

Messiah College
Department of Psychology
Major Honors Project
Guidelines for Students

I. Eligibility

From the Messiah College Catalog: "PSY 497, 498 Major Honors (3,3) Independent research program for students who have a strong academic record for a minimum of five previous semesters of college study. Must be at least Junior status, with an overall minimum GPA of 3.5, a minimum GPA of 3.75 for courses in the major, and must have departmental approval for enrollment."

II. Basic Timeline

- A. **Approval of student:** The student, in consultation with his or her advisor, will make a determination to apply for major honors. The advisor or the department chair will then bring the name of the student to the department for consideration. This must be done in the first or second semester of the Junior year before mid-semester of the fall if it is to begin in the spring or mid-semester of the spring if it is to begin in the fall.
- B. **Approval of the proposed idea:** The student, before he or she has registered for the PSY 497 course, will submit a 3 to 4 page proposal to the Department of Psychology for approval of the basic idea for the study. This proposal will contain a clear title for the research topic, a description of the problem, a brief summary of past research on the topic, proposed hypotheses, proposed methodology, an outline of the study including questions to be explored, and a preliminary bibliography of sources on the topic to be studied. A majority of the Department must approve the idea before the student may proceed.
- C. **Honors committee:** The student, before they have registered for the PSY 497 course, will recruit a faculty member from the Department of Psychology who is willing to serve as his/her primary advisor for the project. The primary advisor and the student will choose a second faculty member from the Department of Psychology and a third faculty member from outside of the Department of Psychology. These three faculty members will form the student's Honors Committee. In some cases, the Honors Committee may want to ask a fourth faculty member with specific expertise to join the Committee.
- D. **First Draft (including an overview of the problem, literature review, hypotheses, and methodology):** By **October 15**, if the student is registered for PSY 497 in the Fall semester, or by **February 15**, if the student is registered for PSY 497 in the Spring semester, the student will prepare a detailed, 7 – 10 page draft to be presented to the Honors Committee. The First Draft should contain an expanded literature review as well as further explanation and description of any issues raised at the time of the approval of the brief proposal. Within two weeks of the receipt of the proposal the Committee will meet and discuss whether the proposal needs to be modified or if it can proceed. Once the proposal has

been accepted by the Committee, the student may begin gathering data for the project.

- E. **PSY 498:** At the end of PSY 497, the Honors Committee must determine if the first semester's work has been at "A" level to allow the student to continue in the major honors program and to register for PSY 498. If a student does not reach "A" level in his or her work for PSY 497, or if he or she is not able to complete enough work to move on to PSY 498, he or she will be given a grade for the first semester's work but will not be allowed to register for PSY 498. No Incompletes will be given for PSY 497.
- F. **Final Draft of Project:** Students in PSY 498 should prepare a draft of the final project to be given to The Honors Committee by **December 1** if PSY 498 is being taken in the Fall Semester or by **April 15th** if PSY 498 is being taken in the spring. The Honors Committee has the task of reading drafts of the project and giving direction as needed.
- G. **Formal Presentation:** At the end of the semester in which the student is registered for PSY 498, the student must give a formal presentation to the Psychology Faculty and to other interested individuals. Typically, this will take place around Finals Week.
- H. **Final Approval:** After the Final Presentation, the Honors Committee must approve the Final Project presented by the student. The Honors Committee will indicate their approval of the Final Project by assigning a grade to the project and signing the formal acknowledgements page on the Final Project. This should be completed within one week of the end of the semester in which PSY 498 is taken.
- I. **Final Project:** The Department of Psychology will be responsible for copying and binding enough copies of the Final Project so that each member of the Department and the student presenting the Project will receive a copy.

Approved by the Department of Psychology on December 16, 2002