

Psychology and Educational Sciences (PE)  
PSYC and EDWE

# **PE HONOURS PROGRAMME TOPIC LIST**

Academic year 2025-2026

Round I

[PEHonoursprogramma@vub.be](mailto:PEHonoursprogramma@vub.be)

Cannaerts Lander – Coordinator PE honours programme

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1. Mentally fit: The Transdiagnostic Effectiveness of the Ronnie Gardiner Method (RGM) - Prof. Dr. Gina Rossi, Prof. Dr. Eva Dierckx (VUB); Prof. Dr. Rudi De Raedt (UGent)

**Research group and line of research:**

Personality and Psychopathology Research group (PEPS) – personality psychology, neuropsychology and gerontology research lines

**Title:**

Mentally fit: The Transdiagnostic Effectiveness of the Ronnie Gardiner Method (RGM)

Mentaal in conditie: De transdiagnostische effectiviteit van de Ronnie Gardiner Methode (RGM) (Ongoing substudy of joint PhD of doctoral student Xenia Brancart)

**Promotor:**

Prof. Dr. Gina Rossi, Prof. Dr. Eva Dierckx (VUB); Prof. Dr. Rudi De Raedt (UGent)

**Supervisor:**

Doctoral student Xenia Brancart, Prof. Dr. Gina Rossi and Prof. Dr. Eva Dierckx

**Contact by...**

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☐ Office:

**How many people can be selected for this internship?**

1

**Language needed to do this internship?**

English, Dutch

**Abstract (max 250 words):**

This study explores the transdiagnostic effectiveness of the Ronnie Gardiner Method (RGM), a multimodal music and movement-based therapy, in boosting the core executive functions, emotion regulation strategies and subjective well-being among psychogeriatric patients with various mental health problems.

RGM is a practitioner-led intervention that uses red and blue hand and foot symbols projected on a screen—red for the left side of the body, blue for the right.

Participants are asked to translate these symbols into corresponding movements synchronized with music, while simultaneously saying the symbol names out loud.

Previous research underscores the potential of RGM to enhance neuroplasticity through the simultaneous stimulation of physical, cognitive, social and multisensory processes, resulting in improved mood and executive functioning. By activating the entire brain, RGM maximizes its neuroplastic potential, offering a promising intervention for a wide range of psychiatric conditions.

This study focuses on psychogeriatric inpatients ( $\geq 60$  years old) at the Alexianen Zorggroep Tienen. Using a pre-midway-post design with 6-week intervals, we evaluate key transdiagnostic factors such as the core executive functions (via CANTAB and COAST), cognitive emotion regulation strategies (via CERQ), and subjective well-being (via WEMWBS).

RGM provides an innovative and engaging approach to improve executive functioning, emotion regulation and mental well-being across various mental health disorders. Its adaptability and multimodal nature make it a promising tool for future therapeutic interventions, particularly in psychogeriatric care.

**General timing described in the task section is:**

- ☐ Fixed, ...
- ☐ Flexible, ...
- ☒ Other: As soon as possible

**The student *can* perform the following tasks:**

Note: the promotor, supervisor and student will plan which tasks the student *will* perform and when, taking into account that the internship will encompass a total of 45 to 50 full time days (i.e. 7 hours a day).

- ☒ Read and select relevant literature
- ☐ Develop research question(s)
- ☐ Develop a research design
- ☐ Write a research proposal
- ☐ Develop and/or validate stimulus material/questionnaires
- ☐ Recruit participants
- ☐ Conduct a Pilot study
- ☐ Conduct a study
- ☐ Analyze data that you collected yourself
- ☒ Analyze existing data
- ☒ Interpret and present data
- ☒ Write down findings in the form of a paper
- ☐ Participate at a conference
- ☐ Present the research at a conference
- ☐ Other: planning) test administrations of psychogeriatric patients (residentially admitted to the psychiatric clinic of Alexianen Zorggroep Tienen) and entering data in SPSS

**Will the student have the chance to become a co-author if the work leads to a publication?**

☐ No, because ...

