

Department of Psychology: RES Supervisor List (Spring Term 2019)

Email your application to Dr Kevin Dent (kdent@essex.ac.uk, RES organiser).

Your email must include:

1. a one page CV in Word or PDF format attached to the email;
2. a list of any members of staff you would like to work with, in order of preference, with your preferred choice at the start of the list (you can list as many of the staff as you like from the list below);
3. FOR EACH MEMBER OF STAFF ON YOUR LIST OF PREFERENCES, attach a separate short letter (in Word or PDF format) in which you explain your interest in the research project and motivation for working with the researcher.

Please send your application as soon as possible and no later than **9:00am Friday 11th January (Week 15)**.



Kevin Dent

I'm interested in how in such a busy world, people stay focused on what is relevant and avoid distraction from irrelevant objects and events. RES projects in the Autumn Term will focus on the relationships between memory and attention. In particular projects will explore, two issues: 1) how the history of what you were just doing, affects your ability to deploy attention now, and 2) when is it difficult to both hold things in memory and search for an object, and when is it easy to combine these two activities. Students will participate in aspects of study design, participant recruitment and testing, and data analysis.



Maria Laura Filippetti

The ability to intentionally act in the surrounding environment, to express emotions and desires, and to understand other people's behaviour relies on the primary ability to define one's body as belonging to ourselves and distinguished from others. I'm interested in understanding how human beings develop an integrated sense of self that is grounded to a coherent body representation, and how different processes interact together to maintain and updated self-awareness. My current projects explore 1) the development of body perception in infants, 2) the use of new techniques to study body awareness in children, and 3) the development of food responsiveness in infants. As a RES student, you would work with me on one of these topics and you will be involved in the recruitment and testing of participants, using behavioural or neural measures (e.g. NIRS, EEG and eye tracker). I strongly encourage students interested to apply for a DBS check as soon as possible.



Tom Foulsham

My research investigates how people perceive and pay attention to the things around them. In particular, I am interested in the neural, visual, cognitive and social processes that determine where people look and what people notice and remember when they look there. Current projects include investigating where people look in art, comics, movies and computer games.



Helge Gillmeister

My research is about body representation and how this shapes our sense of self. This term's RES project investigates links between emotional difficulties (anxiety, alexithymia) and the mirror neuron system. I'm looking for up to 4 students, who would learn to collect computerised survey responses and behavioural measures from an automatic imitation task involving finger movements in the lab. There is also an opportunity for 1-2 RES students to complete some data collection on the perception of physical disability (specifically, persons with missing limbs). For this, the RES student who would learn how to use eye-tracking equipment to measure attention to body parts, surveys, and the implicit-association test (IAT).



Rick O'Gorman

What is the role of disgust in social settings? Does it help us make moral decisions? Can we use pupil dilation to know when something is more significant in meaning for us? Do we care more about family or friends? Do people look more at men or women, older or younger (are older women 'invisible')? These are some of the questions that I will be looking to study with assistance from a Research Experience Student (or two or three!). My general research interest is in studying human behaviour as a functionally adaptive system; that is, evolutionary psychology--the study of human behaviour and cognition from an evolutionary perspective. Which project is worked on depends on what I need to prioritise, and from discussion with RES applicants.



Rick Hanley

I am currently carrying out a meta-analysis of published studies of individuals who have been categorised as suffering from developmental surface dyslexia. This is a condition in which children have severe problems in learning to read and spell words with atypical letter-sound correspondences such as have or pint. One problem with research in this area is that there does not appear to be a consistent distal cause of surface dyslexia (e.g. visual memory problems; picture naming problems; phonological awareness problems etc.). There is, however, now a potential breakthrough on the horizon. This is because it has recently become apparent that the nature of the reading and spelling impairments in surface dyslexic children may differ from one individual to another. For example, some surface dyslexics can distinguish written words from nonwords (e.g. brain v brane) whereas other struggle to achieve this. Perhaps these different types of surface dyslexia have different distal causes? This project will therefore re-examine the existing published cases of surface dyslexia in an attempt to determine:

The precise nature of each individual's reading/spelling problem to see whether clear individual differences emerge in the form of sub-groups. Establish whether the reading problems of these different sub-groups have distinct distal causes.

