

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 committee, 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 Honors Thesis Coordinator 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. The approximate length of the thesis is 20 double-spaced pages, inclusive of references (exact length may vary). The student may write the thesis in the style of a manuscript to be submitted for publication or of a paper to be submitted for a class assignment.

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 at least 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.

Thesis Committee

The thesis is completed under the direction of a committee consisting of a chair and two additional members. At least one of the other members must be a faculty member (including joint appointment faculty) from the Department of Psychology. One of the members may be a graduate student enrolled in a doctoral program in Psychology. The student will work with the thesis chair to identify committee members with relevant areas of expertise and/or who have worked closely with the student in other capacities (e.g., instructor, service role). The idea is to build relationships with faculty and other professionals who have similar research interests and/or know you in multiple contexts. Faculty members on the Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee and/or affiliates of the Honors College are also good choices for serving on thesis committees.

The student, in consultation with his or her committee chair, will submit a **Thesis Committee Nomination form** (see below) to the Honors Coordinator.

Evaluation of Thesis

The thesis will be evaluated by the thesis committee. Each committee member will complete the Thesis Rubric and submit it to the Honors College Liaison. The committee will consult with each other to determine the final grade for the thesis, and the Honors College Liaison will determine the final grade in cases where committee members cannot agree.

Oral Defense

The student is required to 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 5-10 minutes, with an additional 5 minutes to answer questions). The oral defense is required, but is not graded.

Required Coursework

Students are required to enroll in at least 1 CR of PSYC 4880 the semester they intend to complete their thesis. Students may elect to enroll in PSYC 4870 (1-6 CR) 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.

Deadlines

Intent to Conduct a Thesis

Students must notify the Psychology Department Honors Liaison and 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 1 credit hour of 4880 the semester that they intend to complete their thesis.

Thesis Committee Formation

The thesis committee nomination form is due to the Honors College Liaison no later than 5pm on the Friday of the the first week of classes of the semester in which the student plans to complete the thesis, although students are encouraged to form the committee as soon as possible.

Final Paper

No later than 1 month prior to the last day of classes the student will turn in the completed honors thesis to her/his committee and the Psychology Department Honors College Liaison.

Evaluation of Thesis

Each committee member will complete the Thesis Rubric (below) within two weeks of receiving the final paper and turn in to the Honors College Liaison. The chair of the committee will share the feedback with the student and committee members.

Oral Defense

The oral defense will occur on the first Friday in April or December or on a date set by the Psychology Department Honors College Liaison.

Honors College Notification of Successful Completion of Thesis

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.

Petition for Extenuating Circumstances

The student may request an adjustment to these guidelines to address extenuating circumstances. The petition for an adjustment should describe a specific request, the reason for the request, and whether the thesis chair supports the request, The petition should be emailed to the Honors College Liaison and the faculty mentor.

Required attendance at Honors Thesis Sessions

Students are required to attend three 2-hr sessions led by the Honors College Thesis Team each semester that they are working on their honors thesis. The three sessions are held at the beginning, middle and end of the semester. The last session is the Thesis Pitch, which is an oral competition event where students have 3 minutes to communicate the importance of their research. Presenting at the Thesis Pitch is voluntary, but attendance is required.

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 to the three required sessions, 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 Research Program Coordinator is available to advise students and their mentors.

Questions

Please contact the Psychology Department Psychology Department Honors College Liaison or the Honors College Undergraduate Research Program Coordinator.

Psychology Honors Thesis Rubric
Return completed rubric to Psychology Department Honors Liaison

Date:

Student Name:

Committee Chair:

Committee Member 2:

Committee Member 3:

Rate each of the following using 1 = excellent, 2 = satisfactory and 3 = unsatisfactory

Skill	Rating
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	

Please provide feedback about the thesis, especially feedback about the student that can be included in a reference letter to prospective admissions committees or employers:

Recommended grade: A+ A A- B+ B B- C+ C C- D F

Signature:

Psychology Department Honors Thesis Committee Nomination Form

The thesis is completed under the direction of a committee consisting of a chair and two additional members. At least one of the other members must be a faculty member (including joint appointment faculty) from the Department of Psychology. The third member may be a person who has a faculty appointment in a department at Georgia State University or another university or research institution or a graduate student enrolled in a doctoral program in psychology. The student will work with the thesis chair to identify committee members with relevant areas of expertise and/or who have worked closely with the student in other capacities (e.g., instructor, service to the department). The idea is to build relationships with faculty and other professionals who have similar research interests and/or know you in multiple contexts. Faculty members that are on the Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee, full-time Lecturers, and/or affiliates of the Honors College are good choices for serving on thesis committees.

Tentative Thesis Title (required):

Thesis Abstract (required, maximum 500 words):

Committee Chair (required):

Member 2 (required):

Member 3 (required):

Explain how each of the members satisfies the department's rules and intentions for the composition of the committee (required, maximum 200 words):

Format of thesis: Manuscript style or paper for class