☒ Yes, if the student makes a substantial contribution

**The student will need the following training at an estimated time which will be provided by:**

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**The following prior knowledge is needed:**

Knowledge of statistical software (SPSS) is necessary.  
The student has the means to move independently and easily (e.g. driver's license or easy travelling with public transport)

## 2. De kracht en waarde van Jeugdwerk en Jeugdwerkers in Vlaanderen en Brussel - Prof. Dr. Pieter Meurs

### Research group and line of research:

EDWE

### Title:

De kracht en waarde van Jeugdwerk en Jeugdwerkers in Vlaanderen en Brussel

### Promotor:

Prof. Dr. Pieter meurs

### Supervisor:

Minne Huysmans

### Contact by...

☒ E-mail: [pieter.meurs@vub.be](mailto:pieter.meurs@vub.be)

☐ Office:

### How many people can be selected for this internship?

2

### Language needed to do this internship?

Dutch

**Abstract (max 250 words):**

"Jeugdwerk is een belangrijke agogische sector die niet altijd de onderzoeksmatige aandacht krijgt die het verdient.

Deze Honours-stage is gericht op de ondersteuning van verschillende onderzoeksprojecten die gericht zijn op de brede sector van het jeugdwerk. Meer specifiek, willen we met dit honours-programma ingaan op een samenwerking tussen verschillende spelers uit het jeugdwerkveld, waarbij de Ambrassade werk wil maken van een bevraging bij professionele jeugdwerkers. We willen in kaart brengen hoe jeugdwerker hun eigen functie en rol omschrijven, en welke noden en behoeften ze daarbij hebben. Finaal dient de bevraging uit te monden in een kenniskaart die meer zicht geeft op het profiel, de noden en behoeften van jeugdwerkers.

De bevraging zelf zal ondersteund worden door onderzoekers van Vrije Universiteit Brussel en Erasmushogeschool. Jouw rol in dit proces is voornamelijk gericht op het faciliteren en ondersteunen van dit proces, mee op zoek gaan naar en het contacteren van jeugdwerkers voor de bevraging, in kaart brengen van belangrijke spelers, werken aan onderzoek en onderzoeksmethodologie.

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Youth work is an important (ped)agogical sector that does not always receive the research attention it deserves.

This honours-internship aims to support several research projects focused on the broad sector of youth work with the Department of Educational Sciences at VUB. More specifically, with this honors program we want to address a collaboration between different players from the youth work field. At the of this collaboration, the "Ambrassade" wants to develop a survey for youth workers. We want to map how youth workers define their own function and role, and what needs and requirements they have in order to remain within the sector. Ultimately the survey should result in a knowledge map that gives more insight in the profile, needs and requirements of youth workers.

The survey itself will be supported by researchers from the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Erasmushogeschool Brussel. Your role in this process is mainly focused on facilitating and supporting this process, looking for and contacting youth workers for the survey, mapping important players, working on the research methodology, ...."



**General timing described in the task section is:**

- ☐ Fixed, ...
- ☒ Flexible, ...
- ☐ Other:

**The student *can* perform the following tasks:**

Note: the promotor, supervisor and student will plan which tasks the student *will* perform and when, taking into account that the internship will encompass a total of 45 to 50 full time days (i.e. 7 hours a day).

- ☒ Read and select relevant literature
- ☐ Develop research question(s)
- ☐ Develop a research design
- ☒ Write a research proposal
- ☐ Develop and/or validate stimulus material/questionnaires
- ☐ Recruit participants
- ☒ Conduct a Pilot study
- ☐ Conduct a study
- ☐ Analyze data that you collected yourself
- ☒ Analyze existing data
- ☒ Interpret and present data
- ☐ Write down findings in the form of a paper
- ☐ Participate at a conference
- ☐ Present the research at a conference
- ☐ Other:

**Will the student have the chance to become a co-author if the work leads to a publication?**

☐ No, because ...

☒ Yes, als de student een substantiële bijdrage levert

**The student will need the following training at an estimated time which will be provided by:**

/

**The following prior knowledge is needed:**

kennis van (en evt. ervaring in) het Jeugdwerk en het brede jeugdwerkveld.

### 3. Participatory Arts for Climate (Education) - Prof. Dr. Elivira Crois & Prof. Dr. Free de backer

**Research group and line of research:**

BILD / arts education

**Title:**

Participatory Arts for Climate (Education)

**Promotor:**

Prof. Dr. Elivira Crois & Prof. Dr. Free de backer

**Supervisor:**

Prof. Dr. Elvira Crois

**Contact by...**

☒ E-mail: [elvira.crois@vub.be](mailto:elvira.crois@vub.be)

☐ Office:

**How many people can be selected for this internship?**

1

**Language needed to do this internship?**

English (Dutch (optional))

**Abstract (max 250 words):**

Recent cultural research on Earth's sustainability shows the limitations of information-based teaching strategies and call for a broadening of methods. A potential avenue is offered by participatory arts, which use a wide range of creative methods to engage audiences with climate, yet studies are limited to singular case studies that focus on learning outcomes while failing to give in-depth insight into the mechanisms of their methods. This research project responds to this need by conducting a systematic literature review, conducting interviews, and action research to better understand how and why these mechanisms work which will lead to a directory of methods with their corresponding mechanisms, values and addressed competences.

