

Psychology Honors Track Handbook

March 2024

The Departmental Honors Track in Psychology offers students in the Honors College a rigorous, research-oriented curriculum with which to pursue their Bachelor's degree in Psychology at the University of Utah. This is the only program through which psychology majors can have the Honors designation appear on their degree. The centerpiece of the Psychology Honors Track is a research project culminating in the submission of a written Honors Thesis and its presentation in a public forum. This handbook provides all you need to know to get started on and ultimately complete all requirements of the Psychology Honors Track, including your Honors Thesis.

The extended research experience provided in the Psychology Honors Track will provide substantial benefit to students who plan to apply to graduate or professional school. The Honors Track is also appropriate for students who just love psychology and want to learn more, even if they are unsure of their future plans.

The Psychology Honors Track provides students with the following opportunities:

- Take small advanced classes
- Investigate a topic of interest and importance in depth
- Work closely with a faculty member
- Show potential employers and admissions committees that you have a sustained commitment to a line of inquiry and a finished product to present
- Earn formal departmental honors in psychology on your transcript
- Present your work at university conferences and beyond

Table of Contents

Important People to Know & Contact Info	3
Overview of Required Phases of the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology	4
Requirements of the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology	5
Requirements for Transfer Students	6
More Detailed Information & Advice about Each Phase	7
Phase 1: Application to the University Honors College & Declaration of Honors Psychology Major	7
Phase 2: Meeting with Honors TA or HFA	7
Phase 3: Apply to Research Labs, Find a Research Assistant Placement, & Register for Research Experience credits	7
How do I find a research opportunity?	7
What if I want to work with a faculty member outside of the Department of Psychology?	7
How do I sign up for Research Experience credits?	8
Phase 4: Research Experience (PSY 4800-4806)	8
How do I show good performance as a Research Assistant?	8
Phase 5: Find a Faculty Research Advisor & Propose Honors Thesis	8
How do I find a Faculty Research Advisor?	9
Phase 6: Honors Thesis & Presentation (PSY 4998/4999 sequence)	9
What can I do for my Honors Thesis Research?	10
Advice on developing a thesis topic	11
Psychology Honors Electives	11
Frequently Asked Questions	12
Petition Process & Student Evaluation	13
Presentation Opportunities, Celebration Lunch, & Recognition	14
Other Publication & Recognition Opportunities at the U	15
Appendices	
Appendix 1. List of Psychology Honors Electives	16
Appendix 2. Sample Timelines for Honors Track	18
2.A. Students who start their college career at the U	18
2.B. Students who transfer to the U with more than 59 credits	19
2.C. Students who plan to apply for a fall graduation	20

Important People to Know & Contact Info

Honors Faculty Advisor for Psychology: The Honors Faculty Advisor, or **HFA**, is a faculty member within the Psychology Department who directs the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology. The HFA also teaches the Honors Thesis course series (PSY 4998/PSY 4999). The HFA works in concert with the Faculty Research Advisor to guide students through the completion of their Honors Thesis. The current HFA is [Dr. Lisa G. Aspinwall](#).

Honors Teaching Assistant for Psychology: The Honors Teaching Assistant, or **Honors TA**, is typically an advanced graduate student in Psychology. The Honors TA assists with the Honors Thesis course series (PSY 4998/PSY 4999). The Honors TA also serves as a resource for students who are interested in learning more about conducting Honors Research and, along with the HFA, can help students identify research opportunities. The current Honors TA is [Mirinda Whitaker](#). Please note that the Honors TA is available during the Fall and Spring Semesters, but not in summer. Schedule an appointment via <https://calendly.com/mirindawhitaker/4998>

Faculty Research Advisor: Each student is independently supervised by a Faculty Research Advisor. This is most often a faculty member within the Department of Psychology who has agreed to supervise the student on their Honors Thesis project. Research mentors are typically secured the semester before your Honors Thesis Proposal (Phase 5 application). Although you may work closely with a graduate student, each student is required to have a Faculty Research Advisor. More information about Faculty Research Advisors can be found on pg. 9.

