# USU ACT Research Group Lab Policies for Undergrad RAs

This list highlights a set of important policies, guidelines and tips for being successful in the lab.

**RAs who thrive in the USU ACT Research Group are:**

* **Prompt**
  + Responding to emails within 24-48 hours whenever possible; never letting emails go longer than a week
  + Completing tasks within set deadlines
* **Reliable**
  + Completing tasks regularly, as assigned
  + Not missing scheduled meetings
* **Professional**
  + Attentive to detail in your tasks
  + Thoughtful and communicative about potential ethical or practical issues
  + Handling any concerns and requests in a respectful, professional way
* **Proactive**
  + Communicating when there are any issues (e.g., needing extra time)
  + Asking questions any time you are unsure about a task
  + Noticing and bringing up any potential problems (for example, irregularities in studies) promptly
  + Taking initiative (e.g., asking for extra work or readings when you don’t have tasks to work on)

**Evaluations:** Undergrad RAs are evaluated at the end of each semester by their graduate student supervisor or mentor. The reason we do this is to give you feedback in a transparent, consistent way and to help plan your next steps so that you are getting the best possible training experience (one that will help you be a great candidate for grad school if that’s what you want).

**Who you can contact about any concerns:** If you run into any concerns in your training experience(whether related to specific tasks, workload, getting your training needs met, not being sure what to do, etc.), please reach out to one of the contact points below so we can address it and support you.

* **Your direct graduate student supervisor or mentor:** For training and support on assigned tasks, to help manage your workload, or for other questions about the lab and research training.
* **The undergraduate RA coordinator:** For questions about getting started, lab policies, workload, any concerns about current tasks and assignments, etc.
* **Dr.** **Levin and/or Dr. Twohig:** For questions about graduate school, career paths, advanced training, and so on.
* **We are 100% committed to providing a respectful, safe, supportive, and nondiscriminatory training environment**. If you ever have concerns about inappropriate or unfair treatment within the lab, *please* bring it to Dr. Levin or Dr. Twohig, or the graduate student you feel most comfortable with. If you have concerns like this that you don’t feel comfortable raising within the lab, consider contacting the Psychology Department Head (Dr. Scott Bates) or the USU Office of Equity.

**Specific policies and steps:**

* **Review our info:** Make sure to review the [undergraduate RA page](https://www.utahact.com/undergraduate-research-assistants.html) on the lab website, including all the attached documents.
* **CITI training:** All RAs must complete the online CITI course before starting any research activities, found at this link: <https://research.usu.edu/irb/training/>. RAs are responsible for ensuring that their CITI certification is active throughout the time they work in the lab.
* **Workload:** If you don’t have anything to work on and want something to do, be sure to let a graduate student know. It’s easy to “fall off the radar” if not. Make sure to communicate if your workload is getting difficult to manage too.
* **Expectations**: There are three main categories a RA might fall into in this lab in terms of performance (Excellent, Adequate, and Inadequate). If you want a letter of recommendation from the lab, it behooves you to try to fall as much as possible in the Excellent category, and we will not recommend getting a letter from us if you fall in the Inadequate category. Here are some expectations for meeting these levels.

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| **Excellent** | **Adequate** | **Inadequate** |
| Provides high quality work that shows good effort, attentiveness, and skill. | Provides adequate quality work showing adequate effort, attentiveness, and skills. | Provides work that suggests inadequate effort, attentiveness, or skill. |
| Demonstrates strong initiative (within level of competency) in completing tasks, asking questions, identifying issues, and coming up with potential solutions. | Demonstrates some initiative in these areas and requires minimal prompting/reminding at times in assigned areas. | Often does not complete tasks without multiple prompts, asks questions in a “passive problem solving” way or does not ask questions at all when there are clear issues to be addressed. |
| Completes tasks on time and often even ahead of schedule. In rare circumstances where deadlines are not met, this is addressed in a professional way with a clear reason and plan for a new deadline. | Completes tasks on time. Clearly indicates when deadlines need to be pushed back and with a plan for a new deadline. | Does not complete tasks on time and without a plan for a new deadline. |
| Always responds to emails within 48 hours. | Usually responds within 48 hours and always within a week | Has at any point in the lab not responded to emails directed to them for over 2 weeks without prior notice or follow up |
| Actively engages in learning about what is being researched in the lab (ACT, RFT, OCD, anxiety, contextualism, technology, etc.) and demonstrates this in lab or other discussions. | Engages in at least a little learning about what is researched in the lab and appears reasonably engaged in discussions. | Does not engage at all in learning about what is being researched in the lab. |
| Often willing to help out with extra lab tasks as they come up. | Has engaged in extraneous tasks at in the semester when requested by the lab. | Does not have many or any assigned tasks and does not help out with new tasks as they come up. |

**Letters of Recommendation**: We are happy to provide letters of recommendation for undergraduates applying to graduate programs (particularly if you worked in the lab for a year or longer). However, please make sure to adhere to the following guidelines:

* Contact the undergraduate RA coordinator with information regarding your letter request. They will then help clarify any needed information and forward the request to the appropriate faculty member.
* Be sure to reach out regarding your request at least six weeks prior to when you need it by.
* In your request, please include as much detail as possible, including: which projects you worked on in the lab and what your specific tasks were, your primary graduate student supervisor, how long you worked in the lab, any relevant details about the programs you are applying for and what they ask for in letters, and anything else you think we should know.
* Please provide us with all the schools you are applying to in one e-mail or document, along with how we submit each letter. Dr. Twohig or Levin may be writing letters for up to 10 people and e-mails with individual school requests can much more easily fall through the cracks. It is much easier to do all your schools at one time.