

The Lifespan Lab  
Psychology Department  
Brandeis University

Lab Manual:  
Norms and Expectations



Lifespan Lab

2023-2024

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## **Welcome to the Lifespan Lab!**

Please note: this is a living document and it may change over time.  
Lab members should feel free to suggest changes/additions/clarifications.

## **Introduction and Overview**

### **What do we do?**

The goal of the Lifespan Lab is to promote good health and well-being throughout adulthood. We hope to learn why some people age better than others. We also want to learn what modifiable factors can help to ease the declines that accompany aging. We include young, middle-aged and older adults in our studies so that we can identify what we can do to prevent or slow the problems of aging, as early as possible in adulthood.

Our research examines multiple aspects of health, including psychological well-being, physical health and cognitive functioning. We use a number of methods including large-scale surveys, laboratory-based experimental studies, and cross-sectional and longitudinal designs. We adopt a multifaceted approach to measurement that includes self-reports, physiological and hormonal assessments, and tests of cognitive and functional health.

The list keeps growing because (a) we receive new funding, and (b) lab members bring their own interests and good ideas!

For more information see the Lab website:

<https://www.brandeis.edu/psychology/lachman/index.html>

### **How do we do it?**

We study these questions using a variety of designs such as cross-sectional, longitudinal, experimental, daily diaries, and clinical trials. We use cognitive assessments, questionnaires, technology such as actigraphy and cell phone apps, and biomarkers.

Analytically, we use regression, repeated measures analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), multilevel modeling (MLM), structural equation models, factor analysis. We also often use structural equation modeling (SEM) and mediation models.

We work collaboratively so that everyone helps each other and shares their unique skills.

## Who are we?

Here are the roles that we typically have in the lab, all of whom are an integral part of making the lab run. See section 3 for the expectations for each of these roles. See the lab website for bios of our current lab members.

- Margie E. Lachman, the PI.
- Postdocs: we typically have 1 or 2 Postdocs at a time.
- PhD students: we typically have 2 PhD students at a time.
- MA students: We typically have one MA student each year. Some MA students choose to complete the program in two years rather than one.
- Undergraduate students: We typically have 5-10 undergraduate RAs in the lab at any given time. Most start as sophomores or juniors, a few as first years. We typically do not take students in their senior year.
- Honors students: We often have 1 or 2 honors students working on a thesis.
- Staff: We typically have 1 full-time lab manager/research assistant working in the lab.
- Each semester the lab manager will compile a list of all active lab members with their contact information
- The lab manager will regularly update information about lab members on the lab website: <https://www.brandeis.edu/psychology/lachman/index.html>

## Core lab values:

- Do rigorous science that pushes the field forward. Think mechanistically.
- Adhere to the highest standards of research integrity and open science
- Work collaboratively as a team. Teach and learn from each other.
- All of our decisions should be made remembering we are studying human beings and must respect confidentiality and protect the identify of participants
- Make the lab a supportive, fun, awesome place to work.

## 1. Lab/Group Etiquette

### 1a. Mentorship

#### i. Mentorship style/approach and goals for trainees

I try to take a lifespan developmental approach to mentoring—that is, I try to calibrate my mentoring to each mentee’s stage and individual needs. I’m more directive and hands-on early in your training and expect you to be increasingly more independent as you advance.

I expect you to be proactive. This is your career, and while I’m here to guide you along the way, you need to take ownership and ask for what you need from me to be successful. It is your responsibility to work with me to identify a research topic, identify research milestones and goals, plan your timeline toward progress, plan for conference

submissions, prepare for manuscript submissions, prepare for your thesis proposals and defenses, etc.

Ultimately, my goal is that you become a junior colleague, with the full knowledge and skill set you need for the next step in your career. That means having a clear program for research that you have full intellectual ownership of. Often students take the lab in exciting directions I would not have thought of—this is what is great about working with smart and motivated trainees. Obviously, your research should fall broadly within the scope of the lab, and is constrained by what we have funding for, but within those boundaries I want you to develop your own area of expertise. I will help you with this, but ultimately only you know what you're interested in!

I value clear and proactive communication. Try to solve problems on your own first, but if you get stuck, need input, or aren't sure you're on the right track, please let me know sooner rather than later. I don't always know what you don't know, so please tell me when something isn't clear or you realize you need to fill a gap in your knowledge—I can help, or at least point you in the right direction.

If at any point it doesn't seem like you are making progress or have a plan, you can expect me to initiate a frank and open discussion about it. This is not meant to be at all punitive. Rather, it is my job to try to help you identify the barriers to your progress and problem solve how to get you back on track so that we can continue to make strides together.

