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# **Bachelor of Arts Honours in Psychology Information Handbook**

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**Department of Psychology  
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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS • SECTIONS**

### **1) Honours Committee Contact Information**

### **2) The Psychology Honours Program**

- A. The Purpose of an Honours Degree
- B. Is the BA Honours Degree in Psychology for you?

### **3) Admission to the Psychology Honours Program**

- A. Admission Criteria
- B. Faculty Supervisor
  - 1. Qualifications
  - 2. Securing a Faculty Supervisor
- C. Application Criteria
- D. Application Process
- E. Important Deadlines and Dates

### **4) Summary of the Requirements of an Honours Degree in Psychology**

- A. Overview
- B. PSYC 5110 & 5120
  - 1. Description of the Honours Seminars
  - 2. Assessment Procedures
- C. The Honours Thesis
  - 1. Description of the Honours Thesis
  - 2. Ethical Clearance
  - 3. Purposes and Advantages of an Honours Thesis
  - 4. Content of the Honours Thesis

### **5) Further advice to the student: Supervision of the thesis**

**The Department of Psychology strives for accuracy with respect to the information contained in this document. Some of the contents, however, may be subject to change and/or revision.**

## 1) HONOURS COMMITTEE CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or difficulties at any time you should contact the Chair of the Honours Committee.

### Chair of the Honours Committee:

Dr. Naomi Grant, Office: EA3071  
Email: [ngrant@mtroyal.ca](mailto:ngrant@mtroyal.ca)  
Voice: 403-440-8837

If the Chair of the Honours Committee is unavailable and you have a concern that requires immediate attention you may contact:

### Chair of the Department of Psychology:

Dr. Nancy Ogden, Office: EA3042  
Email: [nogden@mtroyal.ca](mailto:nogden@mtroyal.ca)  
Voice: 403-440-8991

## 2) THE PSYCHOLOGY HONOURS PROGRAM

If you are considering an Honours degree in Psychology, it is important to understand the application process and the selection criteria. Information specific to the BA Honours Degree in Psychology is presented here or can be viewed on the Department of Psychology website or the Psychology Majors Blackboard site.

### A The Purpose of an Honours Degree

There are several reasons why a student might want to participate in the Honours Program and obtain a BA Honours degree:

An Honours degree provides more extensive exposure to the knowledge and practice of the discipline. In addition to the core courses required to obtain a BA in Psychology, Honours students take several psychology courses that non-Honours students do not.

The Honours degree recognizes academic excellence.

Completion of an Honours degree indicates that you have engaged in some form of independent learning, under the guidance of a faculty supervisor, over and above that required by regular degree-related course work. Usually that independent work is research-related, and such research experience is considered an important admission criterion by many graduate schools.

### B Is the BA Honours Degree in Psychology for you?

The Honours program is intended for Psychology majors only. Acceptance into the program is competitive. The Honours program is intended to recognize academic excellence and is designed to give students a more extensive knowledge of the

discipline. Although the majority of students in the Psychology Honours program will be preparing for graduate studies, an Honours degree might also be valuable for students considering other academic or professional programs such as social work, speech pathology, law, etc.

As the number of students admitted each year to the Honours stream in Psychology is limited by supervisor availability, not everyone who wants to get into the Honours stream may be able to do so.

Please consider the following when deciding if a BA Honours Degree in Psychology is for you:

- a. Graduate schools differ in their requirements for admission. Some place a great deal of emphasis on research and/or an Honours degree, and some do not. A graduate program in Counselling Psychology, for example, may not be as concerned with whether or not you have an Honours degree as a graduate program in Clinical Psychology. It is important that you check the admission criteria of the graduate school programs in which you are interested.
- b. An Honours Degree does not guarantee successful admittance to a graduate program. Most graduate programs are even more competitive than the MRU Honours stream.

### **3) ADMISSION TO THE PSYCHOLOGY HONOURS PROGRAM**

#### **A Admission Criteria**

The number of Honours applicants may exceed the number of students accepted to the Honours program.

To be admitted to the BA Psychology Honours Program, you must meet the following criteria set by the Department of Psychology:

- a) completed *PSYC 4412 Advanced Statistical Methods for Psychology* – minimum B grade
- b) completed *PSYC 4413 Research Methods II* – minimum B grade
- c) achieved a minimum GPA of 3.5 across all the 2000-, 3000- and 4000-level psychology courses you have taken, including psychology courses transferred from other institutions
- d) met the Faculty of Arts Criteria as described in the current Academic Calendar
- e) secured a qualified faculty supervisor by May 15. No student will be accepted into the Honours Program without a faculty supervisor.

