

Faculty of Science
Summer Research Scholarships
2026/2027 Projects (Psychology)

Project code:	SCI128
Project title:	Unravelling the underlying pathology in adults and children with swallowing and feeding difficulties
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Anna Miles Shakeela Saleem
Contact details	Anna Miles a.miles@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	-
Project description	
<p>Applicants should have an interest in healthcare, but no prior knowledge is required to work with this passionate team of healthcare professionals (speech-language therapists and laryngologists) in the Swallow and Voice Research Lab. Swallowing difficulties are common in stroke and injury/surgery to the head and neck. Yet, it remains a relatively new field of medicine. This project will provide students with skills in medical research and reading health records of patients with swallowing difficulties – both adults and children. Students will have the opportunity to learn videofluoroscopic x-ray analysis skills and observe clinics.</p>	

Project code:	SCI129
Project title:	Men’s Mental Health
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Chris Sibley
Contact details	c.sibley@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	Enrolled or completed a degree in psychology PSYCH 204 and 311, or equivalent
Project description	
<p>This summer scholarship will work with data from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study to help prepare a report on men’s mental health, and also other related topics. The project is suited for a psychology undergraduate student planning to continue with graduate studies in social or clinical psychology. The New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study is a large-scale national longitudinal panel study that has been running for 17 years. The summer scholar will work as part of a large team of graduate students and researchers to help process and enter data for Wave 18 of the study. Once data entry for the wave is completed, the data will be used to prepare an annual report on men’s mental health; and also contribute to the annual NZAVS newsletter. Our newsletter is sent to about 70,000 participants each year, and the summer scholar will be listed as an author. If the summer project goes well, there may be the possibility of continued paid work as a research assistant working with the NZAVS. You can read more about the NZAVS, and see examples of our previous reports and newsletters at: https://nzattitudesandvalues.org/</p>	

Project code:	SCI130
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Faculty of Science
Summer Research Scholarships
2026/2027 Projects (Psychology)

Project title:	Using Artificial Analysis to Assess Pigeons' Responses to Environmental Enrichment
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Sarah Cowie, Patrice Delmas
Contact details	Sarah.cowie@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	Some Python programming capabilities and the ability to pick up existing tools and knowledge. Computer vision knowledge is not essential, though the candidate will need to acquire relevant skills in computer vision and machine learning along the way. Strong motivation and a willingness to learn are essential.
Project description: Environmental enrichment is commonly used to improve the welfare of captive animals. AI analysis of animal behaviour has potential to provide insight into what those animals really find 'enriching'. This project uses video recordings of pigeons in the University of Auckland's Behaviour Lab, with different types of enrichment (and without enrichment as a baseline comparison). The candidate will trial current computer vision and machine learning techniques for identifying and quantifying pigeon behaviours across enrichment conditions and use these analyses to explore whether specific enrichment types produce measurable welfare benefits.	

Project code:	SCI131
Project title:	Rates of Psychological Distress in New Zealand
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Chris Sibley
Contact details	c.sibley@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	Enrolled or completed a degree in psychology PSYCH 204 and 311, or equivalent
Project description: This summer scholarship will work with data from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study to help prepare a report on generational changes in the rates of anxiety and psychological distress in New Zealand. The project is suited for a psychology undergraduate student planning to continue with graduate studies in social or clinical psychology. The New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study is a large-scale national longitudinal panel study that has been running for 17 years. The summer scholar will work as part of a large team of graduate students and researchers to help process and enter data for Wave 18 of the study. Once data entry for the wave is completed, the data will be used to prepare an annual report on the rate of change in anxiety, rumination and psychological distress; and also contribute to the annual NZAVS newsletter. Our newsletter is sent to about 70,000 participants each year, and the summer scholar will be listed as an author. If the summer project goes well, there may be the possibility of continued paid work as a research assistant working with the NZAVS. You can read more about the NZAVS, and see examples of our previous reports and newsletters at: https://nzattitudesandvalues.org/	

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2026/2027 Projects (Psychology)

Project code:	SCI132
Project title:	Psychological Factors Associated with Menopause
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Chris Sibley and Nickola Overall
Contact details	c.sibley@auckland.ac.nz ; n.overall@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	Enrolled or completed a degree in psychology PSYCH 204 and 311, or equivalent
Project description	
<p>This summer scholarship will work with data from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study to help prepare a report on the psychological factors and possible challenges associated with menopause. The project is suited for a psychology undergraduate student planning to continue with graduate studies in social or clinical psychology. The New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study is a large-scale national longitudinal panel study that has been running for 17 years. The summer scholar will work as part of a large team of graduate students and researchers to help process and enter data for Wave 18 of the study. Once data entry for the wave is completed, the data will be used to prepare an annual report on women's experiences of menopause, and factors associated with positive or negative life change associated with menopause; and also contribute to the annual NZAVS newsletter. Our newsletter is sent to about 70,000 participants each year, and the summer scholar will be listed as an author. If the summer project goes well, there may be the possibility of continued paid work as a research assistant working with the NZAVS. You can read more about the NZAVS, and see examples of our previous reports and newsletters at: https://nzattitudesandvalues.org/</p>	

