

PE HONOURS PROGRAMME TOPIC LIST

ACADEMIC YEAR

2025-2026

ROUND

Round II

Contact e-mail

PEHonoursprogramma@vub.be

Coordinator

[Cannaerts Lander – Coordinator PE honours](#)

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RESEARCH GROUP / LINE OF RESEARCH

Brain, Body & Cognition

SUPERVISOR(S)

Min Qiu & Yuting Zhang

OFFICE

/

PROMOTOR(S)

Prof. Dr. Em. Frank Van Overwalle

CONTACT E-MAIL

Frank.VanOverwalle@vub.be

MAX. STUDENTS

2

LANGUAGE(S) REQUIRED

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

Fixed Flexible Other

Details / constraints...

TASKS THE STUDENT CAN PERFORM

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read and select relevant literature | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop research question(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a research design | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Write a research proposal |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Develop and/or validate stimulus material/questionnaires | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recruit participants |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conduct a Pilot study | <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a study |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Analyze data that you collected yourself | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Participate at a conference | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present the research at a conference |

Other: _____

CO-AUTHORSHIP ON PUBLICATION

No Yes, if...

No prior knowlegde required.

TRAINING NEEDED (ESTIMATED TIME + PROVIDED BY)

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

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

worked on the study (collected data, or analyzed the data).

RESEARCH GROUP / LINE OF RESEARCH

Brussels Research Centre on Innovation in Learning and Diversity (BILD)

SUPERVISOR(S)

Prof. Dr. Elvira Crois

OFFICE

B3.37

LANGUAGE(S) REQUIRED

English, Dutch (optional)

ABSTRACT (MAX 250 WORDS)

This honours internship encompasses a wide range of research related to arts education.

Research

Educational and sociocultural sectors are increasingly required to demonstrate accountability to funding bodies. To this end, it must evaluate its activities, often drawing on methodologies from reception and impact studies. Such studies tend to be based on predetermined impacts and fail to capture the full scope of an arts initiative. By researching creative and bottom-up practices in reception and impact studies, you broaden the perspective on impact and contribute to methodological innovation. As part of this honours programme, you will look into reflection and creative methodologies across disciplines such as the arts, education, and anthropology. You would be able to contribute to an article on 'embedded reflective strategies' where reflection exercises are used both as meaningful learning experiences for participants and methods for data collection. If desirable, it will also be possible to work on the analysis of data collected on the VR-experience Garden Alchemy, a virtual animated garden which groups of people can explore together, to discover audience's meaning-making.

Activities

You will be involved in research activities such as training events of our research group or the doctoral course 'What does it mean to be a researcher in 21st century academia?'.

Funding

You will support the preparation of an Erasmus+ application on playful activism and international funding surrounding community-led restoration projects of ocean biodiversity.

GENERAL TIMING

Fixed Flexible Other

Details / constraints...

TASKS THE STUDENT CAN PERFORM

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Read and select relevant literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Develop research question(s) |
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PROMOTOR(S)

Prof. Dr. Elvira Crois & Prof. Dr. Free De Backer

CONTACT E-MAIL

elvira.crois@vub.be

MAX. STUDENTS

1

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

CO-AUTHORSHIP ON PUBLICATION

No Yes, if...

Interest in education, methodologies, arts

TRAINING NEEDED (ESTIMATED TIME + PROVIDED BY)

No additional training needed.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

they significantly contribute to the actual writing of an article

Voices from the audience: How diverse groups experience arts

RESEARCH GROUP / LINE OF RESEARCH

EDWE - Audience research/publieksonderzoek

SUPERVISOR(S)

Prof. Dr. Jessy Siongers

OFFICE

/

PROMOTOR(S)

Prof. Dr. Jessy Siongers

CONTACT E-MAIL

jessy.siongers@vub.be

MAX. STUDENTS

2

LANGUAGE(S) REQUIRED

English & Dutch

ABSTRACT (MAX 250 WORDS)

*** Nederlands, English below***

Deze studie richt zich op het verdiepen van publieksonderzoek via kwalitatieve onderzoeksmethoden, in hoofdzaak focusgroepen. Waar grootschalige surveys vooral inzicht geven in wie wel en niet participeert aan cultuur, beoogt dit project een beter begrip van de beleving, motieven, ervaren drempels en betekenis van cultuurparticipatie bij specifieke publieken. De focus ligt daarbij expliciet op groepen die in het bestaande cultuuraanbod vaak ondervertegenwoordigd of moeilijk bereikt worden, zoals mensen in armoede, jongeren, personen met een migratieachtergrond en personen met een beperking.