**General timing described in the task section is:**

- ☐ Fixed, ...
- ☒ Flexible, ...
- ☐ Other:

**The student *can* perform the following tasks:**

Note: the promotor, supervisor and student will plan which tasks the student *will* perform and when, taking into account that the internship will encompass a total of 45 to 50 full time days (i.e. 7 hours a day).

- ☒ Read and select relevant literature
- ☐ Develop research question(s)
- ☐ Develop a research design
- ☒ Write a research proposal
- ☒ Develop and/or validate stimulus material/questionnaires
- ☒ Recruit participants
- ☐ Conduct a Pilot study
- ☐ Conduct a study
- ☒ Analyze data that you collected yourself
- ☒ Analyze existing data
- ☒ Interpret and present data
- ☒ Write down findings in the form of a paper
- ☒ Participate at a conference
- ☐ Present the research at a conference
- ☒ Other: be part of ongoing (international) research projects

**Will the student have the chance to become a co-author if the work leads to a publication?**

- ☐ No, because ...
- ☒ Yes, if they significantly contribute to the actual writing of an article.

**The student will need the following training at an estimated time which will be provided by:**

/

**The following prior knowledge is needed:**

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4. Optimizing STEM education: Exploring the needs of underrepresented groups in STEM - Prof. dr. Valérie Thomas

**Research group and line of research:**

BILD – STEM

**Title:**

Optimizing STEM education: Exploring the needs of underrepresented groups in STEM

**Promotor:**

Prof. dr. Valérie Thomas

**Supervisor:**

Christophe Kegels

**Contact by...**

☒ E-mail: [valerie.thomas@vub.be](mailto:valerie.thomas@vub.be) ; [christophe.isabelle.j.kegels@vub.be](mailto:christophe.isabelle.j.kegels@vub.be)

☐ Office:

**How many people can be selected for this internship?**

2

**Language needed to do this internship?**

Dutch

**Abstract (max 250 words):**

STEM-vaardigheden zijn essentieel om de maatschappelijke en economische uitdagingen van de toekomst het hoofd te bieden (OECD, 2020). Toch blijven een aantal groepen (zoals vrouwen en minderheidsgroepen) ondervertegenwoordigd in STEM-opleidingen en -beroepen (Anderson et al., 2023). Terwijl de vraag naar STEM-professionals toeneemt, gaat daardoor een aanzienlijk potentieel aan talent verloren (Luttenberger et al., 2019). Jij (als honoursstudent) onderzoekt de behoeften, motivaties en uitdagingen van ondervertegenwoordigde leerlingen in de laatste jaren van het secundair onderwijs. Door middel van interviews verzamel en analyseer je data. Zo doe je niet alleen waardevolle ervaring op in empirisch onderzoek en data-analyse, maar krijg je ook diepgaand inzicht in de factoren die deelname aan STEM stimuleren of juist belemmeren. Jouw bevindingen vormen de basis voor het ontwikkelen van gerichte strategieën die inclusieve participatie bevorderen en het risico op uitval uit de STEM-leerweg verkleinen (Mackenzie et al., 2024; Schiefer et al., 2021). Op die manier combineer jij academische verdieping met een directe maatschappelijke impact.

**General timing described in the task section is:**

- ☐ Fixed, ...
- ☒ Flexible: okt '25 – mei '26
- ☐ Other:



**The student *can* perform the following tasks:**

Note: the promotor, supervisor and student will plan which tasks the student *will* perform and when, taking into account that the internship will encompass a total of 45 to 50 full time days (i.e. 7 hours a day).

- ☒ Read and select relevant literature
- ☒ Develop research question(s)
- ☐ Develop a research design
- ☐ Write a research proposal
- ☒ Develop and/or validate stimulus material/questionnaires
- ☒ Recruit participants
- ☒ Conduct a Pilot study
- ☐ Conduct a study
- ☒ Analyze data that you collected yourself
- ☒ Analyze existing data
- ☒ Interpret and present data
- ☒ Write down findings in the form of a paper
- ☒ Participate at a conference
- ☐ Present the research at a conference
- ☒ Other: Present the findings to schools/teachers

**Will the student have the chance to become a co-author if the work leads to a publication?**

- ☐ No, because ...
- ☒ Yes, if significant contributions during writing process are given.

