

PSYCHOLOGY 501
GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS
September 2014

Course Coordinators

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Course Outline
Mandatory Seminars for 501

Monday classes: 1:00-2:30
Wednesday classes: 11:30-1:00

Please read this material carefully. Save it for later reference - you should reread sections later as you proceed through the stages of your thesis.

Throughout this document, we will refer to “your course coordinator”. If you are in Section A, your course coordinator is Dr. Harkness. If you are in Section B, your course coordinator is Dr. Castelhana.

For the first two weeks of classes, you will be meeting regularly for the mandatory seminars. It is your responsibility to keep your course coordinator informed about your supervisor and proposed topic. Email has proven to be the most effective way to distribute information to the class, but it may take some time before we have complete and accurate lists. Remember to check your Queen’s e-mail regularly, and be sure that your mailbox is not full. If you do not receive any email messages in the first few weeks of the term, you should check with Ms. Allison Horwood in the Undergraduate Office or your Course Coordinator to ensure that we have your correct e-mail address in our database. We prefer that you use your university-based account for all e-mail correspondence pertaining to this course.

Please take notice of the PSYC 501 board outside the Undergraduate Office (Humphrey 225). The bulletin board is also where you will find material on things such as graduate fellowships and applications, etc. Please remember to check this board regularly.

Preface

These Guidelines have been prepared to help you negotiate your way through the course with a minimum of stress and confusion. You should study them before you begin work on your thesis, and consult the appropriate sections as you move through the year. Students usually find that there is a great deal for them to learn in the course because, for most of you this will be your first experience in carrying a research project through all of its stages. Learning how to do this presents great opportunities, but also challenges.

It is important that you are aware that not only must you complete your thesis successfully, but you must also do so within some fairly stringent and unavoidable time constraints. The deadlines are unavoidable because all of the work, (including formulation of the research plan, gathering the data, analysis of the results and preparation of the written report, and the examination), must be completed in time to allow submission of marks to the Faculty Office in the first week of May. As a result, you not only have a great deal to learn but you also have to do it on a fairly tight schedule.

Remember that the marks deadline for graduates is tighter than for other students, because marks not only have to be recorded but also must be used to calculate eligibility for graduation and class of degree. If you expect to graduate at the end of the academic year there is very little leeway -- should you become delayed, you seriously jeopardize your chance of graduating on schedule. Moreover, you will find that most stages of your research take considerably more time (about 3 times more!) than you might anticipate. Once you fall behind it is very difficult to catch up. Thus, over the years strict deadlines have been established in order to keep students on track. Adherence to the schedule is very much in your best interest, as it is established to facilitate completion of your thesis work on time. Finally, you should know that the resources available for this course are substantially lower now than in the past; so, there will be fewer people to help if you fall behind. In addition to your course coordinator, Nida Latif (graduate student) is the teaching assistant for this course.

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

Samples from unusual populations (such as prisoners, infants, school children, etc.) are interesting to work with but have been associated in the past with two major problems: (a) ethical clearance to work with such groups is more difficult to obtain and can cause unacceptable delays; (b) some students have had samples from such populations "arranged" only to be told they must wait (in some cases months) before starting, or even finding that the sample or access to it was no longer available at all. If you want to work with such populations, we strongly suggest that you consider your decision very carefully. If you decide to try it, an early start is particularly important and you should be prepared for some delays. You should also have a contingency plan for salvaging a thesis if (when) disaster strikes. If you are considering work with such a population, please consult with your course coordinator to review your plan and get their advice on the feasibility of the project, as soon as possible.

After choosing the problem, you have several weeks in which to generate a clear and definite proposal for your research project. This is done in

above. You will be randomly assigned a date for your presentation. You will also be assigned as a reader for two other presentations. When you are a reader, your responsibility will be to read the proposal and come prepared to ask several well-developed questions.

Each section will meet once a week for five to six weeks (depending on the number of students enrolled) and will hear three proposals at each meeting. Each student will prepare an oral presentation of their proposal, which they will deliver to other members of the seminar section (both students and the coordinator) to provide an opportunity for comment and discussion. You should provide a clear understanding of the precise methods to be used and the research design. You may use whatever aids you wish, (e.g., flow charts, diagrams, etc). We strongly recommend that you use a PowerPoint projector to present your material. You will be allowed a total of approximately 20 minutes. You should present the substance of the proposal, i.e., the problem with its background and rationale, research design, and proposed data analysis, in **no more than 10 minutes**, in order to leave time for group discussion.

For your PowerPoint presentation, be sure to bring a memory stick (that has been scanned for viruses) with a copy of your talk before the class begins. Remember, your talk should be **no longer than 10 minutes. You should bring your own laptop for your presentation. Mac users will need to bring an adaptor.**

Please note: Your proposal will be posted online on Moodle.

Your proposal presentation is an opportunity for you to get useful advice and feedback, as well as practice in preparing for your final poster defense. The seminars often produce very useful suggestions for revision and improvement of the proposals. Remember that the feedback you get is "free", (i.e., criticism on that occasion will not cost you any points; it is intended to show you possible problems to save you trouble later).

Each student will act as a reader for two proposal presentations. It is the responsibility of the readers to download their assigned proposal(s), from Moodle, to read in advance of the presentation. When acting as a "reader," come to class with written comments/questions that you have generated for the assigned proposal. You should start off with some brief comments (e.g., what did you like about the proposal). Also write out at least 5 – 6 well thought out questions. You might only ask a portion of these questions. Keep in mind that each proposal presentation has 2 readers and so you will want to have some questions on reserve (in case the other reader has the same questions as you). You do not have to hand in your written comments/questions. They are meant to guide the time you spend asking the presenter questions.

