**Honors Thesis Application Form**

**PSY 1973 / 1975**

**Honors Thesis Overview**

The honors designation in psychology offers a challenging and interesting research experience through which students conduct research with supervision by a psychology faculty member, write a thesis, and defend their thesis in front of a committee. This project will require considerable independent work on the part of the student. The student will be supervised by a faculty member and perhaps a larger lab support system.

In this document, we use the term “chair” to refer to the faculty member that the student is working with who will chair the honors thesis committee.

One common misconception is that students think that they can do an honors thesis without ever having worked in a lab before. To the contrary, the expected pathway towards doing an honors thesis is that a student has already been working in the chair’s lab for at least one semester and the collaboration is perceived to be going well for both the student and chair. Only in quite unusual circumstances would it make sense for a student to do an honors project with a faculty member if they have not already been working in their lab.

Starting in Fall of 2024 the approval process for honors theses will work a bit differently. In the past, students have sometimes submitted the application with very little input from their chair, which could lead to confusing situations for all parties involved. In addition, the undergraduate education committee had difficulty meaningfully reviewing applications, because the descriptions of the research are short, and often important information was not included. Moreover, we feel that the chair is the most appropriate person to determine whether a student should be approved to do an honors thesis. Thus, this document is intended to serve as a way for the student and chair to collaborate on a feasible honors thesis. This document is also meant to serve as a reminder about certain deadlines and requirements. The chair is expected to be closely involved in this proposal and verifying that these expectations are being met, and if not, explain why it still makes sense to proceed with this honors thesis or what modifications can be made. After collaboratively working on this proposal and the Chair the signs it, then the student submits the proposal. The approval from the advising office (with consultation by the UEC) is meant as a check that the project is feasible.

**Before proceeding, please review some of the basic requirements to make sure that doing an honors thesis is feasible. Sections below have more details about each of these.**

* The chair of the honors thesis committee must have a primary appointment in the Psychology department or be an approved supervisor for PSY 1903. If the chair is a PSY 1903 supervisor, one of the committee members must have a primary appointment in the Psychology department.
* Except in very rare situations, it is expected that the student has already been working in the chair’s lab. Most commonly this occurs through directed research
* In order to graduate with honors, a student must have an overall GPA of >3.25 and psychology GPA of >3.5.
* If approved to do an honors project, the student will enroll in PSY 1973 and PSY 1975 in two consecutive semesters (excluding summer) and attend the weekly seminar. Students are required to attend the 1973 / 1975 seminar; see the Class Search function in Peoplesoft to see the timing of this class and instructor. Attending this seminar counts for 25% of the grade for these courses – the remaining 75% of the grade is assigned by the Chair. If there is a true conflict that cannot be avoided, the student should contact the instructor of the seminar to see if an alternative is possible; however this option is only provided in rare circumstances. For students who are doing the honors thesis on a schedule different from the typical Fall (1973) Spring (1975) cycle, the student must be in contact with the instructor of the seminar to see how their situation will be handled; they likely will also be expected to come to the seminar.

Follow these steps to complete the **HONORS THESIS APPLICATION** form:

1. As explained above, students should already be working in the lab for at least one semester
2. Students should meet with their chair to discuss completing an honors thesis
3. Student and chair should **design a feasible research project** for the student to complete
   1. Project should be feasible within a 2-semester timeframe
   2. Project should be within the student’s ability to complete
4. Student and chair complete this document together and fill out the attestation section.
5. At least 1 month before the beginning of the semester the student submits the completed form.
6. The Undergraduate Education Committee will review the application and email the student a permission number to enroll in PSY 1973 by the first day of the semester.
7. Student enrolls in PSY 1973 before the Add/Drop deadline (2 weeks after the term start date) and attends the first meeting of the honors seminar.

**Section Completed by Student and Chair of Committee Collaboratively**

**1) GPA Requirements.** In order to graduate with honors, a student must have an overall GPA of >3.25 and psychology GPA of >3.5. In the event these thresholds are not met, the student will receive academic credit for their work in PSY 1973/1975, but 'Honor in Psychology” cannot be conferred.

* Overall GPA (needs to be >3.25 at graduation): FILL IN CURRENT GPA
* Psychology GPA (needs to be >3.5 at graduation): FILL IN CURRENT PSYCH GPA

As student, I understand that if my GPAs fall below the thresholds at graduation, I will not get ‘honors’ and I wish to proceed.

* I wish to proceed: STUDENT INITIALS HERE

As chair, I am comfortable proceeding with this honors project given the student’s GPAs. (Another option is to still do directed research or Advanced Directed Research (PSY 1064) but not as an honors project.)

* I wish to proceed: CHAIR’S INITIALS HERE

**2) Prior work with Chair.** Has the student already been working with the chair? If yes, write how long. If not, describe why you feel that it is still feasible for the student to conduct an honors thesis in your lab in 2 semesters.

* FILL IN RESPONSE HERE

**3) Honors Committee.** The honors committee must have at least 3 members with certain requirements listed below. By filling this table out, you are attesting that all of the members below have agreed to be on the committee and satisfy the requirements. There are two versions of the requirements, depending on whether the Chair of the committee has their primary appointment in Psychology, or if the Chair is a 1903 faculty mentor.

