

Psychology Department Undergraduate Honors Thesis Guidelines and Requirements

Why do it?

The honors thesis provides students with in-depth exposure to scholarship and professional activity that cannot be paralleled by any classroom experience. The thesis allows students to explore a topic thoroughly, generate knowledge and contribute to their field. The thesis can satisfy intellectual curiosity, promote creativity and intellectual maturation, and expose students to graduate school expectations and potential careers. The thesis encourages the development of several important academic and professional skills, such as critical analysis, oral and written communication, problem solving, and time management. The thesis also affords students the opportunity to develop a relationship with their professors, who can enrich their intellectual development. The thesis improves student marketability by providing students with professional experience, detailed meaningful reference letters from their mentor, and a tangible product to show admissions committees and prospective employers.

Eligible students

Junior or senior honors students who are Psychology majors or Psychology minors who also have completed at least three upper division classes. Non-honors students that meet the Honors College requirements (i.e., minimum 3.3 GPA and in good standing) are also eligible. Students who do not meet these requirements may submit a petition to the Director of Undergraduate Studies to waive the requirements. This petition should include a letter of recommendation from the prospective mentor.

Eligible mentors

Any full-time Psychology Faculty member may supervise a Psychology Honors thesis.

Timeline

Students typically apprentice in a research laboratory for at least 1 semester prior to conducting a thesis. The actual thesis project may take 2-3 semesters to complete. The duration of the thesis depends on many factors, such as the amount of time needed to 1) review the literature, 2) develop a research question, 3) obtain approvals from the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC; for research involving non-human animals) or Institutional Review Board (IRB; for research involving human participants), 4) become proficient with the necessary skills, 5) conduct the research and analyze results, and 6) write the thesis.

Students are expected to meet regularly with their faculty mentor to set goals and deadlines, discuss progress, and provide feedback.

The product

The honors thesis will be an APA-style paper whose approximate length is 20 double-spaced pages, inclusive of references (exact length may vary).

Model 1: An empirical thesis

In this model, students either collect new data or analyze existing data to address a research question. The written product includes an Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Reference Section. The amount of time needed to complete an empirical thesis is more substantial than the amount expected in a 1-semester class. In many cases, students will analyze data that has already been collected in the faculty supervisor's lab. Students who collect new data will likely need 3 semesters to complete the thesis.

Model 2: A critical literature review

In this model, the student summarizes, synthesizes and critiques the published scientific literature on a particular topic in psychology. The review could include a new interpretation of the findings, a timeline of the progression of knowledge, or themes. The overall goal of the critical literature review is not only to demonstrate comprehensive, sophisticated knowledge of the current literature on a particular topic, but also to create new understanding of previous findings.

Evaluation

The thesis will be evaluated by a committee comprised of the mentor and a second reader. The Psychology Department Honors College Liaison, in consultation with the mentor, will assign the second reader. Typically, faculty who are members of the Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee and/or affiliates of the Honors College will serve on thesis committees. The following checklist will be used to evaluate the thesis. The committee will consult with each other to determine the final grade, and the Honors College Liaison will determine the final grade in cases where committee members cannot agree.

Oral Presentation

The student will present the honors thesis orally. The presentation will be open to GSU Psychology majors, GSU faculty, and other members of the public (e.g., parents, family members) invited by the student. The formal presentation should be about 15 minutes, with an additional 5 minutes to answer questions). The oral presentation is required, but not evaluated. That is, the quality of the oral presentation does not count towards the grade; however, students must give the oral presentation to complete the thesis project.

Coursework and deadlines

Students are required to enroll in at least 3 CR of PSYC 4880 the semester they intend to complete their thesis. Students may elect to enroll in PSYC 4870 during the semesters prior to that, if they are actively engaged in thesis activities. The exact number of credit hours and whether to enroll in 4870 depends on variables such as the student's schedule, financial constraints, and/or mentor requirements.

Students must notify the Honors College of their intent to conduct an honors thesis by completing the online [Intent to Conduct a Thesis Form](http://honors.gsu.edu/intent-conduct-honors-thesis/) <http://honors.gsu.edu/intent-conduct-honors-thesis/>, which requires that students 1) identify the faculty member who has agreed to supervise their project, 2) write a 200-word summary of their project, and 3) provide a tentative title for their project. If a student needs to register for 4870 or 4880, then this form is due **April 1** for summer registration, **August 1** for fall registration, and **December 1** for spring registration. Students who do not need to register should submit this form as soon as they begin the thesis. *NOTE: Students MUST register for at least 3 credit hour of 4880 the semester that they intend to complete their thesis.

No later than 1 month prior to the last day of classes the student will turn in the completed honors thesis to her/his faculty mentor and Psychology Department Honors College Liaison, who will distribute to the second reader.

The oral presentation will occur after the student turns in a complete draft, but before the last day of classes on a date set by the Psychology Department Honors College Liaison.

Students who receive a passing grade must notify the Honors College that they have successfully completed their honors thesis by completing the [Certification of Successful Completion Form](http://honors.gsu.edu/certification-successful-completion-honors-thesis/) (<http://honors.gsu.edu/certification-successful-completion-honors-thesis/>). This form is due by **the last day of final exams during the semester in which the thesis is completed.**

Honors College support

Honors College students participating in Honors Thesis are eligible to borrow a laptop computer from the Honors College for the semester, contingent on availability. These students may also apply for financial support to present at conferences and purchase supplies for their research. In addition, there are several workshops held in the Honors College each semester to provide support to Honors College students engaged in research and theses activities. The Faculty Associate for Research and Theses and the Research Program Coordinator are available to advise students and their mentors.

Questions

Contact the Psychology Department Psychology Department Honors College Liaison, the Honors College Undergraduate Research Program Coordinator, and the Honors College Faculty Associate for Research and Theses.

Psychology Honors Thesis Rubric

Please provide a rating of 1 = excellent, 2 = satisfactory and 3 = unsatisfactory for the following:

Skill	Rating	Comment
Demonstrated an understanding of scientific literature.		
Critiqued and analyzed scientific studies and presented integrated synthesis		
Demonstrated an understanding of scientific terminology		
Used concepts in psychology to describe, explain, and evaluate phenomena and to generate a research question and, for empirical theses, formulate a testable hypothesis		
Used appropriate methods to answer research question/hypothesis		
Demonstrated understanding of the scientific method		
Communicated effectively in written form		
Demonstrated understanding of results and their interpretation		
The thesis was consistent with APA style and free of typographical and grammatical errors		

Recommended grade: _____