Honors Advisory Committee: The Honors Advisory Committee, or **HAC**, is typically made of up three members (the HFA, the Director of Undergraduate Studies in Psychology, and a representative faculty member or Dean of the Honors college). The HAC will be in charge of reviewing the Psychology Honors Track procedures, as well as student applications, petitions, and performance.

Whom Do I Contact For Questions?

- For questions about getting research experience, planning your Honors Thesis, or the Phase 5 application process, students should reach out to the HFA or Honors TA.
- For questions about the Honors College requirements or degree-related inquiries, students should reach out to the [psychology advisors](#) or an Honors College Academic Advisor. We recommend that all Honors College students who are majoring in psychology meet with both the psychology advisors and the Honors College advisors.

Additional Resources:

- Honors College Honors Thesis [Webpage](#) and Honors Academic Advising [Webpage](#)
- [CSBS Student Success Center](#)
- Office of Undergraduate Research [Webpage](#)
- Honors Psychology Research Opportunity database [Webpage](#)

Overview of Requirements of the Psychology Honors Track

The major requirements of the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology are organized in six phases as shown below. Additional information about each of these phases is presented in the following sections.

Required Phases of the Psychology Honors Track

1	Be Admitted to the University Honors College & Declare Honors Psychology Major	
2	Meet with Psychology Honors TA or HFA	Ongoing: Take 2 Psychology Honors Electives (you may petition to substitute 1 Honors elective from any other department or program)
3	Apply to Research Labs	
4	Get Research Experience (PSY 4800-4806)	
5	Find Faculty Research Advisor & Propose Honors Thesis	
6	Complete & Present Honors Thesis (PSY 4998 & 4999)	

Requirements of the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology

The Departmental Honors Track in Psychology is intended to be flexible and accessible to all interested and eligible students, including transfer students (please see special notes on this page and the next for transfer students). Honors Track requirements typically take a minimum of three semesters to complete. To receive an Honors Bachelor's degree in Psychology, students must meet all of the following requirements:

- **Phase 1:** Be admitted to the University Honors College. (Visit honors.utah.edu for more information on requirements and how to apply). Then [declare the Honors Psychology Major](#) by completing one of the options below AND either meeting with an Academic Advisor or submitting the declaration form.
 - PSY 1010/1011: General Psychology with a grade of a B or better at the University of Utah
 - Posted Transfer Credit: General Psychology course equivalent with a grade of a B or better
 - Posted Advanced Placement Credit: Psychology AP score of 3 or Higher
 - Posted International Baccalaureate Credit: Psychology Standard or Higher Level score of 5 or Higher
- **Phase 2:** Meet with Psychology Honors TA or HFA.
 - Contact the Honors Teaching Assistant to discuss research interests and potential labs. Note some labs may require an application process. This phase should be started at least a semester before the semester you intend to join a lab. Note that there is no Honors TA in summer.
- **Phase 3:** Apply for research lab placement(s) and register for Research Experience class(es)
 - Once you have been accepted into a lab as a Research Assistant, the faculty member or Lab Manager will provide a permission code to add the appropriate PSY 4800-series course.¹
 - Students completing research outside of the department must complete the [PSY 4800 Research Contract](#) and have the position approved by the Director of Undergraduate Studies.
- **Phase 4:** Complete 6 units (typically 2 semesters)² of Research Experience (PSY 4800-4806) in approved laboratories.
 - Research experience (PSY 4800-4806) conducted with a faculty member in Psychology is automatically approved as meeting this requirement.
 - **Transfer students:** Transfer students who enter with more than 59 credits may satisfy the research experience requirement with 3 units of Psychology 4800-4806.
- **Ongoing:**
 - Meet all requirements for a Bachelor's degree in Psychology.
 - Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.5 overall, a minimum grade of B in all Psychology courses, and a cumulative GPA of 3.5 in all Psychology courses.
 - Complete 2 classes (6 units) of Psychology Honors electives (see Appendix 1 for a list of preapproved classes). Note that you may petition to substitute 1 Honors elective from any other department, program, or college, including the Honors College. We recommend that you

¹ The specific course number for Research Experience enrollment will depend on your field of study and the faculty lab you are enrolling in (see p. 8). Each Professor has a different section number. Students should ask psychology staff member [Wendy Reeve](#) for the class number and section number that correspond to their Faculty Research Advisor's lab.