Note: In the event that you do not meet the grade requirements for admission to the Honours program due to exceptional circumstances, permission may be granted by the Department of Psychology Honours Committee. Please contact the Chair of the Department of Psychology Honours Committee to discuss the process you should follow in this situation.

## **B FACULTY SUPERVISOR**

### **1. Qualifications**

A qualified faculty supervisor includes full-time tenured, tenure-track, and fixed-term faculty members in the Department of Psychology at Mount Royal University. The Department of Psychology may have a list of additional Mount Royal University faculty members who are approved as qualified faculty supervisors.

No student will be accepted into the Honours Program without a qualified faculty supervisor. Students must secure a qualified faculty supervisor by May 15.

### **2. Securing a Faculty Supervisor**

Some time prior to the end of the application period (before May 1), it is strongly recommended that you contact individual faculty members to express your interest in the Honours program and in their area of expertise, to discuss the possibility of working with them on an Honours project, and to consult about additional selection criteria they may have for their own potential Honours students (for example: research experience, interview and/or writing skills.)

If a qualified faculty member agrees to supervise a student prior to May 1, the "*Honours Supervisor/Student Agreement*" form can be completed and submitted as part of the student's application to the Honours program. Securing a faculty supervisor does not guarantee admission to the program; the student must meet all the criteria set by the Department of Psychology.

For those students who did not secure a faculty supervisor before submitting their application, you should indicate on the "*Psychology Honours Program Application*" form the names of three faculty members with whom you would be interested in working. Matching of successful applicants and supervisors will occur between May 2 and May 15. If a preferred faculty supervisor agrees to supervision, applicants will be notified of this fact via email. The student and the faculty member will sign the "*Honours Supervisor/Student Agreement*" form.

If none of the student's preferred supervisors is available, but another faculty member is willing to consider supervision, the student will be advised of this fact via email. If an agreement is reached, the student and faculty supervisor will sign the "*Honours Supervisor/Student Agreement*" form.

All Honours Supervisor/Student Agreements must be signed and submitted to the Chair of the Honours Committee no later than May 15. Students who have not secured a faculty supervisor by May 15 will not be accepted into the Honours Program.

## C Application Criteria

To apply for admission to the BA Psychology Honours Program, you must meet the following criteria set by the Department of Psychology. To apply for admission to the Honours program, the Department of Psychology requires that you have:

- a. completed *PSYC 4412 Advanced Statistical Methods for Psychology* – minimum B grade
- b. completed or are currently enrolled in *PSYC 4413 Research Methods II* – minimum B grade
- c. achieved a minimum GPA of 3.5 across all the 2000-, 3000- and 4000-level psychology courses you have taken, including psychology courses transferred from other institutions, or have permission of the Department of Psychology Honours Committee in the event of exceptional circumstances
- d. met the Faculty of Arts Criteria as described in the current Academic Calendar

Note: Meeting the minimum requirements outlined above does not guarantee admission into the program. Acceptance to the Honours program also requires that you secure a qualified faculty supervisor by May 15. No student will be accepted into the Honours Program without a faculty supervisor.

## D Application Process

You need to apply for admission to the BA Psychology Honours Program. Between April 1 and May 1 of the year before you intend to complete your Honour's thesis (this is usually the final year of your degree program), you should submit the following documentation to the Department of Psychology Office (EA3040):

1. A completed Department of Psychology form: "*Psychology Honours Program Application*". The application form will be available April 1 on the Department of Psychology website, and the Psychology Majors Blackboard site <http://mtroyal.ca/ProgramsCourses/FacultiesSchoolsCentres/Arts/Departments/Psychology/index.htm>
2. Information regarding your Honours supervisor or preference for supervisor. If the "*Honours Supervisor/Student Agreement*" form has been signed prior to submission of the application, a copy of the agreement should be attached to your application. Your Honours supervisor will provide you with this form. If an agreement has not been signed at the time of application, please indicate the names of three faculty members with whom you would be interested in working.
3. An unofficial copy of your MRU transcript (this can be printed from the MyMRU site).
4. If applicable, an official copy of transcripts from any transfer institution(s).
5. Final grades from the Winter semester should be submitted to the Department of Psychology Office via email as soon as you receive official notification of those marks.

