

July 2, 2014

Dear Prospective Student:

Thanks for your interest in our graduate programs. The Admissions Committee is eager to review your application materials. In all cases, their goal is to facilitate a ‘best fit’ between students and supervisors so I encourage you to make it very clear why you are a great candidate for the Master’s or Ph.D. program in the Institute.

You will find lots of relevant and useful information on our website, so I won’t repeat it all here. Instead, I will tell you a bit more about our programs, to help potential applicants choose the one that best suits their backgrounds and interests. I also hope that this letter will inform you about the exciting opportunities that are available in the Institute.

Ph.D. in Cognitive Science

Our Ph.D. program started in 1997 – to date, we have graduated more than 20 outstanding individuals who have done original work on topics as diverse as spatial memory, language processing in individuals with brain damage, cognitive tunneling, primate theory-of-mind, models of human information processing, psychophysics of decision making, and processing of anaphoric reference. These graduates are currently employed in a variety of governmental, university, and private sector settings – most pursuing research in related fields. We are extremely proud of them. Each year, we look forward to welcoming a new group of between 5 and 8 students. Our Ph.D. program is the only one in Canada that is associated with a stand-alone Cognitive Science department. Although other disciplines contribute greatly to Cognitive Science at Carleton, we are able to offer a wide range of courses through the Institute that are designed with Cognitive Science students in mind. Thus, our students quickly develop a strong sense of themselves as Cognitive Scientists. They present their work (and win prizes) at the premier conference for the interdisciplinary field of Cognitive Science (i.e., the Cognitive Science Society) as well as attending other conferences and meetings that are more specialized. Students who already have a Master’s degree in a related discipline (Experimental Psychology, Philosophy, Linguistics, or Artificial Intelligence) are typically admitted to the Ph.D. program with only a few additional requirements. Students who are applying with an undergraduate degree will be required to complete the MCogSc first (see below).

Master of Cognitive Science (MCogSc)

The first cohorts of students were admitted to the Masters program in 2010. We designed this degree to be flexible, so that we could accommodate both students who already have a background in Cognitive Science and those who are new to the discipline. Accordingly, the program includes two streams – Thesis or Project. In both streams students learn about the discipline of Cognitive Science in a proseminar course (CGSC 5100) and take at least one of the

two methodology courses that are offered (Experimental CGSC 5101 or Computational CGSC 5102). *Students who graduate from either stream will be prepared to go on to Ph.D. programs in Cognitive Science or in the discipline of their research focus (e.g., Psychology, Philosophy, Computer Science, or Linguistics).* How, then, do the two streams differ?

In the ***Thesis*** stream of the MCogSc, students complete three additional one-semester courses in Cognitive Science or related disciplines and a major research project in collaboration with their supervisor (i.e., the MCogSc Thesis). This program is designed to be similar to research Master's degrees in areas such as Experimental Psychology, Psycholinguistics, or Computer Science. The emphasis is on development of students' research skills and application of those skills to an interesting question in Cognitive Science. Most students who plan to do a Ph.D. and those who enter with an undergraduate degree in Cognitive Science will follow the Thesis stream, but the decision will depend on the individual and his or her goals. Students who plan to enter the workforce directly after the Master's may find that the Project stream is more suited to their goals.

In the ***Project*** stream of the MCogSc, students also take the proseminar and a methods course, as well as six additional one-semester courses in Cognitive Science or related disciplines. They also will complete a significant research project (roughly equivalent in scope to an honours thesis) where, as part of a research team that is guided by an experienced faculty member, they will address a specific issue or question that is typically part of a broader research agenda. For example, students may participate projects on the role of distraction in driving; explore the neurolinguistics of prosody using ERP; help test theories of memory for people learning mathematics; study the role of opaque contexts for children's language development; or explore the question of how to model a simple game such as 'rock, paper, scissors'.

Regardless of whether students chose the Thesis or Project stream, they will interact with the other Cognitive Scientists (students, faculty members, and visiting scholars) who are involved in the Institute. Students are required to attend talks by famous and not-so-famous (but fascinating) researchers in a wide range of disciplines linked to Cognitive Science. They can join the Cognitive Science Students Association and participate in a variety of activities organized by (and for) their fellow students.

When you are considering our programs, please take the time to contact the researchers whose work excites you. You will have the best experience, and make the best progress, if you are informed about the opportunities that are available. Feel free to contact the Graduate Supervisor ([Dr. John Logan](#)) if you have specific questions about the program, or the Graduate Administrator ([Mrs. Liane Dubreuil](#)) for information about the application process.

Along with all the other faculty and staff in the Institute, I look forward each year to welcoming a new group of people who are eager to learn about the fascinating interdisciplinary activities that constitute Cognitive Science.

Sincerely,



Jo-Anne LeFevre, Ph.D.
Director, Institute of Cognitive Science