Undergraduate Studies: Honours Program Information

Who Should Take the Honours Program?
The Honours Program is for students who have demonstrated strong academic performance and who plan to go on to advanced study and research in psychology or a related discipline. Students enrolled in the Psychology Honours Program will have the opportunity to participate in original research, to have close contact with faculty members, to gain valuable research training, and to prepare for graduate study.

Why Should You Take the Honours Program?
You will learn about the world of academic psychology, receive guidance on how to apply to graduate school, and receive training to prepare you to conduct graduate research. Specifically, you will learn about a range of methodological issues and approaches, receive practical information about planning and conducting research, and gain experience presenting your research in writing and orally.

Requirements for Admission to the Honours Program
All admission requirements must be completed by the June 1st application deadline. The application form and a list of faculty teaching and research interests are available on the department website: www.sfu.ca/psychology.

Application Requirements
1. Completion of 75 credit hours with a minimum CGPA of 3.33.
2. Completion of 15 SFU Psychology credits with a minimum CGPA of 3.0.
3. Completion of
   - PSYC 100, 102, 201(with a minimum grade of C), and 210
   - One course from Group A: PSYC 221, 280
   - One course from Group B: PSYC 241, 250, 260, 268, 270
   - One additional course from Group A or Group B
4. Completion of PSYC 300 and 301 with a minimum grade of B. If the applicant has not completed PSYC 301 by the application deadline, the following additional requirements must be met:
   - The applicant must submit a letter from their primary supervisor acknowledging: a) that the student will complete PSYC 301 in the Summer or Fall term; b) that the student will be withdrawn from the Honours Program if the student fails to achieve a minimum grade of B in PSYC 301; and c),that they agree to supervise the student under these conditions
   - Have an UDGPA of at least 3.67
   - Enroll in PSYC 301 in the Summer term or the Fall term concurrent with PSYC 490/PSYC 457
5. Submission of the Honours Program Application form, which includes a brief outline (two pages) of the proposal with approval and signature of a Psychology faculty member willing to supervise the Honours Project.
6. Submission of a proposal. Students must submit a brief (approximately two pages) outline of their planned project. It should describe the area of study with a few key references, the question they plan to address and a brief description of the methods and data analytic plan.

7. Submission of the Tri-Council Ethics Certificate or the Animal Care Services training (depending on the nature of your project).

**Honours Program Admission Appeal Process**

Note that students are not guaranteed admission to the Honours Program. If denied, the student can appeal through the Psychology Undergraduate Steering Committee. Appealing students would submit the following documents to the undergraduate advisor within two weeks of receiving the rejection letter:

- a letter of appeal
- a letter of support from their primary supervisor
- the original application materials

Your appeal will be reviewed by the Psychology Undergraduate Steering Committee.

**Continuation Requirements: To maintain enrollment in the Honours Program, the student must meet the following requirements:**

1. Maintain a minimum 3.0 CGPA for all courses taken each semester.
2. Maintain a minimum 3.0 CGPA for all Psychology courses taken each semester.
3. Complete PSYC 301 with a minimum grade of B.
4. Satisfactory attendance at the graduate research seminar in the appropriate graduate area while enrolled in PSYC 490/PSYC 457 and PSYC 499/PSYC 459. Honours students are expected to attend the relevant Area Seminar, normally held bimonthly, or an equivalent number of seminars (usually 5-6) from a combination of Area Seminars. Students should select the appropriate seminars in consultation with their advisor.
5. Continuing permission of the primary supervisor

Students who do not meet the requirements may be withdrawn from the program, but may apply for readmission to the program the following year.

**Completion Requirements**

1. Complete 60 upper division credit hours, of which 50 must be in upper division Psychology courses, and must include:
   PSYC 308 History and Systems of Modern Psychology (or PSYC 207)
   PSYC 490, Honours Project (Fall)*
   PSYC 499, Honours Project (Spring)

   *NOTE: No more than 9 upper division credits may be in Directed Studies courses. Up to 12 upper division credits may be approved options from other departments.

2. Meet the Bachelor of Arts Honours degree requirements of the University and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.
The Honours Project

The Honours Project is completed in two-semesters (fall/spring sequence) and it is the most important part of the Psychology Honours Program. It provides an opportunity for the student to become involved in original research. Some Honours Projects originate entirely with students; others are closely related to ongoing faculty research programs. Students may collect their own data or they may use archived data.