## E Important Deadlines and Dates

**April 1:** The "*Psychology Honours Program Application*" form is made available on-line from the Psychology Majors Blackboard site and can also be linked from the Psychology website.

(<http://mtroyal.ca/ProgramsCourses/FacultiesSchoolsCentres/Arts/Departments/Psychology/PsychologyHonours/index.htm>)

**April 1 to April 30:** Completed applications will be accepted in the Department of Psychology Office (EA3040).

**May 1 to May 15:** The Department of Psychology Honours Committee will screen applicants to ensure they meet the admission criteria. For those students who did not secure a faculty supervisor before submitting their application, matching of successful applicants and supervisors will also occur during this time. (Refer to the section: Securing a Faculty Supervisor for details on this process). As the number of students admitted each year to the Honours stream in Psychology is limited by supervisor availability, not everyone who wants to get into the Honours stream may be able to do so.

All Honours Supervisor/Student Agreements must be signed and submitted to the Chair of the Honours Committee no later than May 15.

E-mails will be sent to students who were accepted into the Honours Program by May 15. E-mails will be sent to students who were not accepted into the Honours Program after May 15.

## 4) SUMMARY OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF AN HONOURS DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY

### A Overview

In addition to satisfying the course requirements of the BA Psychology degree, an Honours student in Psychology must:

1. complete the following course sometime during their degree:

*PSYC 3305: History of Psychology*

2. complete the following two courses during the student's Honours year (exceptions must be approved by the department):

a. *PSYC 5110: Honours Thesis I*

b. *PSYC 5120: Honours Thesis II*

**Note:** These courses are numbered among the Psychology courses taken to complete the BA in Psychology, so the total number of Psychology courses taken should not

exceed 24, the maximum number of Psychology courses permitted in the BA Psychology Degree program.

3. complete four 4000 level courses, two of which include PSYC 4412 and PSYC 4413 (PSYC 4412 and 4413 must be completed prior to being accepted into the Honours Program, with a minimum B grade)
3. achieve a minimum average GPA of 3.5 in their 2000, 3000, and 4000 level Psychology courses. Any student who fails to maintain this minimum will lose their place in the Psychology Honours program, and they will revert to the Majors stream for their BA program.

## **B PSYC 5110 & PSYC 5120**

### **1. Description of the Honours Courses**

Once accepted into the Honours program, students will be required to complete *PSYC 3305: History of Psychology* (if they have not already done so); and the two seminar courses: *PSYC 5110: Honours Thesis I* and *PSYC 5120: Honours Thesis II*. The weekly Honours seminar courses are offered in a fall/winter sequence.

During completion of *PSYC 5110: Honours Thesis I* and *PSYC 5120: Honours Thesis II*, students will attend weekly seminars. In addition to the requirements of the two seminar courses, students complete an Honours thesis under the supervision of a qualified Department of Psychology faculty member. It is therefore important to note that most of the work relevant to a student's thesis will take place outside of the seminar.

The primary objective of *PSYC 5110: Honours Seminar I* is to provide opportunities for students to improve on their research, writing, and public speaking skills. *PSYC 5110* will require students to develop and present a formal research proposal, including an ethics application. It is expected that all research projects will conform to Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans (if applicable). The objectives of the thesis proposal are twofold: to conceptualize the project and to pull together the critical and relevant background literature. More specifically, the research proposal will demonstrate that the student has progressed to the stage where can declare with appropriate certainty that the proposed project is a) feasible, b) uses reasonable methodology, and c) relies upon appropriate data sources.

The primary objective of *PSYC 5120: Honours Seminar II* is to provide students with the opportunity to conduct research in their area of interest, gather data, analyze and present findings, and develop a written thesis. In the weekly seminar, students will present their own work and critique the work of others. The thesis comprises 45% of the final grade in *PSYC 5120* so it is required that the thesis be completed by the end of the course. At the end of the Winter semester, students will be required to present a summary of their data at a Department of Psychology undergraduate conference.\*

\*Note that students may not present their work outside of the MRU community without consultation and written consent of their supervisor. Typically, presentations or publications outside of MRU include the supervisor as a co-author unless the supervisor gives explicit written permission otherwise.