² The minimum requirement is 2 semesters of research totaling 6 credit hours (3 for transfers), but students are encouraged to pursue their research in greater depth. Start early if you can!

consider Psychology Honors courses to meet these elective requirements, but encourage you also to consider courses in other departments or majors, such as Neuroscience, Family and Consumer Studies, Criminology, Educational Psychology, or Computer Science, that may be of interest to you and may help you prepare for the conduct of your Honors Thesis.

- **Phase 5:** Find a Faculty Research Advisor & submit a successful Honors Thesis Proposal (Phase 5 application).
 - Deadlines are typically in early November (to be eligible to take PSY 4998 in the spring) and mid-June (to be eligible to take PSY 4998 in the fall).
 - Students will not be given access to Phase 6 (PSY 4998) unless their thesis proposal is approved.
- **Phase 6:** Complete and present your Honors Thesis (PSY 4998 and 4999 sequence)
 - Complete 6 units of Honors Thesis coursework as part of the two-semester thesis course sequence (3 units of PSY 4998 and 3 units of PSY 4999). **Note that PSY 4998 can be used to meet the Honors College's elective requirements.**
 - Submit a written Honors Thesis (see pp. 9-11). The format of the Honors Thesis should be consistent with standard scholarly practice (i.e., Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and References, following APA style). As per University Honors policy, the thesis must be completed “with distinction.” Students will receive guidance and feedback on multiple drafts on their written thesis as part of PSY 4998 and PSY 4999. These two classes are typically taken during your final year (PSY 4998 in Fall and 4999 in Spring). However, students may elect to start the sequence by taking PSY 4998 in Spring and PSY 4999 in Fall if they submit a successful Phase 5 proposal by the early November deadline. See Appendix 2 for sample timelines for students planning to graduate in the Spring or Fall.
 - The final thesis is due in the same semester in which PSY 4999 is completed. Exceptions must be approved by petition.
 - Present the results of your research in an appropriate public forum (i.e., CSBS Student Research Day, Undergraduate Research Symposium) approved by the Psychology Honors Advisory Committee. This is typically done in the form of a poster presentation.

Requirements for Transfer Students

Welcome to the U! We recognize that students who transfer to the U have less time to meet Honors Track requirements. As noted above and summarized below, the program was designed to permit transfer students (those entering with more than 59 credits) to complete the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology by altering two key requirements:

1. Transfer students may satisfy the research experience requirement with 3 units of Psychology 4800-4806 (rather than the 6 units listed above).

Sample Timelines for Completing the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology

Sample timelines for completing the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology are presented in Appendix 2. Note that there is a separate sample timeline for students who started their careers at the U and for those who joined us as transfer students. There is also a sample timeline for students who plan to graduate at the end of the Fall Semester (rather than the more typical timing of a Spring Semester graduation). All timelines are provided as an example, but there are multiple ways to arrange your schedule to complete Honors Track requirements, including research experience and the Honors Thesis itself. The Honors Faculty Advisor and Psychology Advisors can work with students to create an individualized plan. This advance planning will be especially helpful to those of you

completing more than one major and those of you involved in certificate programs, premed classes, and other activities that involve meeting multiple requirements.

Details of Requirements of the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology

The Psychology Honors Track requirements consist of six phases (plus completion of the required Honors electives). This section presents additional information – and advice – about each phase.