During seminars, all students will be asked to fill out a feedback form for each of the proposal presentations. This feedback is to be constructive to help each student better understand how their presentations came across. This will be valuable in learning about what needs more explanation, what is clear, what works, and what needs some attention.

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A few other salient points to note are:

1. *Equipment and Funds*

person who finds the thesis in the Psychology archives will read in order to decide whether to read the rest.

a) The abstract should be followed by the contributions page. This is a page that describes who (you? your supervisor? another student?) did what (e.g., data collection, training animals, data analysis, etc.) in the project. This page is intended to clarify your contribution to the thesis project.

b) The acknowledgement page should only be added after the defense, that is, when the final (revised, if necessary) thesis is handed in to the Undergraduate Office for binding.

Avoid abbreviations. Some are allowed, but the safer course is to use none. (If you must indulge, see the APA manual for guidelines on how to use abbreviations). Remember, a thesis is written for both a specialized and a general audience. Define your terms and explain your methods so that a reasonably intelligent reader can understand your thesis even if they are unfamiliar with the area.

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 *given the size of the class, it is not the TA's role to assist you with questions concerning statistics, reading drafts, etc. These remain the responsibility of your supervisor.*

Stage 5: Poster presentation and defense

This year, poster presentations will occur on a single day in April. There will be a lecture to help prepare you for the poster format and presentation. As has been done in past years, each presenter will be examined by a committee. The date and examiners for the poster presentations defenses will be posted in early March.

The defense format is designed to simulate a poster symposium at a professional conference. Each session (one in the morning and one in the afternoon) will be for 3.75 hrs. Each student will have approximately 15 minutes with the committee. The students will be asked to present the key findings from the research for the first 2-5 minutes and followed by 10 minutes of questions from their examining committee. The examining committee for the defense of the thesis will be composed of at least three faculty members: the chair (normally your course coordinator), your supervisor, and an additional faculty member. This faculty member will have not read your thesis and it is up to you to explain your thesis clearly and concisely. Each

committee member will ask two to three questions about your research. You will be informed about the composition of your committee when the thesis defense schedule is posted.

A copy of your thesis, approved by your supervisor, must be submitted *two weeks before the date of the poster presentation and defense*. To submit your thesis, you should **email a copy to psyc501@queensu.ca NO LATER than 3:00 p.m. on the due date.**

If you submit late, but before the scheduled defense date, you are not allowing enough time to read your thesis. If this is unavoidable, you must notify your coordinator immediately that you are going to be late. You may face late penalties.

It is important to practice your presentation before hand. Keep the presentation short and clear. By the time you are finished, you will likely find yourself starting to relax, and rightfully so, so you can proceed to the unrehearsed part of the exam. Don't worry if you are somewhat anxious before it starts - almost everyone is. The examiners expect this, and will try to help you relax so that you may truly demonstrate your ability.

Each member of the examining committee will then ask pertinent questions. You will be judged on how well you demonstrate mastery of your research problem and of the area generally. Some questions will be very specific, and others may be very general. You will not be able to tell from the questions how any given committee member evaluates the thesis - sometimes readers will save the toughest questions for the best theses.

In general, most of the variance in the grades is based on the written theses and defense. However, your lab work and participation in seminars and lectures is also taken into account. After the defense, you should make any essential corrections requested by the Chair to your thesis, and then hand in a copy for the Psychology Archives to the Undergraduate Office. You will be required to pay a binding fee. This must be done within one week of the poster defense.

DELAYS IN COMPLETING THE DEFENSE

1. Delays occasioned by illness, personal or family problems, etc., must be documented by the Associate Dean of Studies and reported to the faculty coordinators *in writing* in order to obtain an authorized delay and avoid penalty. Inform your supervisor, but you can get an authorization for the delay only from the course coordinator.

Delays occasioned by problems in completing research should also be reported in writing to the faculty coordinators as soon as they occur. Automatic or advance authorization for delays in the examination will not be given. Rather, the student must outline the circumstances producing the delay to the course coordinators, who will then decide on appropriate action. The maximum penalties that can be levied are shown below. Clearly, it will be in your best interest to minimize

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 your supervisor and your coordinator;
2. An assessment of the quality of the poster and 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.

After the defense, supervisors will provide verbal feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of both the written thesis and the students' performance in the defense, as well as students the minimum letter grade that will eventually be assigned. The final letter grades will not be determined until a few days after the exam period, when the 501 Coordinators will meet to review the entire set of grades. The final grades will be announced after they are submitted to the Registrar's Office.

CAUTIONARY NOTE

Inevitably, circumstances can arise that are beyond your control and which may interfere with timely completion of your thesis. *As soon as you become aware of a problem*, consult one of the course coordinators.

FINAL ENCOURAGING NOTE

These guidelines are full of cautions that may be unnecessary for most students, but problems do happen. However, you should not be discouraged or intimidated by the admonitory tone of this document. In the past, most honours theses have been of very high quality, and we expect the same again this year. Most students proceed through the challenges successfully, and rate the experience as educationally outstanding.

We are here to help you to make your thesis a high point of your intellectual growth and development, and to minimize the problems. Do not hesitate to ask for advice, consultation, or information when you need it. For more general academic resources that may be helpful to you throughout this course, you may also wish to visit the Arts and Science Undergraduate web page at <http://www.asus.queensu.ca/acsfacts>.

Revised September 5, 2014