My job as an advisor is to help my advisees be successful in their chosen career, which I recognize will not be a traditional academic one for everyone. Sometimes students are reluctant to say they want to pursue non-academic paths and worry that their advisor will be disappointed or unsupportive— I never want you to feel like I will think less of you for choosing a different path! Your success, no matter what field, is what makes me proud. I will do my best to support you in getting the types of training and experiences that will best position you for the career you want, including helping to connect you to people and resources that can provide better advice than I can for non-academic career paths. I can only do that if I know what careers you are interested in. I want my advisees to let me know the range of career paths in which they are interested at the earliest possible date. This will also help us to seek out relevant opportunities throughout your time here. I also recognize that career paths change through graduate school, so we discuss this as part of your IDP every year. Like every grad student, you may consult with Marika McCann at Brandeis [Career Services](#) as an additional guide. Past students have said she has fantastic resources, networking events, and helpful ideas.

## ii. Availability to students

We have scheduled meetings every week, for a 30-minute block where I am available for individual meetings with those who are conducting post-doctoral, doctoral, masters, or honors level work. You can also schedule meetings with me at other times as needed or

attend my regularly scheduled office hours. We also have a 1- hour lab meeting once a week where we have planned discussions and presentations.

What students can expect from their mentor--

You can expect me to:

- Have a vision of where the lab is going and be responsible for making sure we are doing good and rigorous work.
- Mentor you in your path to becoming an independent scientist. I will strive to help you ask questions, engage the scientific literature, and design scientific work.
- Make the time to meet with you regularly, provide timely feedback on your drafts (typically within two weeks but often sooner), and talk about science and career development with you.
- Push you to a high standard of scientific thinking, writing and presenting. I will make you draw and tell the story of your models, and do many, many drafts.
- Support you in your career development (whatever career path you choose), including writing letters of recommendation, introductions to other scientists, conference travel, and promoting your work as often as possible.
- Support you as a human being by giving you flexibility in working hours, environment and encouraging you to develop a healthy work/life balance. I will be supportive, and help connect you with other supports, when you encounter challenges.

## 1b. Expectations for work times and locations

### i. Working in-person or from-home

There are benefits, both for exchanging ideas and knowledge and building community, to the informal interactions with each other that happen when we work in shared spaces (lab, shared offices), so I encourage you to do be in the lab at least 3 to 4 days a week. Working at home one day a week is reasonable and encouraged to facilitate uninterrupted work time.

### ii. Work hours

For the most part, you can set your own schedule. The nature of research is that the workload ebbs and flows, with some real crunch times and others with a slower pace. As long as studies are running smoothly and you are being productive in meeting your program milestones and own research goals, I trust you to find the work schedule and rhythm that works for you. The exception is that your schedule must accommodate classes and meetings and deadlines. It is up to you how you decide to budget your time and if and when you want to work evenings or weekends. In some cases it is not possible to get everything done during the 9 to 5, M-F work week.

I also expect everyone to generally be available for scheduled meetings during normal working hours (9 AM-5 PM, M-F), unless they have other scheduled academic/work commitments (classes, participant slots), with few exceptions (e.g., medical appointments, job interviews). Scheduling group meetings is hard enough around everyone's other work commitments—it becomes impossible if people also block off times they would just rather not come to campus, etc.

## 1c. Communication guidelines

### i. Who to go to for help within lab/group

I encourage lab members to use one another as a resource—senior lab members are an invaluable resource for how to do things, examples of analysis scripts, etc. Or sometimes the expert on a particular task may be an experienced undergraduate RA! I am of course also available to help but may not be the best source of information in day-to-day operations (this is what happens when you are the PI. . .).

### ii. Methods of communication

#### 1) Lab communication:

Email is the primary method of communication in the lab, and for department and university communication.

You should check your Brandeis email regularly for important official communication and announcements. Official department and university communications are done by emails to the appropriate Google groups (e.g., [psychologygradstudents-group@brandeis.edu](mailto:psychologygradstudents-group@brandeis.edu) reaches all Psychology grad students). You should generally not send emails to these groups as they are reserved for top-down communication. Instead, email the individuals you need to communicate with directly. Although we do not use Slack for internal lab communication, it is helpful to sign up for the Psychology Department Slack to keep abreast of departmental conversations [Brandeis.psych.slack.com](https://brandeis.psych.slack.com)

## 1d. Conflict resolution and accountability

### i. Within lab

We have been fortunate to have very few conflicts in the lab. The foundation of that is good communication and trust in one another.

- If you feel like there has been a miscommunication or something is bothering you, speak up right away, don't let it fester. Ask if they have a moment to talk. Use "I" statements. Listen to their perspectives.

