

MCGILL COGNITIVE SCIENCE

ADVICE SURVEY



The Student Association of Cognitive Science (2019-2020) conducted a survey in which Cognitive Science alumni were asked to provide advice for current students in the program. This document contains the responses we received.

If you have any questions or suggestions, feel free to contact us!

Email: communications.sacs@gmail.com

Facebook page: Student Association of Cognitive Science, McGill University

Webpage: www.cogsci-mcgill.com



Response #1

STREAM(S): Computer Science

GRADUATION DATE: May 2019

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION?

Software development, natural language processing.

WHAT SKILLS DID YOU ACQUIRE IN THE COGNITIVE SCIENCE PROGRAM THAT ARE RELEVANT TO WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW?

Web development, software design patterns, NLP/ML methods

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE CLASSES/PROFESSORS IN THE PROGRAM?

COMP 330 Theory of Computation, PHIL 310 Intermediate Logic, COMP 550, COMP 551, LING 445.

PLEASE PROVIDE ANY GENERAL ADVICE FOR CURRENT COGNITIVE SCIENCE STUDENTS.

If you're trying to go to grad school, try and get into a lab in U2 at least to get enough experience. If you can afford it, staying an extra term or year to make up for a lack of research experience is worth it. Being a student has benefits!



Response #2

STREAM(S): Neuroscience/Psychology

GRADUATION DATE: May 2016

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION?

VR Game Developer

WHAT SKILLS DID YOU ACQUIRE IN THE COGNITIVE SCIENCE PROGRAM THAT ARE RELEVANT TO WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW?

Computer science skills mainly, along with general knowledge of some of the science behind perception.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE CLASSES/PROFESSORS IN THE PROGRAM?

Intro to Deductive Logic ended up being very helpful in a coding career, along with all the comp courses I took. Out of all the COMP courses, COMP206 (Intro to Software Systems) gave me practical knowledge which I've used at two different jobs now (bash scripting).

PLEASE PROVIDE ANY GENERAL ADVICE FOR CURRENT COGNITIVE SCIENCE STUDENTS.

Every CogSci degree is unique. Whatever you end up pursuing, use your interdisciplinary background to differentiate yourself by bringing art to science or science to art.



Response #3

STREAM(S): Psychology

GRADUATION DATE: October 2018

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION?

Currently pursuing a Master's degree in Psychology at Concordia University. I am carrying out my thesis in a Psycholinguistics lab.

WHAT SKILLS DID YOU ACQUIRE IN THE COGNITIVE SCIENCE PROGRAM THAT ARE RELEVANT TO WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW?

The interdisciplinarity of cog sci made me the perfect candidate to get accepted into the lab in which I am currently doing research (namely the fact that I took courses in both psychology and linguistics).

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE CLASSES/PROFESSORS IN THE PROGRAM?

Michael Petrides is a gem. He made PSYC 311 one of the more memorable courses in my degree. Oran Magal was great for intro to philosophy, PHIL 200. PHIL 210 logic course, super interesting conceptually, one of the more unique courses I took. It was tough and dense but worthwhile. PSYC 211 with Jonathan Britt really solidified my confidence in my decision to switch into cog sci from physics. The course was full of super cool information. A great first year psych course. And finally, if you have the opportunity you must take Dr. Sam Veissiere's ANTH seminar. Every semester he's got a new topic. I took 2 seminars with him both fabulous.

(cont.)



(cont'd)

PLEASE PROVIDE ANY GENERAL ADVICE FOR CURRENT COGNITIVE SCIENCE STUDENTS.

You're in the best program at McGill. Take as many different courses as possible. Take advantage of the diverse array of courses available to you. Best of luck!

Response #4

STREAM(S): Psychology and minor in Linguistics

GRADUATION DATE: April 2020

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION?

Upon graduation, I will be doing my master's in cognitive science at the University of Vienna in Austria.

WHAT SKILLS DID YOU ACQUIRE IN THE COGNITIVE SCIENCE PROGRAM THAT ARE RELEVANT TO WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW?

1. How to think about the same subject/question from different perspectives (e.g. philosophy and neuroscience)
2. How to conduct research (through COGS 401 and COGS 444)

The master's at the University of Vienna is set up very similarly to the program at McGill, including the required course list, which means that I feel quite prepared for it. It also asks all students to write a master's thesis in their

(cont.)



(cont'd)

second year, which reminds me of the requirements in the research courses listed above.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE CLASSES/PROFESSORS IN THE PROGRAM?

PSYC 304 with Melanie Dirks; PSYC 538 with Stevan Harnad; COGS 401 (research) with Noémie Auclair-Ouellet

PLEASE PROVIDE ANY GENERAL ADVICE FOR CURRENT COGNITIVE SCIENCE STUDENTS.

1. See Ryan Bouma often, not only because he is the most amazing advisor at McGill, but also to ensure that you are on track to graduate on time.
2. Take at least one research course, especially if you are thinking about going to graduate school.
3. Take seminars so that you have some professors that actually know you and can write you letters of recommendation (you will not get [good] ones from lectures, even if you got an A in the class because the professor most likely doesn't know you!)
4. Don't wait to take your freshman and CogSci requirements (including BASC 201). Your third- and/or fourth-year self will thank you.
5. Take advantage of the luxury of being able to take such a wide range of classes. Don't just take classes in your own stream.



Response #5

STREAM(S): Neuroscience/Psychology

GRADUATION DATE: May 2019

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION?

Accounting assistant, soon to be student again. (Neuropsychology).

WHAT SKILLS DID YOU ACQUIRE IN THE COGNITIVE SCIENCE PROGRAM THAT ARE RELEVANT TO WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW?