Phase 1 is an initial application to the University Honors College, followed by declaration of an Honors Psychology Major.

Students are encouraged to make their initial application to the Honors College as early as possible in their academic careers in order to receive Honors-related advising concerning coursework and research opportunities. This initial application consists of materials required by the Honors College for their application. See this [website](#) for the current application requirements. If students are already enrolled in the Honors College prior to orientation and have completed their PSY 1010 or equivalent requirement, they will be declared after orientation. All other students must complete PSY 1010 with a B or higher before submitting the [declaration form](#).

It is important to emphasize that initial acceptance into the Honors College does not guarantee successful completion of the Departmental Honors Track. Students must complete the required research experience units with distinction, find a Faculty Research Advisor willing to supervise their thesis, and meet all of the requirements specified here, including completion of the required Psychology Honors electives and the Honors Thesis.

Phase 2 is meeting with the Psychology Honors TA or HFA.

Contact the Honors Teaching Assistant or Honors Faculty Advisor to discuss research interests and potential labs. Note some labs may require an application process. This phase should be started at least a semester before the semester you intend to join a lab. The Honors TA and HFA are available for meetings during the Fall and Spring Semesters (for contact information, see Important People to Know, p. 3). Note that there is no Honors TA in summer.

Phase 3 is applying to research labs, finding a placement, and registering for Research Experience credits.

How do I find a psychology research opportunity?

There are several ways to become involved in research with psychology faculty or faculty doing research related to psychology elsewhere on campus. You can learn about faculty research labs [here](#) and on individual faculty webpages. We also maintain a database of faculty in psychology and elsewhere on campus who have indicated that they have research opportunities for Psychology Honors students. [Access the Honors Psychology Research Opportunities database.](#)

Other ways to learn more about potential research opportunities are to visit faculty after class or during office hours and ask questions about their research. You can also meet again with the Honors Faculty Advisor or Honors TA to discuss your interests.

Once you've identified some opportunities that sound interesting, your next step is to contact faculty for more information about current opportunities and to set up a meeting. Note that some faculty have a specific application process for joining their labs.

What if I want to work with a faculty member outside the Department of Psychology for credit?

If you want to work with a faculty member outside the Department of Psychology for credit to meet the Research Experience requirement, you must submit a [PSY 4800 Research Contract](#) to the Director of Undergraduate Studies for approval. The research must be related to psychology in some

way. Please make these arrangements well in advance, as it can take some time to set up an appropriate section number for a faculty member who does not have an appointment in Psychology.

How do I sign up for Research Experience credits?

The PSY 4800-series consists of several research lab courses that students may take for credit to satisfy the Research Experience requirements for the Psychology Honors degree³. The process for signing up for these units can be confusing, as these courses are not listed in the schedule of classes (there would be too many of them, and they all need instructor permission to enroll). To enroll in these courses, you must make arrangements to work in a faculty lab (e.g., as a Research Assistant), and then **you may enroll with instructor permission**. These classes are typically taken for three units, although some faculty may be willing to supervise students for a lower number of units per semester (these arrangements are made individually with faculty labs). Importantly, there is no formal class to attend. This is why you will almost never see days and times listed for classes in the PSY 4800-series. Instead, you will likely be invited to attend lab meetings. Performance in this course series is evaluated by fulfilling all required lab duties. Individual faculty and supervisors will communicate the projects and tasks you will be expected to complete within your lab.

The reason we say 4800-series is that each of the major substantive areas of psychology has its own course number for Research Experience – for example, Social Psychology has PSY 4806. There is also a unique section number that corresponds to each member of the faculty—students should ask psychology staff member [Wendy Reeve](#) for the section number that corresponds to their faculty lab and the corresponding class number to register for. The section number can change each semester, and faculty are unlikely to know their own section numbers for this reason. To illustrate, let's say you have made arrangements to work with Dr. Jacqueline Chen in her social psychology lab. If Dr. Chen's section number were 004, you would sign up for Psychology 4806-004. It is essential to get this information right, or your grading information will go to another faculty member who has no way to know whose lab you are in!