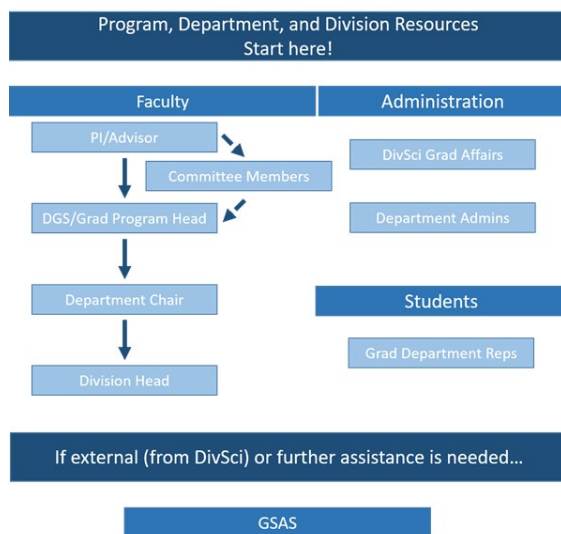
- When working on a project together, communicate early and often about your goals and expectations. Have a clear division of responsibilities and timeline everyone agrees on.
- Discuss authorship early in a collaboration (see section 8).
- Respect one another's workspace and research materials– don't move/borrow things without permission.
- In shared offices and workspaces, keep the space clean and neat.

I expect you to try to work things out with one another first. If that fails, or there is ever a situation where you don't feel comfortable talking to someone directly, please come to me with it. I'm also happy to help you troubleshoot mentoring/supervision relationships (e.g., what to do if an RA is not performing adequately) and outside collaborations (e.g., what to do if a collaborator is sitting on a draft forever).

Likewise, if you ever feel like something is not working well in our mentoring/supervision relationship, I hope that you will talk to me about it first (and I promise to listen and try to make it better). But if you need an outside ear and perspective, you can also talk to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS, if a grad student), or Ombuds Office (for anyone).

## ii. Outside of the lab

If you are experiencing problems or conflicts in the program or university more broadly, I'd also like to know about them, so I can try to help. Other resources include the DGS (for grad program issues), grad student department reps (for grad program issues where a peer perspective would be helpful), and Ombuds office (see above).





## 2. DEI Statement and Anti-Harassment Policy

### 2a. [Division of Science DEI statement](#)

### 2b. Individual lab/group DEI statement

We have lab members from a wide variety of backgrounds and identities, which enrich our community and the science we do. Please be mindful of how other people's experiences and cultural backgrounds may affect how they interact, interpret things, and express themselves. Be open to different ways of being and thinking in the world. Don't make assumptions about other's knowledge or intentions—ask respectful questions, listen, be curious.

I strive to recruit and mentor students from backgrounds that have historically been underrepresented in the field. In doing so, I want to be mindful of the ways in which there may still be systemic problems (in the field, university, department, lab) that impact people's ability to thrive, professionally/academically and personally. If there are barriers I can try to help address, ways I can advocate for you, or if I've missed the mark in my own interactions with you (and I'm certain I unintentionally will from time to time!), ***please let me know.***

Health, mental and physical, is also an important diversity dimension: See section 7.

### 2c. Resources - Offices on campus to go to for help

#### i. [Brandeis Counseling Center \(BCC\)](#)

The BCC provides a variety of services, including individual therapy, group therapy, workshops, and drop-in support groups for both undergraduate and graduate students. Grad students may especially want to try out the grad student support group. All on-campus counseling services are provided with no out-of-pocket or direct costs passed along to students.

#### ii. [Ombuds](#)

The ombuds office provides confidential, independent, impartial, and informal resource for all members of the Brandeis community including undergraduates and graduate students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

#### iii. [Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion \(ODEI\)](#)

A network of offices and groups that support community members in the various dimensions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Reporting offices include the [Gender and Sexuality Center](#), the [Intercultural Center](#), the [Office of Equal Opportunity](#) and [University Ombuds](#).

#### iv. [Chaplains](#)

Brandeis chaplains offer counseling, support and community to all students. The Center for Spiritual Life wants students of any, all, or no religious tradition to feel at home connecting.

#### v. For staff

##### [Office of Human Resources](#)

Employee Assistance Program: It is important to us at Brandeis that staff and faculty are well-supported in all they do — on and off campus, and in every stage of their lives. With the help of New Directions, the university offers employees new-parent coaching, child care referrals, short-term counseling and help with family, financial or substance-abuse issues. These employee assistance services are free, confidential and available 24 hours a day, every day. Login to the [New Directions website](#) (company code: Brandeis University) or call 800-828-6025.

### 3. Expectations of lab members

#### 3a. PI

See section 1.a

#### 3b. Grad Students and Postdocs

- **Stay in good standing (grad students):** with the graduate school by meeting graduate school requirements, filling out paperwork on time, registering for the appropriate classes on time, completing milestones satisfactorily, and scheduling committee meetings.
- **Do rigorous and ethical science:** by following the lab's protocols in section 4 and ensuring that all IRB protocols are followed exactly. I have zero tolerance for any intentional breaches of human subjects' protections or research ethics and data integrity. If you aren't sure if something is OK, stop and ask before proceeding. **If you see something, say something.**
- **Prioritize research:** by dedicating time and attention to it as you would a job. Especially for PhD students past their first year, research is your main job (see section 5b).
- **Communicate:** regularly with me about your progress, your lack of progress, your challenges, your needs, your strengths, your weaknesses, and anything else that impacts my ability to support you in your pursuit of your career path.
- **Participate:** actively in the lab, department and university, attending (and asking questions at) all lab meetings and department brown-bags and colloquia. Especially remember that your lab mates benefit from your feedback, and vice versa. I also encourage you to seek out workshops, and other professional, technical, and departmental events when they are relevant to your work and professional growth. Of

course, participate within reason, as prioritizing research remains a key responsibility as well.