Je werkt in hoofdzaak mee aan de voorbereiding, uitvoering en analyse van focusgroepen met participanten aan cultuuractiviteiten (bv. musea of podiumkunsten). Deze focusgroepen worden opgezet met relatief homogene groepen naar achtergrondkenmerken, zodat deelnemers zich vrij voelen om hun ervaringen te delen. Ze bieden diepgaand inzicht in de motieven om deel te nemen, de ervaren drempels (praktisch, financieel, sociaal-cultureel of symbolisch), de rol van publieksbemiddeling en communicatie, en de betekenis die cultuurparticipatie heeft voor hen. Je ondersteunt onder meer het uitwerken van topiclijsten, het meedenken over werving en samenstelling van de groepen, het modereren of observeren van focusgroepen en de thematische analyse van de verzamelde data. Op basis van de inzichten uit de focusgroepen en relevante literatuur formuleer je aanbevelingen voor publiekswerking in de cultuursector en werk je mogelijke pistes uit voor toekomstig actie-, experimenteel- en/of surveyonderzoek gericht op drempelverlaging en inclusieve publiekswerking. Je wordt hierbij inhoudelijk en methodologisch ondersteund door onderzoekers van het Kenniscentrum Cultuuronderzoek, verbonden aan de VUB en UGent.

*** English***

Voices from the Audience: How Diverse Groups Experience Culture

This study aims to deepen audience research through qualitative research methods, primarily focus groups. While large-scale surveys mainly provide insight into who does and does not participate in cultural activities, this project seeks to develop a better understanding of the experiences, motivations, perceived barriers, and the meaning of cultural participation among specific audiences. The focus is explicitly on groups that are often underrepresented or difficult to reach within the existing cultural offer, such as people living in poverty, young people, individuals with a migrant background, and people with disabilities.

You will mainly contribute to the preparation, implementation, and analysis of focus groups with participants in cultural activities (e.g. museums or performing arts). These focus groups will be organised with relatively homogeneous groups based on background characteristics, so that participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences. They provide in-depth insight into motivations for participation, perceived barriers (practical, financial, socio-cultural, or symbolic), the role of audience mediation and communication, and the significance that cultural participation holds for them. You will support tasks such as developing topic guides, contributing to recruitment strategies and group composition, moderating or observing focus groups, and conducting thematic analysis of the collected data.

Based on insights from the focus groups and relevant literature, you will formulate recommendations for audience engagement practices in the cultural sector and develop possible directions for future action research, experimental research, and/or survey research aimed at reducing barriers and fostering inclusive audience engagement. You will receive substantive and methodological support from researchers at the Centre for Culture Research, affiliated with VUB and UGent.

GENERAL TIMING

Fixed Flexible Other

april 2026 - dec. 2026

TASKS THE STUDENT CAN PERFORM

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|--|--|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Participate at a conference | <input type="checkbox"/> Present the research at a conference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |
-

CO-AUTHORSHIP ON PUBLICATION

No Yes, if...

Not necessarily, but prior knowledge of audience research, the Flemish arts sector, and conducting focus groups can be an advantage.

TRAINING NEEDED (ESTIMATED TIME + PROVIDED BY)

No additional training needed.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

significant contributions during writing process are given.

Educational change and innovation

RESEARCH GROUP / LINE OF RESEARCH

Brussels Research Center for Innovation in Learning and Diversity (BILD) – Educational Change and Innovation

SUPERVISOR(S)

The supervisor(s) and mentor(s) will be appointed during final composition of the Honours Programme activities. Co-supervision will be provided by professors and postdoctoral researchers from the BILD group, according to the specific tasks and activities.

OFFICE

B.3.42

LANGUAGE(S) REQUIRED

English

ABSTRACT (MAX 250 WORDS)

As part of the PE Honours Programme, selected candidate(s) will engage in the daily research activities of the Research Group BILD within the Department of Educational Sciences.

In addition to general BILD activities and collaboration with BILD researchers, candidates will be involved in ongoing research projects involving international consortiums. Research topics include self-regulated learning, technology-enhanced learning, mobile professional learning, GenAI and education, hybrid learning spaces for active learning, ongoing PhD research on various topics.

Furthermore, candidates will also be involved in educational innovation projects linked to the research group and MSc. Educational Sciences programme. This may include further developing BILD Learning Lab; contributing to research activities related to educational quality assurance initiatives of MSc programmes.

GENERAL TIMING

Fixed Flexible Other

In consultation with honours programme student, depending on final core activities.

TASKS THE STUDENT CAN PERFORM

- | | |
|--|--|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

PROMOTOR(S)

Prof. dr. Koen Lombaerts

CONTACT E-MAIL

koen.lombaerts@vub.be

MAX. STUDENTS

2

CO-AUTHORSHIP ON PUBLICATION

No Yes, if...