Phase 4 is completing the required 6 units of 4800-4806 Research Experience (3 units for transfers).

How do I show good performance as a Research Assistant in a faculty lab?

Keep in mind that in asking a Faculty Research Advisor to supervise your Honors Thesis, you are asking that person to work with you for one year or more. For that reason, faculty often wish to see how students fulfill their responsibilities as RAs before agreeing to supervise you for this intensive individual research experience. In addition to completing all assigned tasks to the best of your ability and by any deadlines you are given, ask questions. Ask about the rationale for the study – why is it important, what theories are involved? Ask if there are additional readings that would help you understand the theoretical approach to the research, the methods used, controversies in the particular area of study, and so on. These individual research experience courses (PSY 4800-series) will be what you make them, and taking these active steps to learn as much as you can from the faculty member and graduate students and other research personnel working in the lab will greatly increase your learning experience.

Phase 5 is finding a Faculty Research Advisor and preparing and submitting the Honors Thesis Proposal.

The [Phase 5 application](#) is submitted to the Psychology Department and describes the proposed thesis project and its timeline. Prior to submitting a Phase 5 application, students must secure a Faculty Research Advisor who will agree to supervise the Honors Thesis. The application requires three elements: (1) 1-2 page description of project (including rationale, hypotheses, proposed methods, proposed

³ Psy 4800 is Research Experience: General; 4802 is Research Experience: Cognitive; 4803 is Research Experience: Neuroscience; 4804 is Research Experience: Clinical; 4805 is Research Experience: Developmental; 4806 is Research Experience: Social.

analyses, and importance to theory and application), (2) ½ page timeline outlining the steps needed to initiate, conduct, and complete the project, (3) a letter of support from a faculty member who has agreed to supervise the thesis. Phase 5 applications are reviewed twice per year, typically in early November and mid-June. In general, students should plan to submit this application shortly after the Spring semester of their Junior year or credit equivalent for transfer students. Alternative timeline options are provided in Appendix 2.

Only if a student's Honors Thesis Proposal is approved will they be given a permission to register for the first half of Phase 6, PSY 4998 Honors Thesis Research. Students whose proposals are not approved will be removed from PSY 4998.

How do I find a Faculty Research Advisor?

Typically, the Faculty Research Advisor will be a faculty member in the Department of Psychology with an active research program. The Psychology HFA and Honors TA can assist in identifying potential advisors, but cannot guarantee the availability of particular faculty or the willingness of faculty to supervise theses. Advisement by faculty who are not in the Psychology department is allowed upon approval by the HFA, provided the research topic is related to psychological science. In cases where students have well-defined research interests that are not represented by departmental faculty, a student may petition to have a primary advisor from another department (e.g., Psychiatry, Educational Psychology, or Neurobiology & Anatomy) provided that the petition outlines plans for coordination with the psychology HFA and that the resulting thesis conforms to the standards of the Department of Psychology. A meeting between the faculty outside the department and the Honors Faculty Advisor is necessary before approval can be granted. Please email the HFA with any questions about advisement.

Notes for Students Already Involved in a Faculty Research Lab. Most departmental faculty require at least one or two semesters of research experience in their own labs before considering supervising students for the Honors Thesis. However, being already involved in a lab does not guarantee that you will be able to conduct your Honors Thesis in that lab. Faculty willingness to supervise students varies depending on a variety of factors, including advisors' other commitments, preferences for certain types of projects, and a student's past performance in their lab. Thus, if you are already involved in a lab and would like to continue working with your Faculty Research Advisor on your Honors Thesis project, you should approach that individual **prior** to making your Phase 5 application to the Honors program. If your advisor is unable to support your Honors Thesis, you can still apply, but will need to make alternate arrangements for mentorship (that is, find another Faculty Research Advisor). These alternative arrangements need to be in place by the time of the Phase 5 Honors Thesis application.