- **Collaborate with and support:** other members of the lab. Group members should strive to work collaboratively to solve problems, share their expertise, and make the lab an awesome place to work. We often run or analyze large studies where multiple lab members are expected to contribute. I expect you to help even when it isn't "your" project—your lab mates will do the same for you.
- **Mentor undergraduates:** We generally pair undergraduates doing an honors thesis or independent study with a grad or postdoc mentor. The undergraduate RAs are critical to your work by helping run participants and other tasks— providing mentorship is a critical way to pay it forward and also good practice for you. Be clear about expectations, and you're your own boundaries so that you can successfully complete your own work. Ideally, their work will benefit yours, as well.

### 3c. Undergrads

- **Enroll in the appropriate course for lab credit:** Per university policy, to be in the lab, you must be enrolled in a 90-level course (academic year) or have funding (e.g., summer fellowships). Students in their first semester in the lab should enroll in PSYCH 91 (1-credit). After that, students can continue to enroll in 91g, or may choose to do an independent research project (PSYCH or NEUR 93) which requires writing a research proposal or report—if you wish to do so you must talk to me well in advance and identify a grad mentor (I can help with this). **Seniors who wish to complete an honors thesis** (PSYCH or NEUR 99) should talk to me about it by the end of their junior year— to do an honors thesis in the lab, you must have been in the lab for at least a year (i.e., by the start of junior year) and meet the GPA and other major requirements (check psych and neuro websites for details). The honors thesis contract lays out the guidelines and timelines for the thesis project in detail— we will go over it when we first meet about doing a thesis. You will be expected to apply for grants so that you can begin your work during the summer going into your Senior Year.
- **Be reliable:** I expect undergraduates to be utterly reliable and willing to help with whatever projects need it. At a bare minimum, reliability includes showing up on time, maintaining your hours (minimum of 8 hours/week), and making sure that all of your work is accurate (double-check everything). If you find yourself without a specific project, be proactive by asking what you can work on— there are always tasks to do.
- **Follow research protocols carefully:** You play an important role in the lab! We are counting on you to carry out lab tasks carefully and follow through on the tasks you are assigned. Sometimes it may seem like we are very picky about exactly how things are done, but this is for good reason—the accuracy and integrity of our studies depends on it. If you are unclear about how to do something, ask! If you notice a problem, speak up! We value your input. If you are in charge of updating data or training protocols, please ensure they are continuously up-to-date.
- **Do rigorous and ethical science:** by following the lab's protocols in section 4 and ensuring that all IRB protocols are followed exactly. I have zero tolerance for any intentional breaches of human subjects' protections or research ethics and data integrity.

If you aren't sure if something is OK, stop and ask before proceeding. If you see something, say something.

- **Participate and learn:** Consistently attend weekly undergraduate team meetings if this is expected by your supervisor. Attend weekly lab meetings if you can, and feel free to ask questions. Take the initiative to read papers from the lab and learn more about our research and other research related to ours.

### 3d. Staff

- **Be present:** I expect you to be accessible during normal working hours. By default, plan to come to the office during the daytime with regularity. In some cases tasks may require weekend and evening hours, in which case you will flex your schedule to take other time off. Vacation time should be arranged with me in advance, ideally at least 2 weeks before, to ensure things continue to run smoothly.
- **Do rigorous and ethical science:** by following the lab's protocols in section 4 and ensuring that all IRB protocols are followed exactly. I have zero tolerance for any intentional breaches of human subjects' protections or research ethics and data integrity. If you aren't sure if something is OK, stop and ask before proceeding. **If you see something, say something.**
- **Be organized and responsible:** Much of the day-to-day running of studies falls to you. It is essential that you develop and maintain systems for keeping studies running smoothly, keeping materials and data organized, maintaining lab inventory, and tracking study progress. I'm happy to help you troubleshoot, but you should be relatively independent in carrying out these tasks.
- **Communicate:** regularly with me about study progress and any problems that arise. You are also a trainee, so please also communicate about your career development progress, your lack of progress, your challenges, your needs, your strengths, your weaknesses, and anything else that impacts my ability to support you in your pursuit of your career path.
- **Participate and learn:** Most staff members are interested in eventually applying to graduate school. Toward that end, I encourage you to get involved in the science as much as possible beyond your day to day duties, by attending (and asking questions at) all lab meetings, as well as department brown-bags and colloquia (speak to me or a lab member if you need information about these events). I also encourage you to seek out workshops, and other professional, technical, and departmental events when they are relevant to your work and professional growth. Of course, participate within reason, as prioritizing research remains a key responsibility as well. I encourage you to take on your own research projects within the larger study to submit for conferences and publication—please talk to me if you are interested in doing so.
- **Train and mentor undergraduates:** You have a key role in training undergraduate research assistants and mentoring them as they learn the ropes. I expect you to be a firm but friendly and supportive supervisor. This can be tricky for recent college grads who are transitioning from being peers to supervisors. If you are having any difficulty in this role, please talk to me about it and I will work with you on these skills.