**The student will need the following training at an estimated time which will be provided by:**

No specific training needed but students will join Research Group workshops and team sessions. Possible extra training needs will be determined based on the final scope of core activities. However, strong academic performance in previous programmes and current enrollment in MA1 Educational Sciences or MA1 Onderwijskunde or Agogiek are considered a solid foundation.

**The following prior knowledge is needed:**

Strong planning, organizational, and time management skills; basic knowledge of qualitative research methods, particularly interview techniques.

5. Implicit social sequence learning, fMRI, non-invasive neurostimulation and autism - Prof. dr. em. Frank Van Overwalle

**Research group and line of research:**

BBCO

**Title:**

Implicit social sequence learning, fMRI, non-invasive neurostimulation and autism

**Promotor:**

Prof. dr. em. Frank Van Overwalle

**Supervisor:**

Min Qiu; Yuting Zhang

**Contact by...**

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☐ Office:

**How many people can be selected for this internship?**

2

**Language needed to do this internship?**

English,Dutch

**Abstract (max 250 words):**

An increasing number of studies have revealed that the posterior cerebellum plays a vital role in mentalizing by identifying and learning social action sequences which render social interaction more fluent, coordinated and predictable. We are currently developing and testing implicit social sequence learning tasks: the Belief serial response time (SRT) task, the Ultimatum SRT task and the Emotion SRT task. Our first hypothesis is that successful performance of these tasks depend on the posterior cerebellum. This has already been demonstrated with the Belief SRT task using functional imaging (fMRI). Our second hypothesis is that individuals with autism have particularly difficulties with implicit (rather than explicit) learning of sequences involving social mentalizing. To test this hypothesis, the social SRT tasks are administered to autistic and neurotypical individuals, and the hypothesis has now been supported with the Ultimatum SRT task. In addition, our third hypothesis is that targeting the cerebellum with non-invasive anodal transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) should improve performance on social sequencing. In a double-blind sham-controlled protocol, participants receive either anodal tDCS (i.e., 2 mA for 20 min) or sham tDCS. Results so far (for the Belief SRT task) show a positive effect of anodal cerebellar tDCS on implicit mentalizing sequence learning by neurotypical participants, supporting a causal role of the cerebellum in this learning process. This holds promise for treating clinical populations with limited social and sequencing capacities (e.g., autism) with anodal tDCS.

**General timing described in the task section is:**☐ Fixed, ...☒ Flexible:☐ Other:

**The student *can* perform the following tasks:**

Note: the promotor, supervisor and student will plan which tasks the student *will* perform and when, taking into account that the internship will encompass a total of 45 to 50 full time days (i.e. 7 hours a day).

- ☒ Read and select relevant literature
- ☒ Develop research question(s)
- ☐ Develop a research design
- ☐ Write a research proposal
- ☒ Develop and/or validate stimulus material/questionnaires
- ☒ Recruit participants
- ☒ Conduct a Pilot study
- ☐ Conduct a study
- ☒ Analyze data that you collected yourself
- ☒ Analyze existing data
- ☒ Interpret and present data
- ☒ Write down findings in the form of a paper
- ☒ Participate at a conference
- ☐ Present the research at a conference
- ☐ Other:

**Will the student have the chance to become a co-author if the work leads to a publication?**

- ☐ No, because ...
- ☒ Yes, if worked on the study (collected data, or analyzed the data)

**The student will need the following training at an estimated time which will be provided by:**

depending on the interest of the student, on fMRI or tDCS. This will be provided by the team.

**The following prior knowledge is needed:**

No

6. Comparing non-suicidal self-injury among younger versus older adults: A pilot study - Prof. dr. Imke Baetens & dr. Lisa Van Hove

**Research group and line of research:**

Brussels University Consultation Center (BRUCC), Psychologie

**Title:**

Comparing non-suicidal self-injury among younger versus older adults: A pilot study

**Promotor:**

Dr. Lisa Van Hove (Prof. Dr. Imke Baetens)

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Lisa Van Hove (Prof. Dr. Imke Baetens)

**Contact by...**

☒ E-mail: [Lisa.van.hove@vub.be](mailto:Lisa.van.hove@vub.be)

☐ Office:

**How many people can be selected for this internship?**

1

**Language needed to do this internship?**

English,Dutch

**Abstract (max 250 words):**

Recent research indicates that adults also engage in non-suicidal self-injury (NSSI). However, little is currently known about this. The present pilot study aims to map this among Flemish adults, as well as to compare younger adults (30 years and older) with older adults (60 years and older). This will allow us to gain a better understanding of adults, as well as to evaluate the validity and age neutrality of a screener for NSSI in older adults.

