

PSYCHOLOGY 501
GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS
September 2012

Course Coordinators

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Remember that we are here to assist you in making your thesis a rewarding and educational experience. If you have problems or questions, your first resource should be your supervisor, but if he/she can't answer or help in every way necessary, do not hesitate to consult us - the sooner the better! It is important and in your best interest that you let your supervisor know of your progress regularly; problems can and do arise, and can be handled far more easily if there is advanced warning.

Outline

The purpose of this course is to give students the opportunity to develop and demonstrate skills in psychological research. Specifically, we require students to:

Recognize and develop a research problem, formulate this problem in a testable way, and incorporate it into a written proposal;

Design and carry out an empirical investigation of the research problem, under faculty supervision;

Report on the results of the investigation both by writing a brief thesis (less than 50 pages) and completing an oral examination on the written thesis submitted.

Thus, the work involved in this course falls into a number of stages that must be completed in order. It is strongly recommended that you and your supervisor discuss and agree on a timetable for completion of each stage. The following sections give more information on each.

Stage 1: Preparing and Submitting a Research Proposal

The first critical task is to confirm that you have a thesis supervisor. As far as we know, all students linked up with a supervisor, either last term or during the summer. Even if you believe that you already have an arrangement, you should contact your supervisor and confirm your arrangement **before the end of the first week of the term**. Make sure that you have a clear and explicit understanding with the potential supervisor that he/she has agreed to supervise you and also agreed on the topic.

Should you find that you do need a supervisor, you should contact your course coordinator **immediately**. At this point, almost all supervisors are already committed and the selection is therefore extremely limited.

We do not have firm rules on what sort of problem constitutes a valid topic for a thesis, other than the restriction that the thesis must be empirical; that is, you must deal with data at some level. If you would prefer to do library research instead, then you probably would be better off taking a series of seminars rather than Psyc 501. In the past few years, some archival studies, in which students did not actually collect the data they used, have been allowed. However, by their very nature, archival studies are different than projects where students collect the data themselves. If you are contemplating a project that might be regarded as archival, you and your supervisor should consider that examiners will take the following criteria into account:

1. significance of the research;
2. intellectual input of the student;
3. quality of the write-up;

Students are expected to complete ethics training.

For students who are working with animals, you will complete three mandatory courses: WHIMIS, the Online Animal Research Ethics course and the Departmental Animal Care Seminar (with Lisa Miller),.

Please contact Lisa Miller (lisa.miller@queensu.ca; 613-533-6016) if you are doing animal research and she will provide further information on the mandatory courses.

All other students will complete the Tri-Council's online ethics module. This module takes a total of approximately two-four hours to complete. You need not complete the module in one sitting, as you are able to save frequently and return to the module when you are able. A confirmation page will appear when you have successfully completed the module. You are required to include this page in your proposal.

The module is available here: <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/english/tutorial/>

We suggest that you ask your supervisor for some examples of previously accepted proposals in your area. Examples of well-written proposals from recent years will also be posted on Moodle. Previous theses provide the best guides to the form and content of work that has been found acceptable by the Department in the past. Not all prior work is of equal quality, however, so you should consult with your supervisor for recommendations on a good choice of examples in your area.

*Once you and your supervisor are both satisfied with your proposal, you should **email a copy to NO LATER than 5:00 p.m. on October 15, 2010.** You must also carbon copy (cc) this email to your supervisor.*

PLEASE SEE THE 501-PROPOSAL CHECKLIST (AVAILABLE ON MOODLE) AND THE THESIS PROPOSAL AND ETHICS HANDOUT (AVAILABLE ON MOODLE) FOR SPECIFIC DIRECTIONS ON HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR PROPOSAL AND WHAT TO INCLUDE WITH YOUR SUBMISSION.

Given the size of the class, the TA will not read any drafts of your proposal. This is your

Once your proposal and ethics package are approved

Each student will act as a reader for two proposal presentations. It is the responsibility of the readers to download the

IMPORTANT: *The average length of an honours thesis is 30 pages. Under no circumstances should a thesis go beyond 50 pages, excluding Appendices. Theses that are longer than 50 pages will not be accepted.* For a description of material suitable as appendices, see the APA Manual.

Before any further examination, the thesis must be approved in its final form by your supervisor. Again, remember to allow enough time before your submission deadlines for your supervisor to read the thesis a number of times and suggest revisions: the time during which you will be writing is a busy time for academic work, and you should plan for some delays in your supervisor's reading the drafts. Schedule the interim time for minor tasks, such as the compilation of references or table of contents. It may also take more time than you expect to make any revisions. The secret of good writing is rewriting.

If you plan to use university computing facilities, you should expect them to be crowded at the end of term. Do not set up your schedule to depend on last-minute access to anything you will need, from data processing to advice.

IMPORTANT!: Please understand that *g*
you with questions concerning statistics, reading drafts, etc. These remain the responsibility of your supervisor.

Stage 5: Oral presentation and defense

There will be a lecture to

EVALUATION

In general, grades for this course are based on three aspects of performance:

1. An assessment of the written thesis as independently evaluated by each member of the examining committee
2. An assessment of the quality of the oral defense, made by the examining committee;
3. An assessment of overall performance in the execution of the thesis research throughout the year, made by the course coordinators and your supervisor.

No fixed weights are given to these three aspects of the evaluation, but the greatest importance will be attached to the independent assessments made of the written thesis by each member of the examining committee.

Immediately after the oral defense, students will not be told their numerical grade, but the minimum letter grade that will eventually be assigned. The chair of the examination will also provide verbal feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of both the written thesis and the students' performance in the oral examination. The final numerical grades will not be determined