## 4. Research Documentation and Data Storage

We strive to always follow current best practices when it comes to making our research rigorous and reproducible, and sharing our data, code and materials with others. If you haven't read about the replication crisis, give this a [read this](#) and some of the linked articles, and you'll see why. In practice this means we:

### 4a. Preregistration

We preregister most papers on [OSF](#) (you will be added to the lab space). A preregistration commits you to your hypothesis (preventing hypothesizing after the results are known, aka [HaRKing](#)) and data analysis plan (eliminating "researcher degrees of freedom"- flexibility in analyses that can produce [p-hacking](#)). Preregistration protects us against our brain's remarkable ability to convince ourselves that we *did* predict or plan something that we really didn't.

In our lab, we tend to do preregistrations as the first half of the paper– introduction and methods section, ending with a detailed power analysis and analysis plan. This saves time later, as you will just need to add the results and discussion section to have a full manuscript draft. We have also started moving toward including the actual analysis code (usually SPSS, R or Mplus input files) in the preregistration to more exactly specify the analysis plan. We cannot upload MIDUS data to OSF or any journals. You can provide the code that derived your subset of data without uploading the data itself.

Since we often publish multiple papers from a data set, not all of which were planned before running the study, we often do preregistrations after the data are collected but before they are analyzed. **No one is allowed to look at data until the preregistration is approved by me and posted to OSF.**

### 4b. Data use and storage

Some of our studies are exempt from IRB approval. If you are using public data that is deidentified it may not be considered human subjects research. In any case it is best to submit your study to the IRB and let them make the determination as to whether a full protocol needs to be submitted. It is essential to always follow the data security and confidentiality procedures in our IRB protocols. Before accessing any data, you must read these protocols carefully!

Raw data files should *never* be edited or removed from the lab servers or Qualtrics. When you are pre-registered and ready to work with data, copy the data **with no identifying information** you need to your computer/cloud folder to work with. You are responsible for backing up your working data and analysis files. I strongly recommend using cloud storage (from the University) or backup. Rename the file with your initials and keep track of any changes or recodes that you do. Always rename a variable with "r" in the suffix to show it was recoded.

Only copy de-identified data: **No files with identifying human subjects' information should ever be anywhere except the appropriate places on the lab server, as described in the IRB protocols.** Some data are inherently identifiable (e.g., diagnostic interview recordings or transcripts) and should never be worked with off the lab server or shared with anyone not explicitly listed in the IRB protocol as being permitted to access them (e.g., often undergraduate RAs do NOT have access to these materials).

#### 4c. Data, analysis script and materials sharing

I expect everyone to maintain well-commented and clear analysis scripts for all analyses. This means that you need to be doing everything in a scripted software (generally Mplus in our lab, sometimes R), or if you are using SPSS you must save the syntax to a script file.

These files must be posted to your project on OSF prior to submitting the paper for publication, along with the fully de-identified data file(s) in CSV format, and a readme file identifying all variables and explaining the content of all files. Anyone should be able to reproduce your analyses completely and exactly from the files you post.

If you have constructed any *new* measures (tasks, questionnaires) for the study, these should also be posted to OSF prior to submission.

Always include your syntax with your data analysis output so I can see what you did.

## 5. Lab Meetings and University Seminars

### 5a. Expectations for meeting/seminar attendance

#### i. Lab meetings:

I expect everyone to attend lab meetings except in exceptional extenuating circumstances (e.g., when ill). These are essential for keeping abreast of what is happening in the lab and providing feedback to your lab-mates when they present.

#### ii. Writing group

Although not mandatory, some students have found it helpful to attend the writing group that Hannah Snyder leads for the whole department. The format differs a bit between semesters depending on what the participants want to do (e.g., reading and discussing things about writing, silent writing time), but always include weekly writing goal setting. Participants have generally found writing group helpful in being more productive, better and happier writers.

#### iii. Brown Bag/Colloquia

I expect all graduate students to attend the department brown bag presentations every week, even if they are not enrolled in the course. It is important that you learn about

what other graduate students are doing and support them when they give presentations. Be sure to sign up each year to give a presentation about your research in Brown Bag.

