### BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

- Help-seeking is a fundamental part of the learning process and help-seeking behaviour has been shown to predict student achievement (e.g., Byun, Pinnell, & Midgley, 2001).
- Using the 2 x 2 achievement goal framework (Elliot & McGregor, 2000) which distinguishes between approach and avoidance tendencies toward both mastery and performance goals, research has typically found that mastery-approach goals are the most strongly linked to instrumental help-seeking behaviour (e.g., Rosent et al., 2011). Most of this research has been conducted in K-12 classrooms.
- The typical university student has access to numerous help sources, including face-to-face and technology-mediated help from both professors and peers.
- Research examining whether students prefer to seek help in person or via technology has resulted in mixed findings. While some studies have found that students prefer to seek help from computers over people (Kuzabnec & Knapp, 1988), more recent work has found that students prefer face-to-face over technology-mediated help (Reeves & Sperling, 2015). Other research has suggested that the preference for face-to-face versus technology-mediated help may depend on who is providing the help. Specifically, Makara & Kuzabnec (2013) found that students prefer face-to-face help from peers and technology-mediated help from instructors.

### METHOD

- 163 students (126 female, $M_{age} = 19.21$, $SD_{age} = 3.26$) from Introductory Psychology participated in exchange for experimental credit. A majority of the participants (77%) were in their first year of university.

#### Part 1

- Participants completed the 12-item Achievement Goals Questionnaire (revisted-AGQ; Elliot & Murayama, 2008), as well as questions regarding their help-seeking behaviours and preferences, GPA, and demographics. Sample items from the AGQ are included in the table of the 2 x 2 achievement goal model. Three items are used to assess each goal. Participants indicate their agreement with each item on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). For help-seeking behaviours, participants indicated how often (from 1 – never to 7 – frequently) they had completed the behavior.

#### Part 2

- Participants were randomly assigned to one of four help-seeking scenarios. In all of the scenarios, the students are asked to imagine that they are studying for their PSY100 final exam when they come across some difficult material and realize that they will need some help. The student then recalls a particular source of help (professor or peers) that is available to them either face-to-face (office hours/study group) or online (discussion board). For example, the Peer-Face-to-Face scenario reads “You recall that your friends mentioned peer study groups that are available for you to ask questions to your classmates directly.”
- After reading the scenario, participants are then asked about the perceived costs and benefits of seeking this particular form of help.

### RESULTS

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the AGQ**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>5.21</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>5.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correlation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significant correlations at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Part 1: Achievement Goals & Help-Seeking Behaviours**

| Item                                                                 | Mastery-Approach | Mastery-Avoidance | Performance-Approach | Performance-Avoidance | F (1, 159) | p*
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------|--------
| I have attended a professor’s office hours                          | 2.53             | 3.10              | 3.49                 | 2.59                  | 2.46       | 0.125  |
| I have asked a professor a question during office hours             | 1.71             | 1.75              | 1.54                 | 1.62                  | 0.09       | 0.76   |
| I have attended a professor’s class                                 | 0.74             | 0.74              | 0.86                 | 0.89                  | 0.75       | 0.386  |
| I have asked a professor a question during class                    | 1.34             | 1.34              | 0.70                 | 0.70                  | 0.36       | 0.55   |
| I have asked a professor a question on the discussion board       | 1.10             | 1.10              | 0.70                 | 0.70                  | 0.36       | 0.55   |

*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Part 2: Perceived Benefits and Costs of Different Help-Seeking Behaviours**

**Key Takeaways:**

- Seeking face-to-face help from professors is positively associated with achievement. However, this type of help-seeking behaviour is relatively uncommon and has the highest perceived costs.
- In contrast, receiving face-to-face help from peers is perceived as having the greatest perceived benefits and lowest perceived costs.
- Establishing greater forms of high quality face-to-face peer support may be of particular benefit to students.