
VISTA Trainee Welcome Package

Welcome from VISTA's Scientific Director

Greetings and welcome to York University's Vision Science to Application (VISTA) Program.

About VISTA

VISTA is a collaborative research program funded by the Canada First Research Excellence Fund (CFREF). VISTA builds on York University's world leading interdisciplinary expertise in biological and computer vision with over 80 academic, public, and for-profit partners.

VISTA's Mission

Our mission is to advance vision science through computational and biological research perspectives and to produce applications that generate positive economic, societal, health and technological impacts for Canada and the world.

Our Team

- [VISTA Staff](#) – click this link to find out who to reach out to in the VISTA Office
- [VISTA Researchers](#) – follow this link for a list of our members and their research areas

VISTA Resources

- The [VISTA website](#) is the main resource for all your VISTA related questions. If you cannot find the answers you're looking for please email us at adminvista@yorku.ca.

Communication

- There are several mailing lists that you should join to receive up to date information about events, program requirements, opportunities, etc.
- VISTA has two trainee related listservs – please reach out to adminvista@yorku.ca to be added to the lists as soon as possible
- Other relevant lists you should join:
 - Yorkvis@yorku.ca – General vision related news at York
 - CVR@yorku.ca – Centre for Vision Research news – reach out to cvr@yorku.ca to be added to this list.
 - FGSnews@yorku.ca – most graduate students are automatically added but if you aren't receiving these messages email them with your student ID requesting to join.
 - Check with your supervisors to see if your home department or Faculty have any other relevant lists you should join.

Graduate student (Masters & PhD) Resources

Visit the [Faculty of Graduate Studies incoming student website](#). This [page](#) will assist you in preparing for your graduate career at York in conjunction with orientation events offered by your individual program.

Resources include:

- **Checklist:** Use this list to assist you in preparing for your graduate career at York and help ensure a smooth transition to campus life.
- **YU Start Program** is your primary online resource for preparing for your academic journey at York. It includes a Discussion Board for incoming students to connect with other students and have your questions answered.
- **Housing:** There are a variety of housing options for graduate students while studying at York. Several campus options, as well as Toronto's many vibrant neighborhoods and downtown core.
- **Student Administrative responsibilities:** Incoming graduate students are encouraged to complete all applicable administrative responsibilities (i.e., [Setting up Passport York](#), [Email Account](#), [YU-card](#), [Parking](#), and [Keys](#)).

York University's Graduate Student Association (YUGSA)

The YUGSA is the students' union, committed to representing graduate students' interests and advancing students' and workers' rights across and beyond York's campuses. Please visit <https://www.yugsa.ca/services> for a detailed list of services provided by the YUGSA.

Health Plan

The [YUGSA Health and Dental plan](#) is **mandatory** for all full-time graduate students without an alternate coverage and is optional for part time students. All full-time students will be automatically enrolled in the plan and the GSA Healthcare charge will appear in their student accounts. Part time students can join the plan by opting into it. Complete coverage details are available at [your benefits](#).

International graduate students:

University Health Insurance Plan

The University Health Insurance Plan ([UHIP](#)) is a mandatory basic coverage plan that is in place for international students and others who are not covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). Students who must be covered under UHIP include:

- International students with a valid study permit registered as active in a degree program
- Incoming exchange students
- Dependent(s), spouse and/or children, of eligible students
- International Visiting Research Trainees with a valid work permit

International students who are registered as active in a degree program are automatically enrolled under UHIP. However, this year, since a lot of international students are studying from their home

countries, only students who are in Canada this year will be enrolled or charged for UHIP. For further information please email: uhip@yorku.ca.