You should certainly also attend all department colloquia. This is a chance to hear from some of the top researchers in the field, who are also often excellent speakers. I encourage you to sign up for the graduate student lunches with the speakers as well when possible. Each year the graduate students are asked for suggestions for one or more colloquium speakers. If you have a suggestion for a colloquium speaker, inform a [Psychology Graduate Representative](#).

Additionally, there are Slack communities for our department that may be helpful for you to join, as members of the department communicate information (especially graduate students): the Psychology Department (graduate students and faculty), the Psychology Department Graduate Students, Brandeis University Graduate Students, and various other Brandeis slack channels (for example, "Brandeis Outings" if you are new to the area).

## 5b. Priority of time spent in meetings, seminars, lab/research, and coursework

The primary job of graduate students, especially PhD students beyond their first year, is to be researchers. This is usually the hardest part of the transition from undergraduate to graduate school. Yes, you need to do well in your classes and with TA duties, but the majority of your time should be spent in research. If you are struggling with this balance (which is very common), please talk to me about it and we can strategize how to manage your time. Grad students in the lab have also found it helpful to speak to more senior lab members about what schedules and methods have worked best for them over the years.

For PhD students, as very rough estimates you should be spending the following percentages of your work time on research, at minimum:

Year 1 Fall: 25% fall, 50% spring

Year 2: 50-75% (includes lab rotation)

Year 3: 75%

Year 4: 75-100% (depends on TA requirement)

Year 5: 100%

MA students completing the program in one year should aim for approximately 50% research time both semesters in order to successfully complete their thesis (note that this is very tough with the course load, so I would advise considering finishing in the summer). MA students completing the thesis in two years should aim for 25% research the first year and 75-100% research the second year (depending on if they have CAs, with the usual plan that all coursework is completed in the first year).

## 6. Professional Development and Conferences

### 6a. [IDPs](#)

We will complete an individual development plan (IDP) together at the start of each year. We have lab templates tailored to different years in the program which I will send you at the start of each fall semester to complete. We'll then discuss and revise them in individual meetings. This is a very important process of identifying and communicating your goals (short and long term) and how you will get there.

### 6b. Expectations about attending conferences

Graduate students after their first year should ideally present at 1-2 conferences a year. Junior grad students will generally present posters. Senior grad students should seek out opportunities to give oral presentations when possible (e.g., apply for your submission to be considered for papers or symposia).

There are [funds](#) for traveling, poster printing, and research you can apply for from the university and department. Anything not covered by those, please talk to me in advance to see if the lab can cover it or if there are grant funds you can apply to for support.

I always attend the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) annual conference (which is a great smaller conference with lots of very relevant research for us and good networking opportunities for trainees) and sometimes APA (which is very large, but good for broader coverage of the field). I'd encourage you to consider attending one or both of these conferences as well, but if there are other conferences that seem relevant to you I'm happy to discuss them.

If you are traveling for a conference during the semester and will miss class/TA duties, you must clear it with the affected faculty members before applying. Generally, faculty are pretty accommodating of grad students attending conferences.

## 7. Work/Life Balance

### 7a. Weekly schedule

See section 1.b.

### 7b. Time away from research (trips, time to see family)

It is essential to take some real time off during breaks in order to recharge and come back with energized and motivated. The work *never* ends, so you have to carve out time away from it. There will be several weeks a year during breaks and summer when I'll be away from work (I will let you know in advance when those times are so you can plan ahead for anything you need



from me). There will be a point person for urgent lab issues during those times– everything else can wait.

### **Grad students:**

Generally, everyone takes the first two weeks of winter break off, and then we use the remaining time before the semester starts for research and prep for the next semester.

It is also fine and expected to take time off over Thanksgiving, February and Spring university breaks, although deadlines often necessitate not taking these periods fully off.

Everyone generally takes 1-2 weeks off in the summer. You should let the lab know when you are planning to be away for scheduling planning purposes.

### **Staff:**

Staff have a set number of vacation days and paid university holidays. Please see the HR website and Workday for details on your available leave. It is important to let me know when you want to take leave as soon as possible so we can ensure smooth running of the lab–We will need to coordinate schedules so that multiple people aren't on vacation at the same time at times when participants are scheduled.

## **7c. Wellness**

### **i. COVID**

We will always follow [current Brandeis COVID policies](#) as the minimum standard. Please pay attention to all updates from the university on these policies.

It is also essential that anyone involved in running participants read and carefully follow the COVID safety procedures in the IRB protocols.

Beyond that, people in the lab vary in their health risks and risk tolerance. Thus, the rule is to always do what the most cautious person in the room is comfortable with. For example, if Brandeis is not currently requiring masks in labs/offices, but someone in the room is more comfortable with everyone being masked, please respect that. This requires clear communication–e.g., you can't assume that the fact you are masked communicates that you want others to be as well, you need to tell them.