The proposal for the Honours Project will be developed during the Fall semester and applications for appropriate ethics or animal care certificates should be made. Students will develop a research proposal based on readings of the literature and on discussion with their supervisors. The research topic should be one that fits within generally recognized areas in psychology and behavioural neuroscience. A central question should be formulated in ways that can be answered by marshaling evidence. The evidence typically will be data collected by the student, or existing data that can be made available to the student. Because the Honours Project must be completed in two semesters, students should be careful not to choose projects that make them too dependent on the cooperation of external institutions and agencies. Together, students and their primary supervisor will identify a secondary supervisor. This secondary supervisor can be either a psychology faculty member, an adjunct faculty member in Psychology, or a faculty member in a related area approved by the Undergraduate Studies Committee.

Data collection (or analysis of secondary data) and pilot work may begin in the Fall or Spring semester. Completion of the Honours Project, which includes a written manuscript, presentation in the relevant Area Seminar, and an oral defense occurs in the Spring Semester. The examining committee for the oral defense will consist of the Primary Supervisor, the secondary supervisor, and the chair. The analyses of the data are expected to be reasonably sophisticated and critical. Students are expected to use appropriate procedures and methods and all procedures must be approved by the SFU Board of Ethics.

The Honours Project report must be written in clear English. Students should adhere to the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association for all aspects of the report including the presentation of figures, tables and references.

Although the results of many Honours Projects are presented at scientific meetings or published, producing publishable research is not the primary goal of the Honours Project. Rather, the primary goals are to develop the student's research competence through participation in original research and to demonstrate the level of research competence achieved.

PSYC 490 / PSYC 457 The Honours Seminar

PSYC 490/PSYC 457 will meet as a regularly scheduled class during the fall semester and a Psychology Department faculty member will serve as the instructor. Activities in PSYC 490/457 typically include student presentations of their Honours proposal, discussion of methodological issues, and preparation for graduate school applications (e.g., preparation of CVs and personal statements). Although students should be developing their proposal with consultation and feedback from their primary supervisor (and secondary supervisor where appropriate), the instructor of the Honours Seminar will also provide feedback on the proposal and the writing of the proposal. The grade for the proposal will be determined by the Honours Instructor of PSYC 490. Students will submit the proposal and a form signed by their supervisor indicating the readiness for submission of the proposal to the Honours Instructor according to the timeline stated in the syllabus for PSYC490.
PSYC 499/ PSYC 459

Students will enroll in PSYC 499/ PSYC 459 in the Spring semester to represent their involvement in the final semester of the Honours Project and the work conducted with the Primary and Secondary Supervisor. There is no regularly scheduled seminar associated with this course number. The final grade for PSYC499/PSYC457 will be determined by the examining committee and based on common criteria.

**Oral Defense**

Each student enrolled in PSYC 499/PSYC 459 in the Spring semester will, at a scheduled time during the examination period, present an oral defense of their project and be examined orally on the final Honours Project report. The purpose of the oral defense is to allow faculty supervisors to explore the student's understanding of the nature and implications of the research described in the written Honours Project report. Questions regarding the oral defense procedures should be directed to the Honours Program coordinators. The oral defense will take place according to the following guidelines:

1. The oral defense will take place within the official exam period in Spring semester.
2. The members of the examining committee will be the primary and secondary supervisors and an additional faculty member who will chair the examining committee.
3. The primary supervisor will be responsible for securing a Chair for the oral defense approximately one month ahead of the anticipated defense date and for bringing the defense paperwork (grade guidelines and grad submission form) to the defense.
4. The student will organize a scheduled time and book an appropriate room (book the room for two hours to allow a half hour for set up and a half hour in case the defense runs overtime). Speak with the Psychology Department Receptionist to book your room.
5. The student must submit the final Honours Project Report to each member of the examining committee (Chair, primary and secondary supervisors) and the Psychology Department undergraduate advisor one week before the scheduled oral defense. Also include a reminder of the time and location of your defense in the email.
6. At least one member of the examining committee must be present in person for the oral defense.
7. The oral defense should last no longer than one hour. It will begin with the Chair asking the student to spend no more than 10-12 minutes summarizing the Honours Project research (consult with your supervisor about the content of the presentation). Following this presentation, the Chair will invite the second and then primary supervisors to take turns questioning the student. The Chair is not expected to ask questions, but is entitled to. Honours defenses are not publicly advertised, but you may invite others to attend your defense.
8. Following the completion of the questioning or one hour, whichever comes first, the Chair will excuse the student and will ask the faculty supervisors to discuss the student's written work and performance at the oral defense and determine the appropriate grade. The student's grade in PSYC 499/459 will be determined primarily by the quality of the research and the written report, and secondarily by the student's performance at the oral defense. The Chair will be responsible for recording the grade and turning in completed forms to the undergraduate Advisor.
The Honours Student-Supervisor Relationship