Phase 6 is the completion of the Honors Thesis Sequence Courses, PSY 4998 Honors Thesis Research and PSY 4999 Honors Thesis/Project and Presentation.

The Honors Thesis in Psychology is a research project culminating in the submission of a written thesis and its presentation in a public forum, typically a poster session. The Honors Thesis in Psychology can take many forms, described below. This is typically completed in students' final year at the U.

Format. The Honors Thesis is prepared in a form similar to a psychology journal article, with a title, abstract (approximately 200-250 words), introduction (literature review, statement of research question and hypotheses), a complete method section (participants, design, procedure, measures), a complete results section (all analyses and results, with tables and figures to illustrate), a discussion section (outlining implications and conclusions), references, and where appropriate, acknowledgments of funding sources or conflicts of interest. In the PSY 4998 class, we cover how to write the sections and work with you to refine them through peer feedback and feedback from the Honors Faculty Advisor, the Honors TA, and your Faculty Research Advisor. These activities continue through the PSY 4999 class, which also covers poster preparation and practice presentations.

Length. The written product (Honors Thesis) is typically 15-35 pages long, including any tables, figures, and references. The appropriate length depends on the complexity of the research question (theories, methods, findings, discussion of implications for theory, alternative explanations, strengths and limitations of the study, clinical or practical applications, future research directions). The length may also depend on standards for journals in the particular subfield of psychology (cognition and neural sciences, clinical neuropsychology, clinical psychology, social psychology, developmental psychology, health psychology, human factors, etc.).

Examples. Examples of successfully completed Honors Theses in Psychology may be found [here](#) (open repository) and [here](#) (closed repository, which means you will have to login to see them).

What Can I Do for My Thesis Research?

There are several different kinds of research projects that may be appropriate for the Honors Thesis in Psychology. Importantly, the kind of project to be undertaken may be highly individualized – it is something that you and your Faculty Research Advisor will design together. Thus, the descriptions below are general and should be customized to your interests, those of your Faculty Research Advisor, and current research opportunities. The following options should be discussed in consultation with your Faculty Research Advisor.

Collecting Your Own Data (New Data)

One type of project involves designing and conducting an independent experiment, survey/questionnaire, interview, or focus group study in collaboration with your Faculty Research Advisor. These options have the value of providing hands-on experience with data collection. However, these typically take more time, not only because the researchers must enroll participants and collect data but also because a human subjects ethical review (IRB application) must typically be successfully completed before data collection can begin. (For some faculty labs, an IRB approval may already be in place, in which case no extra time need be allotted.) Our recommendation is that students interested in collecting new data for their thesis should be working on their thesis idea in the spring of their junior year (and no later than the summer before their senior year) to allow time for the human subjects review and data collection. When deciding whether to collect your own data, it is important to consider whether your research question involves a hard-to-reach-population (e.g., students who are from underrepresented groups or participants who are involved in a specific type of therapy). Underrepresented and patient populations often take longer to recruit, and thus you need to have a clear and feasible timeline in place that allows for participant recruitment and data collection.

New Analyses with Data That Have Already Been Collected (Existing Data)

Not all successful thesis projects involve collecting new or independent data. In many cases, consistent with trends for interdisciplinary research and team science, students have the opportunity to work with data that have already been collected in larger research projects (but not analyzed). This is fine, as long as the thesis carves out an independent literature review, presentation of hypotheses, new analyses, and other elements of the thesis. Many successful honors theses have been completed using data from projects that would otherwise be beyond the scope of an Honors Thesis because they involve data that are too expensive or time-consuming for students to collect on their own or that involve special populations (e.g., cancer patients, justice-involved youth) or equipment (e.g., fMRI) to which students would not ordinarily have access for research purposes. An example of this approach would be an Honors Thesis in which a student analyzed qualitative data (like interviews with adolescents and their mothers or with cancer patients) collected as part of a larger study.