Although regular asymptomatic testing on campus has ended, if you have even mild symptoms, or have a known close contact, please test yourself before coming to campus/lab with a home kit. Students can go to the health center.

## ii. Other physical health

If you are sick, please stay home and take care of yourself. Not only is it better for you, but even if you test negative for COVID, your colleagues still don't want your cold/flu/miscellaneous virus. Nor is it a badge of honor to work sick, even from home: [Sickness behaviors](#) are your immune system telling your brain to put your body to bed for a while—comply.

If you will be missing a lab or department (e.g. Brown Bag) meeting, or need more time on a deadline, please let me know that you are out sick.

If you must be off campus for an extended period of time due to a unique circumstance (e.g. a medical issue) it is important to discuss with the PI a game plan for moving forward. In the past, a weekly update and a weekly zoom meeting was a helpful way to continue progress. A leave of absence is another option that has been implemented as needed.

## iii. Mental health

Grad school and academia in general can be stressful at times, and rates of anxiety and depression are [high](#) in grad students. There are no merit badges for trying to tough it out on your own: I encourage students to take advantage of the services offered at the BCC (see section 2.c). You should also feel comfortable approaching the [Psychology Graduate Representatives](#) (“Grad Reps”) for any resources or peer mentorship. Grad Reps assign each 1<sup>st</sup> year graduate student a more senior graduate student as a peer mentor, but because of the collaborative atmosphere in our department, you are free to seek mentorship in other students, as well. Also, historically, lab members have felt comfortable using each other as sources of support.

You can trust that I will always treat disclosures of mental health struggles seriously, empathetically, and confidentially\*. I ask everyone in the lab to do likewise with one another.

Although no one should ever feel pressured to disclose anything they aren't comfortable with, we strive to make the lab a place where there is zero stigma associated with discussing mental health. We can talk about strategies for adaptive stress coping—we learn from each other, and from the research.

\*As in research protocols, the exception to confidentiality is if students disclose recent suicidal thoughts or violent thoughts towards others, in which case I need to break confidentiality to make a referral to the BCC for you and make sure you are connected with appropriate care, or sexual harassment/violence, in which case I must report it to the Office of Equal Opportunity (Title IX). I say this not to discourage you from telling me, but so that you know I can't keep these specific topics confidential, and that you do have confidential options on campus: The BCC, the Ombuds office, and the campus Chaplains (see 2.c).

## 8. Publishing and Authorship

### 8a. Publishing

Publishing is essential for most career paths. I expect my advisees to work on manuscripts for publication continuously from the beginning of their graduate school career. By the time they graduate I expect my advisees to have multiple publications in the pipeline (published, in press, in review, in preparation). Ideally, you would have one first-authored paper for each year of your program past the first year, plus a few additional co-authored papers. This is aspirational, but is a good goal to aim for.

PhD students generally do their first-year project as secondary data analysis of an existing lab data set (since there isn't time to collect a full data set of your own). By the end of the first year, students should be working on at least another preregistration, either with an existing data set, or one being collected/that they can collect to analyze in their second year. From there on, writing pipelines will differ, as different studies take different lengths of time, but you should always be writing *something* (usually more than one thing, at different stages).

### 8b. Authorship

Generally, you will be the first author on work you lead, and I will be the last (senior) author.

We may also have additional middle authors, inside and outside the lab. Anyone who meets authorship standards should be included as an author. Occasionally, we have joint first authors when the work was really evenly split. We may sometimes be involved in collaborations with other labs with different authorship orders. It is very important to talk about authorship early in a collaboration, and revisit the topic if roles shift over time.

To be included as an author, someone needs to have made substantive scientific contributions to the work (e.g., designing the study, analyzing the data, writing or revising the paper). All authors must approve of the final submission. Individuals who only participated in data collection, coding, or cleaning generally are thanked in the acknowledgements but do not meet criteria for authorship.

The first author is generally responsible for the analyses and writing the first draft of the paper, although other authors may take on sections of these tasks on occasion. You should feel comfortable speaking with the PI if any questions regarding authorship, including co-authorship, arise.

### 8c. Writing process

I will provide you with LOTS of feedback at every stage, from initial ideas through to final polishing. Be prepared to do far, far more drafts than you ever thought possible. Please always

use track changes and leave my comments in place so I can see how you addressed them. You can also reply to comments in the manuscript.

The amount of feedback you receive may feel overwhelming and discouraging at times, but it is all part of the process of learning the hard task of becoming a good scientific writer. I went through the same process with my advisors as a grad student, and although there were times I thought they were impossibly exacting (and just plain unreasonable) at the time, I'm forever grateful to them now.

Documents should be named as: FirstAuthorInitials\_ShortTitle\_Date[Y\_M\_D]\_Initials of last person who worked on it (e.g., MEL\_AwesomePaper\_2023\_7\_16\_MEL\_2023\_7\_31\_XYZ"). Since I always have multiple drafts going with multiple people, this makes them much easier to find than if you send me a draft called labeled "Intro draft 5", for example).