Honours students report that one of the best parts of the Honours experience is working one-on-one with a faculty mentor. Therefore, choosing a supervisor can be one of the most important parts of the process. Most students find a supervisor by taking a course from a professor whose research topics interest them or by volunteering in a professor’s lab. Through formal discussions during a course and informal interactions initiated because of the student’s intrinsic interest in the material, the professor and student get to know one another and discover that they have compatible interests. Other ways that students can get to know faculty members are to volunteer or work as a Research Assistant in their lab, or to take a Directed Studies course with them.

How does a faculty member choose a student? An Honours Project is a great deal of work for the student and the faculty member. Although a supervisor will be there to help, an Honours student must work independently, take responsibility and initiative, and persist in the face of unexpected challenges. Most faculty members will expect that students will be able to manage many small tasks that have big consequences (like completing ethics approval forms or accurately creating online questionnaires). A faculty member will also seek a student who is interpersonally and intellectually compatible, which will help to ensure a productive working relationship. These are hard things to know if the student and professor have had no contact prior to the Honours program. Many professors will only accept an Honours student who has already been a volunteer in their lab, or who has done a directed studies or seminar class with them. Start thinking about a supervisor early. Applications are due June 1, so beginning to explore your options in the Fall semester (a full year before you hope to enter the program) would be appropriate.

What should a student look for in a supervisor? Just as faculty members will want to get to know the students, a student will want the chance to "size up" their potential mentor. Here are several good questions to ask when deciding if a particular faculty member would be a good mentor:

1. Am I impressed by this person's scholarship? Read some recent publications by prospective supervisors to see whether the philosophical or methodological approach they take suits your way of thinking about things.

2. Where does this supervisor fall on a scale of "guided" vs. "independent" research? How involved will they be in providing structure, influencing your design and choice of measures, reading multiple drafts of your Honours Proposal or Project Report, watching a practice talk, etc.; and how much involvement of that kind do you want? Faculty members who will be on study leave may not be the most available mentors. You may wish to speak with former Honour’s students or graduate students of the faculty member with whom you are interested in working.

3. Do I want to get involved in my mentor’s work, or do I prefer to follow my own inspiration? Sometimes faculty have ongoing research, a part of which would make an appropriate Honours Project. Such a project can rank high on efficiency and do-ability, but lower on creativity. Other Honours Projects are very much the students' own idea from start to finish and may not be directly linked to what a faculty member is doing. Such a project demands a lot of independent work on the part of the student, but can be extremely satisfying when your own ideas are validated. Neither choice is right or wrong, but one may suit a student’s needs and interests better than the other. You should ask potential supervisors about their openness to considering each of these two types of projects and consider what would be best for you.
4. What is the supervisor’s availability? Will they be on campus five days a week, or about to away for several months for research? Does the supervisor meet weekly with their students, or once or twice a semester? Students and their supervisors are generally expected to meet weekly during the Fall and Spring semesters of the Honours Program. There are, of course, individual differences and frequency of meetings may also depend on the stage of the project. Some students may not need such intensive supervision during the data collection phase for example. In contrast, a student may thrive on frequent meetings and lots of feedback. Discuss with a potential supervisor their approach to supervising an Honours Project to be sure that a mutually-agreeable working relationship can be established before a commitment is made.

**Psychology Alumni Honours Award**

At least one award, valued at a minimum of $1,000, will be granted annually in any term to a full-time undergraduate student who has conducted the highest quality research for their Honours Project, is enrolled in the Psychology Honours Program or the Behavioural Neurosciences Honours Program in the Department of Psychology, and is in good academic standing.

Students must be registered in 9 credits in the Fall or Spring semester of the Honours program to be eligible for the Honours award, which is given in the summer semester for the best Honours Project. The nomination for the award must be received by the Psychology Undergraduate Advisor within one week of the end of the exam period. The application will consist of the following:

- Advising transcript
- Final Honours Project Report
- Supervisor nomination letter