Faculty of Science
Summer Research Scholarships
2026/2027 Projects (Psychology)

Project code:	SCI133
Project title:	Rethinking the partition of the human mind
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	David Moreau
Contact details	d.moreau@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	Prior knowledge of computational methods and tools is helpful (e.g., R, Python).
Project description	
<p>Psychological science explains human behaviour using abstract constructs such as working memory, executive function, and cognitive control. These constructs shape how cognition is measured in education, mental health, and policy. Yet the boundaries between them remain debated, and it is unclear whether current partitions of the mind reflect optimal scientific organisation or historical convention. The summer scholar will work with the supervisor to investigate whether contemporary artificial intelligence systems can provide new insights into the structure of psychological constructs. Drawing on foundation models, the project will examine the extent to which commonly used psychological concepts are empirically distinct, overlapping, or potentially redundant. The scholar will assist with literature reviews, the development of computational pipelines, data collection and interpretation, and the preparation of research outputs. This project will provide experience at the intersection of psychology, cognitive science, and artificial intelligence, while contributing to emerging debates about how psychological science should conceptualise and organise the human mind.</p>	

Project code:	SCI134
Project title:	Choosing the future when past and present conditions differ
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Sarah Cowie
Contact details	Sarah.cowie@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	Knowledge of behavioural psychology/experimental analysis of behaviour (e.g., PSYCH203, PSYCH309, or equivalent), Excel. Python not essential but would be a bonus.
Project description	
<p>Recent research suggests even the simplest learning processes – operant and classical conditioning – are future-oriented. In this research we explore how pigeons use past experience to anticipate potential outcomes and decide what to do in novel situations, and the extent to which motivation for rewards influences these decisions. The student will contribute to literature reviews, data management and analysis (training provided), and the day-to-day husbandry and care of the pigeons used in the research (training provided). There will also be opportunities to gain experience with experimental design, behavioural data collection, and other research projects currently underway in the laboratory. This scholarship would suit a student with an interest in behavioural psychology, animal cognition, learning, decision-making.</p>	

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Summer Research Scholarships
2026/2027 Projects (Psychology)

Project code:	SCI135
Project title:	Choice with and without punishment
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Sarah Cowie
Contact details	Sarah.cowie@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	Knowledge of behavioural psychology/experimental analysis of behaviour (e.g., PSYCH203, PSYCH309, or equivalent), Excel. Python not essential but would be a bonus.
Project description	
<p>How does decision-making change when behaviours produce rewards only, and when they also produce signals associated with the absence of reward? This project asks how decision-making depends on its consequences using pigeons as an animal model. The successful applicant will assist with an ongoing experimental programme examining how behaviour is allocated between alternatives that differ in their consequences. The student will contribute to literature reviews, data management and analysis (training provided), and the day-to-day husbandry and care of the pigeons used in the research (training provided). There will also be opportunities to gain experience with experimental design, behavioural data collection, and other research projects currently underway in the laboratory. This scholarship would suit a student with an interest in behavioural psychology, animal cognition, learning, decision-making.</p>	

Project code:	SCI136
Project title:	Understanding the effect of environmental stimuli on remembering, language, and engagement
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Rebecca Sharp
Contact details	r.sharp@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	This project would benefit a student who is interested in studying in the Behaviour Analysis Programme at the postgraduate level. Having undertaken papers with a behavioural component at the undergraduate level (e.g., Psych 203, Psych 309) would be an advantage, as would interest and experience in analysing survey and behavioural data.
Project description	
<p>There is increasing evidence that the social and physical environment are crucial in understanding the experiences of people with Major Neurocognitive Disorder (NCD; including those with brain injury and/or dementia), including phenomena such as confabulation or misremembering. The aim of this project is to understand how environmental stimuli occasion behaviour and language in people with NCD from a behavioural perspective.</p>	

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2026/2027 Projects (Psychology)