## 9. Technology and Laboratory/Research Resources

### 9a. Software:

#### i. R or SPSS

Either of these programs are typically used for data analysis. Some use SAS or Stata. In any case please provide the syntax so I can see all recodes, computations, and analysis commands. It is useful to use R Studio for any R analyses. You can get updated software free from Brandeis on the hub.

#### ii. Mplus:

We have several copies of Mplus for data analysis. Let me know if you plan to use it. There are many good resources for learning Mplus on the [Mplus website](#) and we also have a good book in the lab on regression and path models in Mplus.

#### iii. Box:

We store many data files and manuscripts and instructions for scoring in Box folders.

## 10. Human Subjects

### 10a. IRB protocols

Although much of our work uses existing data, there are some studies in which we collect new data with human subjects. It is essential that you familiarize yourself with the IRB protocol for any study you work on, and follow the protocol exactly. This includes not only what happens when the participant is in the lab, but also the procedures to ensure data security and

confidentiality. I cannot emphasize enough how seriously we take this. If you have any questions or aren't sure about anything, ask!

If you realize a mistake was made and some aspect of the protocol wasn't followed, or any unexpected issue comes up with a participant, **it is critical that you tell me immediately**. Mistakes happen (hopefully very rarely!), but I will not tolerate any attempt to cover up a mistake. We need to document everything and report any deviations or adverse events to the IRB and to the funding agency right away.

## 10b. Confidentiality

These guidelines are in the IRB protocols as well, but bare repeating. We often work with sensitive data, including voice data. Not only must these data be stored in accord with the IRB protocols, but you must not discuss these data with anyone who is not listed on the IRB protocol as having access to them.

Please be careful: discuss these data only in a private room in the lab and only with me or another person on the IRB protocol, and if you are listening to or coding audio recordings wear headphones or turn on the white noise machine.

Never store copies of data with identifying information anywhere but where they are supposed to be on Box (see section 4). **NEVER** share data with anyone outside of the Lifespan Lab. It is preferred that you use lab computers when interacting with lab data, but if you must use your personal laptop then please follow all instructed protocols to ensure the safety and confidentiality of data. Do not hesitate to ask your supervisor questions; we are happy to answer questions to ensure everything is clear.

## 10c. Interacting with participants

We are not currently collecting data with participants, although we are able to use data we collected from the Boston Roybal Center clinical trials. We literally can't do our research without the contributions of our participants. We always want them to have a good experience in our studies, from their first contact signing up all the way through. Beyond just following the IRB protocols, this includes:

- Being professional, organized and prompt in all communications with participants.
- Being warm and welcoming, and thanking them for their participation and time.
- Not expressing frustration to them if they need to reschedule, decline to complete some part of the study, or are otherwise "difficult" (you can commiserate with your lab mates later instead).
- Offering water and breaks as needed during long studies. (Participants in studies that prohibit caffeine before the study may also appreciate a coffee or tea when they are done with the physiological portion of the visit).

- Responding in a professional but empathetic manner at all times. Remember we are often asking participants to share information about mental health that may bring up emotions for them. Treat them as a human first and participant second– offer breaks, tissues, remind them they can decline to answer questions that they don't want to and still continue with other parts of the study. Offer our resource sheet to *all* participants at the end of visit. If you are an undergraduate RA and a participant seems to be in distress, go get the grad student/staff person in charge of the study– they are trained in how to provide support and resources.
- Reporting immediately to Margie if you experience any interactions regarding the participant or someone else's mental or physical safety.
- If you are unsure of something, ask the project supervisor or PI. We have limited chances to collect data and interact with participants, so we want to be sure there are no uncertainties on our end.

## 11. Lab Best Practices

- All lab members should take the CITI human subjects training and make sure it is active. Certificates should be sent to the lab manager and Margie. The required modules are indicated on the Brandeis website.  
<https://www.brandeis.edu/ora/hrpp/training.html>
- If you are working on the Roybal project on clinical trials you will also need to take the CITI Good Clinical Practice training.
- It is important that we keep the lab neat and clean. Always put your work away on your designated shelf or drawer.
- Do not eat or drink in front of the lab computers. You can drink if you use a bottle that has a tight cover.
- Food should only be consumed in the lab meeting room. Always clean up after yourself. Do not leave crumbs or spills on the table.
- Unfortunately, the construction crew took away our lab sink and the plugs for our refrigerator and microwave. I am hoping we will have access to department facilities for storing and heating food. They may also put a sink somewhere else in the building near our lab.
- Keep a lab notebook (physical or digital) to always keep a record of what you did each day you are working in the lab. Document your progress on assigned tasks.
- **Backup your data and manuscripts every day.** Always have your latest work in at least 2 places (e.g. on your computer, on box, on an external hard drive or a memory stick).