The interdisciplinary aspect of the faculty and the program itself allows students to master important skills in research, such as the application of the scientific approach (hypothesis, etc.) and the ability to write essays and reports with ease. It also allows a student to touch on multiple streams making it easier to access graduate programs. Touching on all streams allows for a better overall understanding of cognitive science and sciences.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE CLASSES/PROFESSORS IN THE PROGRAM?

Loved Francesca Capozzi. NSCI300, PSYC444, PSYC410. Not directly in cognitive science but I believe to be relevant: SOCI310 Sociology of mental disorder

PLEASE PROVIDE ANY GENERAL ADVICE FOR CURRENT COGNITIVE SCIENCE STUDENTS.

You got this. And if you don't, go see Ryan, he's got this. But also, don't pick a stream until you have tried at least one course in each of them.



Response #6

STREAM(S): Philosophy and minor in Psychology.

GRADUATION DATE: May 2019

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION?

Research Assistant in the Douglas Centre and Functional Quality Assurance.

WHAT SKILLS DID YOU ACQUIRE IN THE COGNITIVE SCIENCE PROGRAM THAT ARE RELEVANT TO WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW?

Analytical thinking and argumentation, knowledge of psychology and to look at psychological phenomena from a philosophical perspective. The most practical skill I acquire is programming.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE CLASSES/PROFESSORS IN THE PROGRAM?

Stevan Harnad, Sam Vessiere, Koestner, Kathryn Gill, Signy Sheldon, David Meger, Philip Buckley, Thomas Shultz(My favorite), COMP 202 (the most hated class among my peers, but a very interesting class and engaging class, much more than other introductory classes. A MUST take for anyone).

PLEASE PROVIDE ANY GENERAL ADVICE FOR CURRENT COGNITIVE SCIENCE STUDENTS.

Take advantage of the versatility the program offers. I wasn't interested in Linguistics but taking just two classes to fulfill my Art credit requirements has helped me immensely in ways that I could not have foreseen.



Response #7

STREAM(S): Psychology and Linguistics

GRADUATION DATE: June 2016

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION?

I am a PhD candidate in cognitive neuroscience at Carnegie Mellon University. I also have a Master's in Cognitive Science (computational neuroscience specialization) from the department of Informatics of the University of Edinburgh, and I did a Neuroimaging internship at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands.

WHAT SKILLS DID YOU ACQUIRE IN THE COGNITIVE SCIENCE PROGRAM THAT ARE RELEVANT TO WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW?

Breadth and a good introduction to the different sub-streams of cognitive science. I did a computer science minor as well, so in terms of skills I took a lot of Maths and Comp Sci classes which gave me a good foundation. McGill's Neuroscience classes are pretty solid too.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE CLASSES/PROFESSORS IN THE PROGRAM?

PSYC 311 with Dr. Petrides is the best class you can take.

NSCI 201 is very useful if you want to continue in neuroscience.

PHIL 221 with Dr. Ian Gold gives a good overview of cognitive science from a historical perspective. I highly recommend for your first year in Cog Sci.

COMP 202 is a must. You need to have some foundations in programming.

(cont.)



(cont'd)

COMP 424 is great if you want to go into computational modelling later.

The LING classes are fun too, but not as relevant as the other ones unless you want to continue into Linguistics.

COGS 401 & GOGS 444 are super important if you want to do research. I did both and I did not regret.

PLEASE PROVIDE ANY GENERAL ADVICE FOR CURRENT COGNITIVE SCIENCE STUDENTS.

The program does not have enough MATH courses. If you want to deal with AI and computational modelling, you will need linear algebra, multivariate calculus and probability for sure. My best suggestion for you all is to not waste too much time taking too many high-level classes. Focus on taking the fundamental 200 and 300 level classes that will give you the foundations of what you need to know across disciplines.

Cognitive Science is not easy because there's so much to learn and everyone needs to make choices because we can't learn everything in depth, but it's extremely rewarding!



Response #8

STREAM(S): Neuroscience and Psychology

GRADUATION DATE: May 2019

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION?

Graduate school (PhD in School Psychology @ Syracuse University)

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE CLASSES/PROFESSORS IN THE PROGRAM?

I loved special topics in neuropsychology but it was very difficult (got a B+), loved PSY444 and PSY412 (easy-ish A's) and for research my honours thesis was with Dr. Weinberg, which was challenging but taught me so much about writing and grad school, also worked in Dr. Eve-Marie Quintins lab which was AMAZING, truly the reason I am in grad school today

WHAT SKILLS DID YOU ACQUIRE IN THE COGNITIVE SCIENCE PROGRAM THAT ARE RELEVANT TO WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW?

Interdisciplinary perspectives, discussion based classes (ie Harnads class is very similar to grad school IMO)

PLEASE PROVIDE ANY GENERAL ADVICE FOR CURRENT COGNITIVE SCIENCE STUDENTS.

Get involved! Do the SACS leadership! Do research!!!!!!



Response #9

STREAM(S): Double major

GRADUATION DATE: 2018

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION?

Bank of Canada, Research Assistant

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVOURITE CLASSES/PROFESSORS IN THE PROGRAM?

Basc 201

WHAT SKILLS DID YOU ACQUIRE IN THE COGNITIVE SCIENCE PROGRAM THAT ARE RELEVANT TO WHAT YOU ARE DOING NOW?

Compsci

PLEASE PROVIDE ANY GENERAL ADVICE FOR CURRENT COGNITIVE SCIENCE STUDENTS.

Get engaged in extra curriculars and talk with your profs!