Project code:	SCI137
Project title:	Relationships between music and cognitive function
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Patrick Savage
Contact details	Patrick.savage@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding and experience with Registered Reports, behavioural experiments, and/or statistical analysis (especially in R) are helpful but not necessarily essential.
<p>Project description</p> <p>Does music make us smarter? Early research on the “Mozart effect” claimed so, but later studies have produced conflicting answers. This project aims to investigate potential relationships using gold-standards of robust research such as Registered Reports.</p> <p>If you are interested, please reach out EARLY via email (patrick.savage@auckland.ac.nz) to give time to interview potential candidates.</p>	

Project code:	SCI138
Project title:	AI use at work: A qualitative analysis of open-ended survey responses
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Lucy Xing
Contact details	lucy.xing@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	Experience with qualitative coding, thematic analysis, Excel, or NVivo would be useful but not essential. Strong attention to detail and sensitivity when working with participant responses are important.
<p>Project description</p> <p>AI tools are increasingly used in workplaces to support communication, learning, decision-making, etc. While these tools may create opportunities for productivity, accessibility, and employee development, they may also raise concerns around fairness, privacy, trust, accountability, inclusion, and the quality of workplace relationships.</p> <p>This project will analyse open-ended survey responses about AI use at work. The student will assist with coding qualitative data, identifying recurring themes, and preparing summary tables and a brief report.</p>	

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2026/2027 Projects (Psychology)

Project code:	SCI139
Project title:	Tracking Online Climate Narratives Using Large Language Models
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Quentin Atkinson Supported by Ana Shapiro (PhD)
Contact details	q.atkinson@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	Helpful but not essential skills and knowledge include - basic understanding of R, familiarity with text-based generative AI tools like Chat-GPT, some background/interest in social psychology, political psychology, environmental psychology and/or promoting climate action.
Project description Despite increasing urgency, the global response to climate change remains inadequate and is increasingly polarised. To understand and potentially change this trajectory there is growing interest in the role of climate narratives - shared systems of descriptive, causal, and affective beliefs thought to impact how individuals and groups interpret climate reality and justify policy responses. Recent advances in large language models (LLMs) now make it possible to rapidly extract and analyse such narratives across large text corpora. This project will involve exploring how these new tools can be applied to climate-related narratives in New Zealand. You will learn how to use LLMs to annotate publicly available texts from parliamentary records, news media, and/or online fora to test hypotheses about dominant climate narrative structures, their variation across parties and groups, and how they change over time.	

Faculty of Science
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2026/2027 Projects (Psychology)

Project code:	SCI140
Project title:	Caregiver responsiveness and cooperation across different types of caregiver-child interactions (project A)
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Annette Henderson Florian Bednarski
Contact details	a.henderson@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An interest in understanding the factors that shape positive caregiver-child interactions • An interest in using experimental methods in developmental science to examine the factors that shape positive caregiver-infant interactions • Experience, or a strong desire, to work with datasets in R or Python • As we seek to enhance the diversity of our research team, A Māori or Pacific scholar would be a valued addition to the team
<p>Project description</p> <p>Tangata ako ana i te whare, te turanga ki te marae, tau ana - ‘A person who is taught at home will stand collected on the marae.’</p> <p>Early caregiving experiences provide the foundation for children to grow into competent, integrated members of society. Central to these experiences is caregiver responsiveness – how caregivers are sensitive to their child’s ongoing behaviour. This project involves coding caregiver-child interactions in our ongoing studies. The scholar will also help with our experimental sessions and learn about the steps involved in developmental research. This may involve being available on certain weekends. Experience with young children would be helpful. Scholars will need to complete a confidentiality agreement.</p> <p>This project will involve working with the team on current studies with a digital child, BabyX. The scholar will code caregiver-child interactions across different contexts. The student will receive training on other research tasks such as scheduling appointments, participant recruitment, conducting literature reviews, data entry, data coding, and data analysis. The student will have an opportunity to help with other projects in the lab (https://www.earlylearning.ac.nz/). Importantly, the student who works on this project will be involved in a thriving lab group over the summer months.</p>	

Faculty of Science
Summer Research Scholarships
2026/2027 Projects (Psychology)

Project code:	SCI141
Project title:	Caregiver responsiveness and cooperation across different types of caregiver-child interactions (project B)
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Annette Henderson Florian Bednarski
Contact details	a.henderson@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An interest in understanding the factors that shape positive caregiver-child interactions • An interest in using experimental methods in developmental science to examine the factors that shape positive caregiver-infant interactions • Experience, or a strong desire, to work with datasets in R or Python
Project description	
<p>Tangata ako ana i te whare, te turanga ki te marae, tau ana - 'A person who is taught at home will stand collected on the marae.'</p> <p>Early caregiving experiences provide the foundation for children to grow into competent, integrated members of society. Central to these experiences is caregiver responsiveness – how caregivers are sensitive to their child’s ongoing behaviour. This project involves coding caregiver-child interactions in our ongoing studies. The scholar will also help with our experimental sessions and learn about the steps involved in developmental research. This may involve being available on certain weekends. Experience with young children would be helpful. Scholars will need to complete a confidentiality agreement.</p> <p>This project will involve working with the team on current studies with a digital child, BabyX. The scholar will code caregiver-child interactions across different contexts. The student will receive training on other research tasks such as scheduling appointments, participant recruitment, conducting literature reviews, data entry, data coding, and data analysis. The student will have an opportunity to help with other projects in the lab (https://www.earlylearning.ac.nz/). Importantly, the student who works on this project will be involved in a thriving lab group over the summer months.</p>	

