



Northeastern University

Bouvé College of Health Sciences
School of Clinical and Rehabilitation Sciences

Language Acquisition and Brain Lab Policy

If you are reading this lab policy, congratulations! You have been selected to be one of the members of the Language Acquisition and Brain Lab directed by Dr. Zhenghan Qi (QLAB). This policy outlines the responsibilities and expectations of Research Assistants (RAs) of the QLAB. In expressing the lab policy, we hope to ensure RA commitment, nurture individual interest, and maintain a supportive team environment that produces respected research.

Expectations from the QLAB:

As of Fall 2023, the QLAB will operate in a project-based format. Each RA will be recruited to one main project team and will have a primary supervisor. Some RAs may be recruited to assist with an additional project and will report to a secondary supervisor. The following RA responsibilities apply to all projects in the lab. Variations within projects will be communicated by the project lead.

Responsibilities

Routine Tasks

- RAs will be expected to complete routine research tasks, including maintaining the lab email account, backing up recorded data from participant sessions, and coding data.

One-Time Tasks

- RAs will also be asked to complete one-time tasks ranging from editing audio files for stimuli to conducting a search and compiling solutions to improve pipelines or coding tasks in the lab.
- Such tasks will be intertwined with responsibilities such as administering online sessions and in-person participant visits. While routine and one-time tasks may seem removed from front-end research, these duties are essential to the success of our lab. Therefore, lab members are encouraged to remain flexible and seek value and understanding in all assigned responsibilities.

Administration

- RAs may also be trained to administer live sessions with participants. Training will include how to engage with parents, children, and adult participants to ensure both responsible research conduct and accurate representation of the QLAB and Northeastern University.

Confidentiality

- It is essential for each lab member to conduct responsible research. This includes completing CITI Training and giving careful detail to the handling of data and identifiable information.
- **No lab data saved on personal computers:**
 - Do not save lab data onto your personal computer. If data is de-identified (e.g. scoring an individual non-video assessment), it may be opened on a personal computer if in a secure location but should not be saved or stored there.

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- Data may only be temporarily saved to personal computers in the process of downloading and backing up assessments and should be removed from the personal computer to a secure lab server immediately.
 - All data that is identifiable must be accessed and processed through lab computers. Use the #remote-access channel to communicate which computer you are using (either in person or remote)
- **Organize and clean up before you leave your shift:**
 - Digital Space**
 - Data is expected to be immediately backed up to the secure lab server after each data collection session by the same RA. If the data cannot be immediately backed up, the status should be marked on the appropriate tracking sheet for follow up.
 - Any data that is downloaded and updated locally using the lab computer should be uploaded to the secure lab server and deleted from the local computer (except for sylvian) before the end of the shift.
 - All windows on remotely accessible lab computers should be closed or minimized to prepare the computer for other lab members to use. Identifiable data such as participant video recordings should be closed at the end of your shift. If your task requires processing time that exceeds your shift time, windows may be left open. Communicate this extended use in the #remote-access channel.
 - Physical Space**
 - After your shift, clean up the lab desk area you used to prepare it for other lab members to use.
 - All lab members are expected to contribute to lab chores and upkeep.

Communication

Responsiveness

- On the designated communication platform (e.g., Slack), RAs are expected to be online and responsive during confirmed shifts (In-Person or Remote).
- **Absences:** If you expect to miss your shift, you must give your direct supervisor 24hrs advance notice, with the expectation that you will make up your missed shift.
- **Illnesses or Unexpected Life Events:** If you must miss your shift for a reason not predictable in advance (e.g. illness, loss), please alert your direct supervisor as soon as you are able, with the expectation that you will make up for your missed shift at a future time once the circumstances are restored.

Task Updates

- At the beginning of each shift, check in at the semester channel (e.g. Fall 2023 Lab Shift) and notify the team and your direct supervisor about the tasks you will focus on.
- At the end of each shift, check out at the semester channel (e.g. Fall 2023 Lab Shift) and notify the team and your direct supervisor of the following:
 - What tasks you accomplished
 - What tasks are in progress
 - Which of your tasks are remaining and require team attention
- In your check-out, tag your project team's channel and your primary supervisor for your related tasks (e.g. #[project channel] @[supervisor name])

Schedule Commitment

Shifts

- Commit at least two, preferably three, 3-hour shifts per week. Coordinate with your supervisor on the days and timeframes of your shifts (e.g. within 9-5, M-F, evenings, weekends)
- Commit to at least two consecutive semesters (e.g. Spring, Summer)
- Because we work with children and working individuals, we will need volunteers for data collection sessions that may fall outside of your set shift hours (e.g., evenings and weekends). Your contribution during these sessions can be used to replace one or more of your typical shift times. These opportunities afford RAs to work directly with individuals, families, and children and learn more about front-end aspects of the research.
- May be case by case: 90% of your shifts should be onsite in the lab (except for completely remote lab members).

Lab Meetings

- Attend Weekly Lab Meetings & Regular Project Meetings
 - To ensure community among the team, lab members are expected to attend and engage in weekly lab meetings.
 - RAs will be expected to sign up for at least one 20-min presentation per semester.
 - To mitigate time conflict, lab meeting times will be determined before the start of the semester to give lab members an opportunity to schedule their classes around the determined time.
 - If not able to attend lab meetings in a given semester, RAs are to notify their supervisor and are expected to be present for Project Meetings with their supervisor and project team.
 - Lab members are expected to consistently attend lab meetings for at least one of the consecutive semesters in the lab (e.g. if time conflict in Fall 2023, attendance expected Spring 2024)

What you can expect of the QLAB:

- A collegial, supportive, inspiring, and energetic environment.
- Intellectually stimulating science projects.
- Exposure to all aspects of research, as long as you are motivated.
- Excellent RAs may expect recommendation letters from PI and/or senior researchers in the lab.
- Potential paid positions or sponsorship for competitive, funded research projects in the summer.
- Opportunities to create, present, and collaborate on conference posters, talks, and writing projects.

Dismissal Policy:**Consistent No-Shows (Probation)**

- If your shift is missed twice without advance notice or explanation, you will be put on probation.
 - Note: Illnesses and Unexpected Life Events do not count towards this as long as your direct supervisor is informed.
- Probation will include removal from specialized tasks and independent projects for one month.

Persistent Lack of Communication (Dismissal)

- If you persistently do not maintain communication with the team and/or direct supervisor (e.g., check-in/check-out, unexcused missed shifts), you will be dismissed from your RA position.

As expressed above, we hope to ensure RA commitment, and in doing so, foster a supportive environment that rewards the members internally and benefits the broader scientific community.

Once you have read through the lab policy and seek to take the next steps, please notify the lab at qlab.nu@gmail.com and copy Dr. Zhenghan Qi (z.qi@northeastern.edu). A project lead will follow up with you to discuss your shift schedule.

Your signed agreement to this policy will be requested after a schedule is confirmed.

Thank you!
The QLAB Admin