanks, and I look forward to working with you.

Lauren Emberson

Date

Supervisor:

Date

Student:

Date