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2026/2027 Projects (Psychology)

Project code:	SCI142
Project title:	Examining the 2026 New Zealand General Election
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Danny Osborne
Contact details	d.osborne@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	Enrolled or completed a degree in psychology PSYCH 204 and 311, or equivalent
Project description This summer scholarship will work with data from the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study to help prepare a report examining the socio-demographic correlates of political party support in the lead-up to the 2026 General Election. The project is suited for a psychology undergraduate student planning to continue with graduate studies in social psychology or political studies. The New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study is a large-scale national longitudinal panel study that has been running for 17 years. The summer scholar will work as part of a large team of graduate students and researchers to help process and enter data for Wave 18 of the study. Once data entry for the wave is completed, the data will be used to prepare an annual report examining different socio-demographic correlates of political party preferences and/or vote choice that will be featured in the annual NZAVS newsletter. Our newsletter is sent to about 70,000 participants each year, and the summer scholar will be listed as an author. If the summer project goes well, there may be the possibility of continued paid work as a research assistant working with the NZAVS. You can read more about the NZAVS, and see examples of our previous reports and newsletters at: https://nzattitudesandvalues.org/	

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2026/2027 Projects (Psychology)

Project code:	SCI143
Project title:	Exploring Pacific peoples’ understandings of fertility and spirituality
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Sarah Kapeli (Lapaha, Tongatapu), Psychology Sarah McLean-Orsborn (Tapatapo, Moamoa, Papa Sataua, Sāmoa), Pacific Studies
Contact details	s.kapeli@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent written, verbal, and interpersonal communication skills • Highly organised and able to work independently • Ability to search and synthesise literature • Strong interest in Pacific health and wellbeing • The ideal scholar will be of Pacific and/or Māori descent who can take a culturally grounded approach to research
<p>Project description</p> <p>Narratives positioning Pacific peoples as inherently ‘highly fertile’ have long obscured conversations about unexplained infertility, miscarriage, and chronic reproductive conditions such as PMOS and endometriosis. For Pacific peoples, family sits at the centre of social life, and decision-making is grounded in collective belonging and genealogical ties. As Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta’isi Efi (208) and Wendt (1996) remind us, the ‘self’ is relational, shaped through obligations to family, village, and nation. Within this worldview, the desire for children is often deeply connected to love, continuity, and collective identity. Heavily intersecting with spiritual beliefs where children are viewed as divine blessings. Consequently, infertility can prompt profound emotional, psychological, and spiritual distress, often complicated by religious stigmas or faith-versus-science tensions.</p> <p>This project will explore Pacific peoples’ understandings of fertility and spirituality and is suited to a scholar with a strong interest in Pacific health and wellbeing. The project will have academic, intellectual, and practical benefits for the scholar, who will receive mentoring, opportunities to network, and contribute to research activities (including but not limited to reviewing literature, report writing, research design, and fieldwork) that will form the foundation for a larger research programme planned for 2027.</p>	

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2026/2027 Projects (Psychology)

Project code:	SCI144
Project title:	In search of subjective value in EEG
Discipline:	Psychology
Supervisor(s)	Paul Corballis André Botes
Contact details	abot165@auckland.ac.nz
Skills Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An interest in, or experience with EEG data collection. • An interest in, or experience with study creation in Psychopy. • Prior experience conducting quantitative research is preferred but not essential.
Project description	
<p>Prior research in economics and neuroeconomics has highlighted the role of subjective value judgements in decision making. However, EEG approaches to directly assessing subjective value are still being developed. This summer research project will focus on conceptual replication of an existing EEG study (Telpaz et al., 2015) which assesses how subjective value can be indexed in event related potentials. Summer scholars will be involved in study preparation, data collection and analysis alongside postgraduate students from the Cognitive Psychophysiology Lab. Data collection will take place in the University of Auckland School of Psychology EEG labs. This study will contribute to a research scheme which investigates the role of goal congruence in value-based decisions.</p>	