The task of the RES student will be to assist me in this project by reading through previously published case-studies to categorize the precise nature of the cognitive problems and the reading difficulties that each individual experiences.

This opportunity is aimed particularly at undergraduate students with an interest in developmental psychology or cognitive neuropsychology and at PGT students who are taking PS950 (Cognitive Neuropsychology).



Gethin Hughes

Ongoing projects in my lab include investigating multisensory integration, time perception, sense of agency (the feeling of being in control of your actions and their outcomes), action understanding, and interoception (the perception of internal bodily states). Some experiments will include electroencephalography (EEG) data collection, while others will involve a combination of behavioural and physiological measures (electrocardiogram and skin conductance). I am looking for volunteers to help collect data for these studies.



Veronica Lamarche

My work stems from the big question "What makes some couples more resilient in the face of uncertainty compared to others?" I am currently focused on two lines of research: 1) What are the individual differences that predict relationship resilience in the face of uncertainty; and, 2) Do self-regulatory systems managing responses to uncertainty outside of the relationship influence relationship regulatory responses within the relationship.

I am looking for students to help me with a project investigating the factors that influence when we offer and when we withhold help from close others. We will be looking at how individual differences in traits associated with trust interact with situational demands for help. As a RES student, you will be helping me coordinate this project and collect data from friends and couples in a lab setting.



Keith May

Effects of cosmetics on face recognition and attractiveness

I am looking for students to collect data on two experiments: one looking at the effect of cosmetics on face recognition, and the other on the effects of lightening and darkening the face on attractiveness. Both of these experiments have been run as student projects, but I would like to collect more data before deciding whether to publish them. The Face recognition experiment requires you to recruit participants and test them in the lab; the other experiment is an online study in which the only work is recruiting participants. It would be possible for a single student to work on both projects.

Face recognition:

If someone is wearing cosmetics, does that make them easier or harder to recognise later? What about if we first see them with cosmetics, and later see them without (or vice-versa)? These questions will be addressed in this experiment.

Effects of lightening and darkening the face with makeup

Previous research has provided mixed evidence on the effects of skin tone on facial attractiveness. For male faces, darker faces have been rated as more attractive by white participants, but less attractive by black participants. For female faces, skin lightness seems to have little effect on attractiveness, but lighter skin has sometimes been found to be more attractive, particularly with black participants. Some of these apparent inter-racial differences in attractiveness judgement involve comparisons across studies that used different stimuli and methodology. The current study investigates the effect of skin lightness for each possible combination of sex (male/female) and ethnicity (black/white) of participants and faces.



Jonathan Rolison

Do you know how you would decide if faced with a real decision, such as whether to jump out of a plane on a skydive? An ability to anticipate how one would decide if faced with a decision is vital for planning our future decisions. Yet, the intention to decide (e.g., to jump from a plane on a first skydive) is hypothetical until one is faced with a consequential decision. A long tradition of behavioural research that uses self-report measures as a substitute for studying behavior directly rests on the assumption that people act as they say they would. In this project, you will help conduct a study to test whether people do as they say they will.



Steven Samuel

One of the most interesting aspects of our cognition is the ability to represent in our minds what is going on in other people's. There is clear evidence that we can take other people's visual and mental perspectives; we can imagine what a visual scene looks like from somewhere other than where we are, and we can take into account what we know about other people when we make judgments about what we think they think. What is less well understood is how we do this, when we do this, and what the scope and limitations of these abilities are. As an RES student, you would collaborate with me on a behavioural study to investigate aspects of our ability to take other visual and/or mental perspectives.
