



Queen's Psychology Honours Students receive Canadian Psychological Association's Certificate of Academic Excellence

by Queen's Psychology
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Congratulations to recent Queen's Psychology Honours graduates **Alex Prosserman, Emily Teves, and Owen Hicks** on receiving the Canadian Psychological Association's Certificate of Academic Excellence!

The Canadian Psychological Association created the Programme of Certificates of Academic Excellence to recognize outstanding achievements made by students at all levels of study (Honours, Master's, Ph.D.) in each Canadian department of psychology.

Alex Prosserman

An important element of animal research is looking for ways to improve animal welfare. For example, does housing rats with a buddy decrease their stress levels? What about the type of air pressure in their cage? Alex's research focused on these questions at both the behavioural and neuroanatomical levels. "Housing conditions profoundly altered rats' anxiety-related behaviour and their neural levels of oxytocin, a peptide that reduces stress", Alex explains. "But, an important caveat is that the behavioural outcomes were influenced by the nature of the behavioural task itself".

Looking toward the future, Alex is interested in the research of off-label psychopharmacological treatments – specifically, psychedelics – for psychiatric disorders. Psychedelic research is a keen interest of his as it bridges his fascination with psychology, neuroscience, spirituality, and the nature of consciousness. This fall, Alex plans to continue his research as he begins his MSc. in neuroscience at Queen's.

Emily Teves

The subject of Emily's Honours thesis was to investigate the impact of meditation on memory consolidation. The purpose of this study was to determine whether sleep plays a uniquely critical role in memory formation, or if other behavioural and brain states have a similar effect as sleep on memory. In order to address this question targeted memory reactivation was applied during periods of self-guided meditation and declarative memory recall was assessed.

"Receiving this award has been incredibly meaningful for me. It has greatly validated all of the hard work I have put into this project and my entire undergraduate degree", Emily says. "This award has been a great encouragement to continue to pursue my interest in conducting research professionally".

Emily is currently enrolled in Queen's Teachers Education program which will begin this fall, and she hopes to complete a Master's degree in education afterwards. Ultimately Emily plans to become involved psychology and education research, to bridge the gaps between these disciplines in order to help develop scientifically-informed educational policy.

Owen Hicks

In his honours thesis Owen examined how chronic stress influences the association between stressful life events and risk of depression relapse in a sample of outpatients diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder. "We found that severe 'major' events were associated with a higher risk of relapse on their own, while chronic stress acted as a protective factor for less severe 'minor' events", Owen explains. "Exposure to a high amount of chronic stress and minor events was associated with a lower risk of relapse, and vice versa."

Owen says he is extremely honoured to receive this award from the Canadian Psychological Association. "Collaborating with Dr. Harkness on this challenging project allowed me to realize my passion for research in clinical psychology", he recalls. "Receiving this award will have an undeniably positive impact on my future in this field".

Owen's thesis also won the 201-2020 W.R. Thompson Award in Psychology.

Owen hopes to attend graduate school to continue working on similar research in the near future.

For more information on the Canadian Psychological Association's Certificate of Academic Excellence program, please go to the [CPA website](#).