Additional York University Resources

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION and LINK
Student Guide to Remote Learning	We've created this guide to help you find the resources and supports to successfully navigate being a remote learner.
COVID-19 Wellbeing Resources	Supporting Students in the transition to online learning and social/physical distancing. Explore our wealth of COVID-19 resources now.
Student Counselling & Health Well-Being	Student Counselling & Development (SCD) offers a range of supports to students including Walk-in Counselling, Emergency Support, Short-term Counselling, Process Group Counselling and LGBTQ2S+ Support.
Student Health & Well-Being Workshops	Need better sleep? Want to learn self-care practices for those with perfectionist tendencies? Tired of figuring out what food is actually "healthy"? Our team of peer health educators offer a wide range of health topics to help you feel your very best. Drop-in to any of our ongoing workshops. Visit our calendar
Maps & Directions	For complete details about traveling to York University please refer to the Keele Campus section of the Maps & Directions page.
Parking	For parking information please refer to the Parking Services site.
Safety Support Services	There are a number of different resources and services available to help keep our community safe and provide support to community members. Please refer to them on the Safety website .
York University Libraries	Library Accessibility Services continues to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, in-person services are not available. Assistance with research and library inquiries are currently offered online via chat service, Zoom and email. If you'd like to connect with a York library staff, please visit the Ask a Question page for contact details.
York International	York International provides assistance to all international students, as well as domestic students. This link provides a guide to help you navigate the process of coming to Canada and keep you fully informed about your responsibilities as an international student. Here, you will find information regarding immigration, health insurance, health care, work, and finance.

Post Doc Resources

Visit the [Faculty of Graduate Studies postdoctoral fellows website](#). This page will assist you in preparing for your postdoctoral journey at York and will support postdoctoral scholars both during their time at York, and in their pursuit of future professional success.

Resources include:

- **Checklist:** Use this list to assist you in preparing for your postdoctoral journey at York and help ensure a smooth transition to campus life.
- **YU Start Program** is your primary online resource for preparing for your academic journey at York. It includes a Discussion Board for incoming fellows to connect with other students and have your questions answered.
- **Housing:** There are a variety of housing options for postdoc students while studying at York. Several campus options, as well as Toronto's many vibrant neighborhoods and downtown core.
- **Administrative responsibilities:** Incoming postdoc fellows are encouraged to complete all applicable administrative responsibilities (i.e., [Setting up Passport York](#), [Email Account](#), [YU-card](#), [Parking](#), and [Keys](#)).

York University Faculty Association (YUFA)

The York University Faculty Association (YUFA) is the professional association and certified bargaining agent for faculty, librarians and archivists, and post-doctoral visitors at York University. Please visit [YUFA website](#) for detailed information about YUFA.

Health Plan

All postdoctoral Visitors (PDV) at York University are provided with extended health care benefits, as per the 2015-2018 York University Faculty Association (YUFA) Collective Agreement. These benefits will be provided in the form of a Health Care Spending Account containing \$1,200 from which the PDV will be reimbursed for expenditures on health, dental, vision and other medical expenses that qualify for the medical expense tax credit as defined by the Income Tax Act. Please note that PDVs have access to up to \$1,200 annually, which is accessible at a rate of \$100 per month and prorated for the length of the PDV contract. \$100 increments are accessible on the 1st of the month, on a cumulative basis.

For more details, please refer to [Healthcare Spending Account](#) Information sheet.

International Postdoc Fellows:

Health Plan

All Ontario residents are required to have basic medical coverage through [OHIP \(the Ontario Health Insurance Plan\)](#).

If applicable, Postdoctoral Fellows must apply for coverage directly from OHIP upon arrival in Ontario. Please note that there is a three-calendar-month waiting period prior to enrollment with OHIP.

- During the waiting period, we encourage Postdoctoral Fellows to arrange for coverage through [UHIP](#) which is offered by Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada.
- After 3 months, you can register for Ontario's Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) at the Service Ontario ([777 Bay Street Offices](#) deal with internationals).
- For PDFs, [York International](#) can advise and [assist with regard to health insurance](#).
- For PDVs, Pension & Benefits (askpb@yorku.ca) will provide the UHIP enrolment form.

Social Insurance Number (SIN)

Get your [social insurance number](#) (SIN) from a Service Ontario Office (either right at Pearson airport, or somewhere in the city). You'll need the SIN for finalizing your work contract, opening a bank account, getting a phone plan etc.

Driver's Licence

If you have an international driver's licence, it is valid only for 3 months in Ontario. Please visit [Driver's licence page](#) for more details.

- Ontario has a graduated licensing program with mandatory test and wait-time requirements. Drivers with valid foreign licences may qualify for reductions in these mandatory test and wait-time prerequisites if they meet certain requirements. Please visit [Foreign Licence Experience Credits](#) for more details on this. To apply for a new licence please refer to the guidelines [here](#).
- [The Official Ministry of Transportation \(MTO\) Driver's Handbook](#) can be used to study for your G1 driver's licence, knowledge test and Level 2 road test.

