# USU ACT Research Group Lab Policies and Expectations for Undergrad Research Assistants

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

* **RAs in the lab need to be signed up as students at USU, and must sign up for at least one research credit** **for any semester during which they are an RA.** This typically means signing up for at least 1 credit of PSY 5910 (Independent Research) but please consult with the lab coordinator if you are interested in signing up through a different course.
* **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.
* **The number one rule for being a successful RA is dependability**. This includes:
  + Replying to emails within 48 hours whenever possible and never letting an email go longer than a week without at least confirming receipt of it.
  + Not missing scheduled meetings with others. If you are not able to make it to a meeting or other expected lab activity, be sure to let people know. However, this does *not* apply to lab meetings, which if you are going to miss is not a big deal and do not need to email Mike about it. Given your individual responsibilities, you may need to email a fellow RA or graduate student if you are not present in a lab meeting.
  + Completing tasks within set deadlines, and letting others know if you need more time.
  + Being reliable and attentive with the work you complete.
  + Asking a question if there is anything you are not sure about your task.
* **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.**
* **If you are interested in doing an independent project, here are a few things to consider:**
  + You will need to be in the lab for at least one semester prior to being able to pursue/explore such a project. Consider this a trial period in which you can demonstrate a commitment to and set of skills needed to successfully complete such a project. If you do not demonstrate an impressive level of commitment and research interests/skills, you will *not* be able to complete an independent project in this lab.
  + Given the large amount of research that we typically engage in during the Fall/Spring semesters, our resources are stretched and it’s very unlikely that we could support a completely new undergraduate project in this lab. However, we are usually able to “tack something on” to an existing project in the lab, which can be used to support an independent study.
* **Lab meetings**: If you are interested in getting more involved and hearing about intellectual discussions, new projects, etc. in the lab you are welcome to attend meetings. This is *not* required though and up to you whether to attend.
* **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, 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 discussions that are attended and is actively disengaged (e.g., using mobile/laptop devices for purposes unrelated to the lab, chatting with others during presentations, etc.) in lab meetings attended |
| 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. However, please make sure to adhere to the following guidelines:
  + Contact the lab coordinator with information regarding your letter request. The lab coordinator 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.