## **2. Assessment Procedures**

By registering in *PSYC 5110 Honours Thesis I* and *PSYC 5120: Honours Seminar II*, the student is contracting to meet with her/his thesis supervisor at all scheduled meetings and to complete all assignments on time as per the established timetable. Failure to meet these obligations will result in expulsion from the Honours seminar courses as well as in the termination of the project with no credit given.

Grades for the two Psychology Honours Seminars are based on a number of different evaluation components. Grading of the different components will be done by the Honours supervisor (or co-supervisors if applicable), the PSYC 5110/5120 Honours Seminar I & II Course Coordinator, and a second reader. More specific information on evaluation can be found in the course outline for each course which will be handed out at the beginning of the Fall (5110) and Winter (5120) terms.

The thesis Introduction (PSYC 5110) and the final written thesis (PSYC 5120) will be evaluated by the Honours supervisor and a second reader. The student, in consultation with the Honours supervisor, is responsible for finding a second reader for the evaluation of these components. The second reader may be either a full-time or contract faculty member within the Department of Psychology.

Other components of the two courses (e.g., in class presentations, written components of the thesis (except the Introduction) will be evaluated by the Course Coordinator.

The thesis supervisor will also evaluate the student based on a behavioural checklist.

## **C The Honours Thesis**

### **1. Description of the Honours Thesis**

The undergraduate psychology honours thesis is a major research project carried out by an Honours Psychology student under the direction of a qualified psychology supervisor.

The thesis project is to be empirical in nature and involves the collection of psychological data. The thesis project cannot merely be a theoretical paper or an in-depth literature review. Projects may involve, but are not limited to, experimental data collection, correlational data collection, archival data collection, or meta-analysis. The student is expected to play a role in all phases of the thesis project, including conceptualization of ideas, a review of the psychological literature and theories, preparing materials and methods, data collection and data analysis, and write-up of the thesis. Please note that if a proposed project is unsuitable for a Psychology Honours thesis project, the course coordinator, in conjunction with the thesis supervisor, may require modifications or the development of an alternate project that is suitable.

Honours students are normally required to collect all of the data to be included in the Honours project. However, it is up to the discretion of the faculty supervisor as to

whether or not the Honours student may receive assistance from research assistants for data collection. The research assistants must be approved by the faculty supervisor.

## **2. Ethics Clearance**

It is a requirement of Mount Royal University and the Tri-Council Agencies that the 'ethical conduct' of research activities be assessed by Mount Royal's *Human Research Ethics Board*. This policy applies to any Honours research project involving human participants. Working with their thesis supervisor, students are expected to seek ethical approval for any research involving people.

## **3. Purposes and Advantages of an Honours Thesis**

The purposes of the thesis are:

1. To encourage the student to undertake independent Psychology-related research and to develop more extensive academic and research-related skills.
2. To provide the means by which students can demonstrate their ability to undertake research at an advanced standard and communicate the results in a professionally acceptable way.
3. To recognize academic excellence.
4. To further the student's general expertise in both the discipline of Psychology and in research.
5. To prepare interested students for graduate school.

The chief advantages of requiring a thesis in Honours are:

1. The opportunity to engage in sustained, independent research with academic supervision; such intensive one-on-one experience serves roughly as an 'apprenticeship' benefiting students in more advanced (graduate) studies and in employment.
2. Because of the scope and quality of independent student work required to complete the thesis, the thesis distinguishes the Honours student from the other students in the BA Psychology degree.
3. The thesis provides an opportunity for the student to engage in research within a specific area of Psychology and also provides the student with an opportunity to apply the statistical and research methods skills they have acquired in previous courses to an independent research project.
4. The thesis provides the student with the opportunity to write a formal research report under the direct supervision of her/his supervisor.
5. The stringent demands on students in the Honours program are designed to challenge highly motivated, hard-working, academically-strong students; the Honours thesis is therefore a valuable tool for assessing achievement within the

Honours program.

- a. Among the qualities assessed by the thesis are the abilities to work independently, acquire requisite academic and applied knowledge, accept constructive criticism, adhere to timelines, as well as innovative thinking.
- b. The thesis also provides a means by which the student can conduct research, including: conceptualizing ideas, reviewing the psychological literature, understanding theories relevant to the project, preparing materials and designing relevant procedures, collecting data, analyzing results, and writing up conclusions based on data.

In sum, the thesis develops and tests the ability to organize and execute a sustained piece of research and to present complex material effectively.