**UQ Summer Research Project Description - 2026**

*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:** | **Loneliness and Connectedness: Understanding Children’s Social Worlds**  **1 Position** |
| **Hours of engagement & delivery mode** | Summer Scholarship Program   * 6 weeks * 36 hours per week * 12 Jan – 20 Feb 2026 * Hybrid arrangement (primarily on-site) |
| **Description:** | Loneliness is increasingly recognised as a significant developmental issue, with research linking it to poorer mental health, reduced academic engagement, and long-term wellbeing challenges (Loades et al., 2020; Maes et al., 2019; Qualter et al., 2015). While often associated with older adults, loneliness is common in childhood and adolescence and may peak during the teenage years. Importantly, it is not just the absence of social contact but reflects a lack of meaningful group memberships and identification, as described by the Social Identity Approach to Health (Haslam et al., 2018). In contrast, feeling socially connected through family, peers, school communities, or extracurricular activities provides belonging, support, and purpose, key protective factors for children’s wellbeing (Jose et al., 2012; Farrell et al., 2024).  This project will contribute to research examining how children and young people experience loneliness and connectedness across different contexts. Scholars will be involved in both in-person and online data collection with children and parents (e.g., surveys, interactive mapping tasks, behavioural tasks) and systematic literature work. By integrating developmental, social identity, and extracurricular perspectives, this work aims to build knowledge that informs both theory and practical interventions designed to enhance social connection for young people. |
| **Expected learning outcomes and deliverables:** | Scholars may gain experience in:   * Recruitment and data collection with children and families (must hold or obtain a Working with Children Blue Card) * Literature searching and synthesis on loneliness and connectedness * Assisting with transcription, coding, and data entry * Supporting the piloting of innovative child-centred measures (e.g., online Social Identity Mapping) * Contributing to preliminary data analysis and preparation of materials for dissemination |
| **Suitable for:** | This project is open to students enrolled within the **School of Psychology, UQ** who:   * Demonstrate interest and knowledge in **Developmental and/or Social Psychology** * Have experience working with children (desirable) * Must hold or obtain a **Working with Children Blue Card** |
| **Primary Supervisor:** | Dr Callyn Farrell |
| **Further info:** | Potential applicants are welcome to contact **Dr Callyn Farrell** (c.farrell@uq.edu.au) with questions prior to submitting an application. |