**General timing described in the task section is:**

- ☐ Fixed, ...
- ☒ Flexible: At the start of the internship, we will the timing of discuss potential milestones.
- ☐ Other:

**The student *can* perform the following tasks:**

Note: the promotor, supervisor and student will plan which tasks the student *will* perform and when, taking into account that the internship will encompass a total of 45 to 50 full time days (i.e. 7 hours a day).

- ☐ Read and select relevant literature
- ☐ Develop research question(s)
- ☐ Develop a research design
- ☐ Write a research proposal
- ☒ Develop and/or validate stimulus material/questionnaires
- ☒ Recruit participants
- ☒ Conduct a Pilot study
- ☐ Conduct a study
- ☒ Analyze data that you collected yourself
- ☒ Analyze existing data



- ☐ Interpret and present data
- ☒ Write down findings in the form of a paper
- ☐ Participate at a conference
- ☐ Present the research at a conference
- ☐ Other:

**Will the student have the chance to become a co-author if the work leads to a publication?**

- ☐ No, because ...
- ☒ Yes, if the study output leads to a manuscript.

**The student will need the following training at an estimated time which will be provided by:**

**The following prior knowledge is needed:**

7. Beslissingen m.b.t. contact in geval van een pleegzorgplaatsing - Prof. Dr. Johan Vanderfaeillie & prof. Dr. Frank Van Holen

**Research group and line of research:**

Centrum voor onderzoek in jeugd- en opvoedhulp (COJO)

**Title:**

Beslissingen m.b.t. contact in geval van een pleegzorgplaatsing

**Promotor:**

Prof. Dr. Johan Vanderfaeillie & prof. Dr. Frank Van Holen

**Supervisor:**

Prof. Dr. Johan Vanderfaeillie & prof. Dr. Frank Van Holen

**Contact by...**

☒ E-mail: [Johan.Vanderfaeillie@vub.be](mailto:Johan.Vanderfaeillie@vub.be)

☐ Office:

**How many people can be selected for this internship?**

1

**Language needed to do this internship?**

Dutch

**Abstract (max 250 words):**

Vandaag worden beslissingen mbt contact van een pleegkind met zijn ouders door pleegzorgwerkers genomen en/of ze adviseren de consulent en/of jeugdrechter in deze materie. Het is echter onduidelijk welke de basis van deze beslissingen is. We weten niet welke factoren (casus-, beslisser-, organisatie- en of contextfactoren) deze beslissing beïnvloeden (cfr. DME-model). Deze internationale vignettenstudie zal worden uitgevoerd in Vlaanderen en Nederland. Respondenten krijgen een vignet te lezen en zullen vervolgens moeten beslissen hoe en welk contact zal worden georganiseerd. Daarnaast zullen ze een vragenlijst moeten invullen waarmee de beslisser-, organisatie- en of contextfactoren in kaart worden gebracht.

**General timing described in the task section is:**

- ☐ Fixed, ...
- ☒ Flexible -> preparation this AY, sept. 2025 data collection
- ☐ Other: ...

**The student *can* perform the following tasks:**

**T&I = Estimated timing and extra information**

Note: the promotor, supervisor and student will plan which tasks the student *will* perform and when, taking into account that the internship will encompass a total of 45 to 50 full time days (i.e. 7 hours a day).

- ☒ Read and select relevant literature
- ☐ Develop research question(s)
- ☐ Develop a research design
- ☒ Write a research proposal
- ☒ Develop and/or validate stimulus material/questionnaires
- ☒ Recruit participants
- ☐ Conduct a Pilot study
- ☐ Conduct a study

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Analyze data that you collected yourself
<input type="checkbox"/> Analyze existing data
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interpret and present data
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Write down findings in the form of a paper
<input type="checkbox"/> Participate at a conference
<input type="checkbox"/> Present the research at a conference
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: .....,

**Will the student have the chance to become a co-author if the work leads to a publication?**

<input type="checkbox"/> No, because ...
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, depending on delivered work

**The student will need the following training at an estimated time which will be provided by:**

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**The following prior knowledge is needed:**

Weinig. Kennis van de jeugdhulpverlening is pluspunt.
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