**UQ Summer or Winter Research Project Description**

Please use this template to create a description of each research project, eligibility requirements and expected deliverables. Project details can then be uploaded to each faculty, school, institute, and centre webpage prior to the launch of the program.

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| **Project title:** | **Compassion in Everyday Life** |
| **Project duration, hours of engagement & delivery mode** | Please outline the duration of the project (for the Winter program, duration must be between 4 – 5 weeks only and hours of engagement must be between 20-36hrs per week).  COVID-19 considerations: Please outline if the project can be completed under a remote working arrangement or if on-site attendance is required.  *For example, 4 weeks and applicant will be required on-site for the project.*  **Project Description**  There is 1 position available, it is on a project for 6-weeks with 20-25 hours of project work per week. You will be required to be on-site (St Lucia campus) for the majority of the project. |
| **Description:** | Please insert a project description to give applicants a comprehensive overview of the project.  *For example, this may include a program background, aim, hypothesis and/or approach.*  **Background Aim**  Compassion, commonly defined as “a sensitivity to suffering in self and others with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it” (Gilbert, 2014), has been shown to reduce mental distress and increase wellbeing in individuals (Kirby et al., 2017). Despite the explosion of research into compassion over the last 15-20 years we still know relatively little about the experience of compassion in everyday life. Moreover, little work has examined whether a daily compassion meditation leads to increased compassionate behaviour in daily life. This study will be the first to answer both these questions.  This project also aims to address the links between compassion and heart rate variability (HRV). Scholars have suggested that HRV is the key physiological measurement of compassion (Di Bello et al., 2021; Kirby et al., 2017), yet this has only been examined in lab conditions where targets of compassion are typically strangers. By examining HRV using wearable devices we can monitor the daily fluctuations of HRV and how it corresponds to moments of compassion to a diverse range of targets (close others, strangers). In addition, the study design is such that we will be examining a compassion condition to a control condition to determine whether a daily compassion meditation increases HRV across time. As a result this study will be using a multi-modal measurement approach combining behavioural, physiological, and self-report data as well as experience sampling methods.  **Research Questions**  This will allow us to answer many previously unanswered questions, such as: Does compassion practice improve heart rate variability? What are the mechanisms of change, both physiological and psychological in the compassion process? How well do our previously relied upon self-report measures capture these changes? And, how are these changes occurring dynamically within an individual as they practice?This is a very broad, overarching summary of what this project will be examining. |
| **Expected outcomes and deliverables:** | Please highlight what applicants can expect to gain/learn from participating in the project, and what they will be expected to complete as a part of the project.  *For example, scholars may gain skills in data collection, be involved in specific tasks, or have an opportunity to generate publications from their research. Students may also be asked to produce a report or oral presentation at the end of their project.*  **Opportunities and Outcomes**  In the Summer Research Project you will gain invaluable experience in conducting real, world-class scientific research. This is no mere learning exercise like you may have completed in previous courses. The research will provide you with opportunities to conduct research involving real people; understanding and using wearable physiological devices that will be used to collect data in real time; perform data coding; and you will have the chance to work with a great team including Dr James Kirby, Dr Chase Sherwell and PhD student Deanna Varley. The student will be immersed in the science of compassion, have opportunities to complete compassion meditations. The student involved in this project will also be asked to attend our team meetings and help create visual graphics reporting on results that can be used as part social media publicising. |
| **Suitable for:** | Please highlight any particular qualities that individual supervisors are looking for in applicants to assist with the selection process.  *For example, this project is open to applications from students with a background in chemistry or 3rd – 4th year students only.*  **Suitable**  This project is suitable for those with a background in psychology, having completed 3rd or 4th year psychology. |
| **Primary Supervisor:** | Please insert supervisor name.  *Dr James Kirby* |
| **Further info:** | If you would like applicants to contact your unit for further information, please provide the relevant contact details here. Please highlight if the supervisor wishes to be contacted by students prior to submitting an application.  For further information please feel free to contact Dr James Kirby ([j.kirby@psy.uq.edu.au](mailto:j.kirby@psy.uq.edu.au)) |