* See <https://www.psychology.pitt.edu/people> and select "Primary” for a list of primary faculty with primary appointments in Psychology.
* See <https://www.psychology.pitt.edu/directed-research-opportunities-psy-1903> for the list of 1903 faculty mentors

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Role on Committee** | **Requirements Option 1** | **Requirements Option 2** | **Name** | **Pitt Email** |
| Chair of the Committee | Faculty member with primary appt in Psychology. | Chair is a 1903 faculty mentor | WRITE THEIR NAME AND ALSO WRITE IF THEY ARE PRIMARY OR A 1903 MENTOR | FILL IN |
| Member 2 | At least Master’s degree | Faculty member with primary appt in Psychology. | FILL IN | FILL IN |
| Member 3 | At least Master’s degree | | FILL IN | FILL IN |
| Member 4 (*optional*; usually there are only 3) | At least Master’s degree. (Sometimes longstanding lab managers with relevant experience are added.) | | OPTIONAL | OPTIONAL |

**4) Project Description:** Please write a structured abstract with the three following sections. The total text for all three sections combined should be less than 300 words.

**Background and Goals**

* FILL IN

**Methods – If using New Data**

* If new data are being collected, clearly state so and describe the recruitment strategy, study design, timeline, anticipated sample size, and any other critical information to confirm feasibility.
* FILL IN

**Methods – If using Existing Data**

* If existing data are being used, clearly state so and describe the dataset, if significant additional coding or cleaning needs to be done, sample size, and any other critical information to confirm feasibility.
* FILL IN

**Hypotheses and Proposed Analyses**

* Provide one or two clear hypotheses or questions you plan to test. For each hypothesis or question, explain the statistical approach you will use to test it. The reason for requesting these details is to confirm that this project is sufficiently thorough and is feasible.
* FILL IN

**5) Project Timeline:**

This section helps you figure out when various parts of the project need to happen. Within each semester you should start at the bottom and work your way up to figure out the dates.

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| **Summary** | **Details** | **Fill in date, or write “completed”** |
| **Semester 1** | | |
| Obtain IRB approval | For projects that involve collecting new data, this should be done extremely early, ideally before the first semester of the honors thesis. For projects that are using already-existing data, there is a bit more flexibility, but should still be done early in the first semester of the honors thesis. | WRITE IN A DATE OR WRITE COMPLETED. |
| Literature review | Up to the student and chair | WRITE ANY INTERIM DEADLINES AGREED UPON HERE. |
| Data collection, coding, and/or organization | Up to the student and chair. The chair should consider proposing interim deadlines for a first draft, second draft, etc. | WRITE ANY INTERIM DEADLINES AGREED UPON HERE. |
| Proposal sent to committee | Must be sent at least 1 week prior to the proposal meeting. | WRITE IN A DATE AT LEAST 1 WEEK PRIOR TO THE DATE BELOW. |
| Proposal Meeting | Must be done by the end of the first semester of the honors project. Note that the semester ends on the last day of regularly scheduled classes in any term – NOT the end of finals week. Final, approved proposal documents should be uploaded to the Canvas site by the last day of regularly scheduled classes. | WRITE IN THE DATE THAT CORRESPONDS TO THIS CRITERION ACCORDING TO THE UNIVERSITY SCHEDULE. |
| **Semester 2** | | |
| Data Analysis and Writing | Up to the student and chair. The Chair should consider proposing interim deadlines for a first draft, second draft, etc. | WRITE ANY INTERIM DEADLINES AGREED UPON HERE. |
| Thesis approved by primary faculty member and sent to committee | Must be sent at least 1 week prior to the defense. | WRITE IN A DATE AT LEAST 1 WEEK PRIOR TO THE DATE BELOW. |
| Defense | The defense must occur at least 1 week prior to the next date below to give the student time to make any necessary revisions. Ideally it should be more than 1 week if this process takes longer. | WRITE IN A DATE AT LEAST 1 WEEK PRIOR TO THE DATE BELOW. |
| Final approval by committee | The chair must confirm that the committee has approved the honors thesis by the end of regularly scheduled classes of the second semester of the honors project. | WRITE IN THE DATE THAT CORRESPONDS TO THIS ACCORDING TO THE UNIVERSITY SCHEDULE. |

**Attestations by Student and Chair**

***We attest that:***

* We agree with the all the information provided above about this project including the committee, abstract, IRB approval status, timeline, etc. are accurate.
* We agree that the research project as described above is feasible within a 2 semester timeframe.
* As chair, I will provide the student with access to resources and data as necessary for completion of their honors thesis
* We understand that the second semester (PSY 1975) of the honors thesis counts for students’ advanced lab requirement. If a student is not successful in the honors thesis, this can cause problems for their ability to graduate on time. This is why it is important for us both to feel that the project is feasible.
* We understand that the student is expected to attend the honors seminar and that participating will count as 25% of the final grade for these courses.

Student Name: FILL IN

Student’s Pitt Email: FILL IN

Student’s PeopleSoft Number: FILL IN

Date: FILL IN

Chair’s Name: FILL IN

\*note, typing in your name here counts as your signature – this cannot be completed by the student

Chair’s Pitt email: FILL IN

Date: FILL IN