Permanent Residency

After working in Canada for 12 months, you might be eligible to apply for [Permanent Residency](#) under the express entry program. You can find more information on the process on [Express Entry](#) webpage.

- Additional resources related to application can be found York International's [Immigration Application Resources](#) page.
- Please note collecting all documents can take up to 2-3 months and the application processing time usually takes 6+ months.

Professional Development

There are a range of resources on campus that can help you develop and enrich your professional skills, whether those are related to teaching or research, or other skills which are useful and desirable in both academic and non-academic professional contexts.

- The Faculty of Graduate Studies coordinates the [Graduate & Postdoctoral Professional Skills \(GPPS\) program](#), which is designed for both postdoctoral fellows and graduate students. The program offers skills development workshops and sessions designed based on input and feedback from the communities they serve.

- [Mitacs Training](#) Workshops are free workshops taught by professionals and are structured around cultivating and improving important professional skills.
- Resources and workshops related to teaching are listed on the website of York's [Teaching Commons](#).
- York University Libraries (YUL) hosts the [Learning Commons](#), which offers regular academic support services and workshops.
- The [Career Centre](#) offers resources and workshops related to the job search and professional development.
- [York's research centres and institutes](#) offer workshops, seminar series, and other opportunities for professional development.

Additional York University Resources

Please refer "[Additional York University Resources](#)" table under the Graduate Student Resources as those resources also apply to postdocs.

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION and LINK	
Concur (Expense Claim Reimbursement)	Allowed expenses will be reimbursed when incurred in accordance with the prescribed Hospitality policy and procedure . Visit Expense Reimbursement for more details. Most commonly used account codes:	
	402500 - Travel-General-Other	406000 – Functions-Campus
	301000 – Office-Supplies-General	305000 – Teaching & Research Supplies
Smartbuy (Procurement)	Sm@rtBuy is the one stop shop for office supplies, computers, scientific supplies, and catering. Key contact: smartbuy@yorku.ca	
FAQs	Refer some Frequently Asked Questions here .	

VISTA Team

VISTA Team Member	Responsible for	Resources
Tara Tharani (VISTA Operations Manager)	Managing and supporting with scholarships, fellowships, and travel awards.	VISTA Opportunities
Rachel Sung (Mitacs + Industry Engagement Coordinator)	Connecting companies with researchers to develop collaborative research projects that solve real-world technical and business problems.	Mitacs
Olivia Zheng (VISTA Senior Finance Manager)	Project's financial administration and budget allocation in accordance with policies and guidelines.	Reimbursements

VISTA Team Member	Responsible for	Resources
	Expense claims, requisitions, Concur, Sm@rtBuy and eReports	Smartbuy (Procurement)
Dr. Diana Gorbet (MRI Analysis Advisor)	Experimental design for MRI Studies MRI analysis guidance Designing of analysis pipelines Teaching a variety of analysis techniques	York MRI Facility
Dr. Xiaogang Yang (Workshop Supervisor)	Experimental technical support, workshop supervision and helping with experimental hardware or software issues	
Chris Giverin (Workshop Technician)		
Yaser Kerachian (Commercialization Manager)	Helping researchers bring their early-stage intellectual property from the lab to the market through technology licensing and start-up creation. Organizing: VISTA Innovation Seminar Series and Innovation & Technology Symposium	Innovation Seminar Series Innovation & Technology Symposium
Shanaa Modchalingam (VISTA Trainee Representative)	Representing your voice at the VISTA Leadership Meeting, facilitating communication and available opportunities and creating a social community around VISTA.	Discord Channel
Kim McIntyre (Postdoctoral Services Coordinator)	Providing support regarding various services available for Postdoctoral fellows.	Postdoctoral Services

VISTA events Calendar:

<https://vista.info.yorku.ca/events/>

York University events Calendar:

<https://events.yorku.ca/>

Join our social media community!

- On Twitter @vistayorku & @CentreforVisio1
- On LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/13738198/>
- On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/485865682345037>
- On Discord: <https://discord.gg/E9kuZwHGZb>

Note: This welcome package is meant to provide an overview about the many resources available for incoming VISTA Scholars. It will guide them to lead their way in collecting information relevant for them.