

Psychology Department: Guidelines for Departmental Honors

Departmental Honors in Psychology is available for exceptionally able and motivated students. Receipt of honors requires the completion of a major scholarly project (i.e., largely independent under the supervision of faculty), representing a culmination of scholarly activity within the major. Honors may be awarded to students who declare themselves in their junior year, are approved by department faculty as candidates, and who successfully complete an honors project judged to be outstanding by the student's honors committee.

Students who wish to receive Departmental Honors in Psychology must meet the following criteria: [Note: Johnston students must meet the same requirements and follow the same procedure/timeline as outlined below for PSYC majors to be an honors candidate.]

A. Declaration

1. Declare themselves candidates for departmental honors ideally in their junior year (but no later than the second week of the first semester of their senior year, no exceptions) by submitting an Honors Screening Application (the honors application is available in the Psychology office and can also be downloaded from the department's website).
2. Obtain primary project supervisor and Department Chair endorsement (or an alternate faculty member appointed by the Department Chair if s/he will be a member of the honors committee).
3. Form an Honors Committee (three or more faculty, at least two, including the primary project supervisor, from the Psychology department).
4. Enroll in PSYC 470 for 2-3 units in the first semester of their senior year and (upon successful completion of the first semester and a unanimous vote to continue toward departmental honors by the student's honors committee) enroll in PSYC 499 for 2-3 units in the second semester of senior year.

B. Minimum grade point averages will be in accordance with University standards and maintained through time of graduation.

1. Grade point average at or above 3.45 for all University work.
2. Grade point average of 3.45 or above in Psychology coursework.

C. Acceptable projects for departmental honors need to make an original contribution to the literature and be based in one of the following areas:

1. Empirical research [including collecting your own original data, analyzing data from an archival source (e.g., National Archive of Criminal Justice Data or other internet data source for social scientists), or conducting a meta-analysis]
2. Theoretical or analytical thesis [using the literature to analyze and answer a specific question; samples of these types of papers are available in the Psychology office]

D. Procedure

1. Declare yourself a candidate for honors in your junior year and form honors committee.
2. Present a written proposal to your honors committee during the first two weeks of your first senior semester (see below for guidelines to writing an honors proposal).
3. Schedule a formal proposal meeting for the week following submission of your written proposal.
4. Obtain unanimous approval of your proposal from members of your honors committee.
5. Obtain IRB approval of the research (if conducting an empirical project).

6. Meet regularly with all honors committee members throughout the research process, obtain their unanimous approval for any modifications or additions to your research plan, their unanimous permission to continue toward departmental honors at the end of the first semester in order to enroll in PSYC 499 for the second semester, and their feedback on the final paper.
7. Submit the final paper in APA format to your honors committee during the last week of February for feedback regarding final revisions.
8. Upon completion of revisions, schedule the formal oral defense for the end of March (consult the Registrar's Office for deadline to submit approved honors paperwork for publication in commencement program).

E. Receipt of Departmental Honors

1. The honors committee (by unanimous vote) will determine whether (i) the proposed project is suitable for honors at the beginning of the student's senior year; (ii) the project is on track to qualify for honors at the end of the first semester, and (iii) the final manuscript and oral defense are of sufficient quality for departmental honors.
2. In order to receive departmental honors, the candidate must:
 - a. Display an exceptional grasp of the relevant research literature, as well intellectual insight, and original thought.
 - b. Be able to explain and critique key terms, concepts, and methodology in an informed and coherent manner.
 - c. Demonstrate the ability to apply and interpret relevant statistical analysis.
 - d. Present the work in a written paper of professional quality (in APA-style) as well as a clear, concise, and logically organized oral presentation and defense of the research project.

Guide to Writing Honors Research Proposal

The Honors Research Proposal is a statement of interest and direction pursuant to an honors research project. Although the proposal is not a detailed project description it must indicate the delineation of a specific area of research, sufficient preliminary background in the research topic (i.e., at least 10 references), the identification of research objectives, and statement of the method in which the research will be conducted. For empirical projects, this includes a description of the proposed methodology to collect data and a statement of how the data will be analyzed. For theoretical/analytical projects, this includes proposing a clear question and an annotated outline illustrating how the question will be answered.

Research proposals are due no later than the second week of the first semester of the student's senior year. Name, address, phone number, and committee members' names must be on the cover sheet of the proposal. The Honors Research Proposal must first be unanimously approved by the members of the student's honors committee. For empirical projects, after obtaining approval from the honors committee, a research application must be submitted to the IRB (and approved) before data collection can begin.

In addition to the cover sheet, the Research Proposal must include a Project Title, Introduction, Method, and Reference Section. Research proposals must be typed, a minimum of five pages, and not exceed ten pages (double-spaced).

Psychology Department: Timeline for Departmental Honors

Spring semester of junior year – declare self as candidate for honors

Select a topic, submit an Honors Screening Application, and form honors committee. Topic must be approved by primary project supervisor and the Department Chair (or an alternate faculty member appointed by the Department Chair if s/he is a member of your honors committee). Honors committee must consist of three or more faculty (at least two, including the primary project supervisor, from the Psychology department).

During summer between junior and senior year – conduct literature review and work on the research proposal

Fall semester of senior year – design research study and collect data

Second week of Fall semester – research proposal due

Individual copies of the proposal must be submitted to the department secretary and to each committee member. Refer to the Guide to Writing Honors Research Proposal (above) for specific requirements for the research proposal.

Third week of Fall semester – formal proposal meeting

Present your proposal (oral presentation) in a formal committee meeting one week following submission of the written proposal to the committee members.

ASAP after proposal approved by committee – submit application to IRB

For empirical projects, an IRB application must be submitted by the October IRB meeting (check IRB website for deadlines).

End of Fall semester – reading and data collection complete

Present project update (oral presentation) in a formal committee meeting for approval to continue with honors project.

Spring semester of senior year – analyze data and write final paper

Last week in February – submit complete version of final paper in APA format to your honors committee for feedback regarding final revisions

Third week in March (or earlier, upon completion of revisions) – submit copies of the final manuscript to each committee member and to the department secretary

Last week in March – present your project in a formal oral defense

Beginning of April – submit paperwork to Registrar for publication in commencement program (consult the Registrar's Office for deadline)

***It is the student's responsibility to meet regularly with all honors committee members throughout the research process, schedule all formal committee meetings, and obtain members' feedback throughout the project. This outline presents the general timeline. Specific due dates for all aspects of the project will be discussed and set with committee members.**