**Independent Projects:** Generally speaking, the lab requires a 10 hr/week commitment from research assistants for at least 1 year. Research assistants who complete their 1-year commitment and demonstrate motivation, interest, and responsibility may be interested in pursuing independent projects. Independent projects are an important opportunity to gain critical research skills in conducting literature reviews, developing hypotheses, designing tasks, managing projects, cleaning and analyzing data, and presenting. Any thesis or independent project completed in the lab requires direct supervision from a graduate student, post-doc or Dr. Tottenham. The general timeline of independent projects is as follows. Please keep in mind that these guidelines may vary depending on the expectations established with your supervisor.

**Independent Project Timeline**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 0 – 1 mos | Work with supervisor to develop research question |
| 1 – 3 mos | Conduct thorough literature review and establish hypotheses * Work with supervisor to preregister hypotheses if appropriate
 |
| 3 – 4 mos  | Identify appropriate dataset and gain access |
| 4 – 6 mos | Identify relevant variables and begin data cleaning |
| 6 – 8 mos | Finish data cleaning and begin data analyses to address research questions of interest |
| 9 mos | Present preliminary findings to laboratory and incorporate feedback |
| 9 – 11 mos  | Finish data analyses and identify avenues for dissemination  |

**Dissemination**: Upon completion of independent projects, students should work with their supervisors to determine the most appropriate avenue of dissemination (i.e., local symposiums, conferences, etc.). Importantly, research assistants who are interested in presenting work at national or international conferences should be aware of the advance submission deadlines for most meetings and potential costs required for attendance. If appropriate, research assistants can discuss the possibility of publication with their supervisors upon completion of preregistration for registered reports, or upon completion of data analysis for traditional manuscripts, keeping in mind that scientific writing is a long, iterative process that can take several years from start to eventual publication.

**Additional Considerations:**

* Despite great interest in supporting independent projects, this is a major time commitment to supervisors, who may not always be able to accommodate such requests
* This is a FAST timeline - many projects will take longer than the timeline outlined in the above table
* Students are expected to do a lot of independent trouble shooting (e.g., identifying statistical support and writing resources beyond the guidance provided by the supervisor)
* Students should begin this process by having a specific hypothesis in mind, which will be edited by their supervisor
* Project hypotheses should fall within the expertise of those in the lab