TRAINING NEEDED (ESTIMATED TIME + PROVIDED BY)

Training needs will be determined based on the final scope of core activities and are not predetermined. However, strong academic performance in previous programmes and current enrollment in MA1 Educational Sciences or MA1 Onderwijskunde are considered a solid foundation and condition for application.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

Substantial contributions have been provided during development and writing process.

Reward processing: measures and relations

RESEARCH GROUP / LINE OF RESEARCH

Brain, Body & Cognition

PROMOTOR(S)

Prof. Dr. Kris Baetens

SUPERVISOR(S)

Dr. Luchuan Xiao

CONTACT E-MAIL

kris.baetens@vub.be

OFFICE

/

MAX. STUDENTS

2

LANGUAGE(S) REQUIRED

English

ABSTRACT (MAX 250 WORDS)

In this honours trajectory, we aim to investigate measures of reward processing (EEG, behaviour in gambling tasks) and their relations with individual differences (i.e., sweet liking preference). The clinical finality is application of this knowledge in clinical groups featuring altered reward processing, especially substance use disorders, but this is likely not an immediate part of this project.

We are looking in particular for honours students who want to be coached in developing a PhD scholarship application in this field.

GENERAL TIMING

Fixed Flexible Other

Details / constraints...

TASKS THE STUDENT CAN PERFORM

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Participate at a conference | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Present the research at a conference |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: Develop expertise in recording electro-encephalograms. | |

CO-AUTHORSHIP ON PUBLICATION

No Yes, if...

Solid background in biological psychology and statistics are recommended.

TRAINING NEEDED (ESTIMATED TIME + PROVIDED BY)

Most likely: preparation and recording of electro-encephalogram (EEG).

Most likely: determining sweet liking phenotype through a taste test.

Basics of EEG data analysis.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

the student makes a substantial contribution

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

RESEARCH GROUP / LINE OF RESEARCH

Centrum voor onderzoek in jeugd- en opvoedhulp (COJO)

SUPERVISOR(S)

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

OFFICE

/

PROMOTOR(S)

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

CONTACT E-MAIL

Johan.Vanderfaeillie@vub.be

MAX. STUDENTS

1

LANGUAGE(S) REQUIRED

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 echter onduidelijk welke de basis van deze beslissingen is. We weten niet welke factoren (casus-, beslisser-, organisatie- en of contextfactoren) deze besissing beïnvloeden (cfr. DMEmodel). Deze internationale vigitetenstudie 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

Fixed Flexible Other

Details / constraints...

TASKS THE STUDENT CAN PERFORM

- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Participate at a conference | <input type="checkbox"/> Present the research at a conference |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

CO-AUTHORSHIP ON PUBLICATION

No Yes, if...

Kennis van de jeugdhulpverlening is pluspunt.

TRAINING NEEDED (ESTIMATED TIME + PROVIDED BY)

No additional training needed.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

delivered work is substantial.

Strengthening youth care by research

RESEARCH GROUP / LINE OF RESEARCH

Centrum voor onderzoek in jeugd- en opvoedhulp (COJO)

SUPERVISOR(S)

Prof. Dr. Johan Vanderfaeillie

OFFICE

/

PROMOTOR(S)

Prof. Dr. Johan Vanderfaeillie

CONTACT E-MAIL

Johan.Vanderfaeillie@vub.be

MAX. STUDENTS

2

LANGUAGE(S) REQUIRED

Dutch: research in done in Flemish foster care.

ABSTRACT (MAX 250 WORDS)

During the internship as part of the PE Honours Programme, the candidate(s) will get involved in the daily research activities of the research group Centrum voor Onderzoek in Jeugd- en Opvoedhulp (Center for research in youth care and support) at the Psychology Department. The candidate will be involved in ongoing research projects within the group: research regarding all aspects of youth care, special foster care and research into child abuse and neglect. Also the possibility exists to publish with already collected data.

GENERAL TIMING

Fixed Flexible Other

Will be further discussed between student and supervisor what is possible and desirable. There is definitely some flexibility as well as working independently.

TASKS THE STUDENT CAN PERFORM

- | | |
|---|--|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |
-

CO-AUTHORSHIP ON PUBLICATION

No Yes, if...

No prior knowledge required.

TRAINING NEEDED (ESTIMATED TIME + PROVIDED BY)

Training in performing document analysis - Here we provide 2 days of training, this can be through attending a guest lecture, self-study, online classes/tutorials/webinars, etc.

PRIOR KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED

If it is published, authorship will certainly be discussed. A publication can be an academic paper, but also a report, a valorizing article, a policy brief, etc.