In cases in which a Faculty Research Advisor does not have existing data suitable for an Honors Thesis, students may propose to use a number of datasets available online (e.g., the [General Social Survey](#), [Project Implicit](#), or [Pew Research Center](#)). If you will be using datasets outside of your immediate lab, the student and Faculty Research Advisor are responsible for ensuring these datasets have been made available for public use or outside analyses (all examples listed above allow researchers affiliated with

academic institutions to download and use these datasets). Other options capitalizing on existing data can include archival research (e.g., analyzing publicly available records, such as historical speeches or diversity statements) or conducting a meta-analysis (an analytic technique that calculates effect sizes for particular findings in order to examine all available studies on a question and then quantify in a common metric the overall strength of research evidence for a particular relationship).

Advice on Developing a Thesis Topic

Many students believe that an independent research project means they need to come up with the ideas, design, measures, funding, etc., on their own. This is almost never the case. Instead, you will work with a Faculty Research Advisor to jointly develop an idea that advances knowledge in some area of psychology. Almost always, the project is in the area of expertise and research interests of the Faculty Research Advisor (that way, the Faculty Research Advisor can offer meaningful guidance). The Psychology Honors Faculty Advisor and Honors TA can help you think through your interests and identify potential Faculty Research Advisors. In some cases (which require approval from the HFA), Psychology Honors students may have a Faculty Research Advisor who has an appointment in a different department, as long as the project primarily involves some aspects of Psychology. It would be highly unusual for a Faculty Research Advisor to agree to supervise a project outside of his or her area of expertise.

The best advice we have for thinking about potential topics and research opportunities for your Honors Thesis **is to get involved in a faculty research lab.** This will give you exposure to the research literature and methods used in a particular area of psychology. We realize that this is challenging as many labs can take on only a few undergraduate researchers, so please consult with the Honors Faculty Advisor and/or Honors TA if you would like help identifying research opportunities. You may also wish to ask professors and instructors of your current courses about research opportunities if those courses spark an interest in what you are learning. To help you find research opportunities, we have created a database of faculty who have indicated an interest in working with Psychology Honors students. [Psychology Honors Research Opportunities database](#)

Honors Electives

Students are required to complete 6 units of Psychology Honors electives. Of these, 3 units must be Psychology Honors electives, but students may petition to have an Honors elective from any other department or program count as the second required elective.

The Honors College requires students to complete 3 Honors electives. Importantly, PSY 4998 (the first half of the Honors Thesis sequence) will count as an Honors elective in meeting the Honors College requirements.

There are two different kinds of official Honors Electives that may be taken to meet the six required credits of Honors electives. **Honors-designated sections and classes** of any Psychology courses or courses from other departments may be used toward the six required credits of Honors electives. If you are signing up for a course that has an official Honors section and a regular section, be sure that you are enrolling in the Honors section. Otherwise, you cannot use the course to meet the Honors elective requirement. **Classes from any department at the 5000-level** also count as Honors electives.

We also list current and upcoming Psychology Honors Electives [here](#).

Important notes. Psychology Honors Electives are small courses that are not offered every semester. Thus, if you see something on the schedule of interest to you, it's important to take it when it is offered as it may not come around again for another two or even three years. Also, many 5000-level courses have prerequisites, so please include this information in your course planning.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I am just about to start my senior year. Am I too late to do the Honors Thesis?

A1: If you already have research experience in a psychology lab (typically, through enrollment in the 4800-series Research Experience classes required for the Honors degree), you may still be able to complete the two-semester honors thesis sequence, but you would need to find a Faculty Research Advisor and submit the Phase 5 application before the deadline, which is typically in mid-June. Exceptions are sometimes made for applications submitted in Summer provided the student has a plan in place for successful implementation of the thesis, has secured a Faculty Research Advisor, and has petitioned for a Phase 5 application deadline extension with the HFA.

A2.:If you do not have any research experience, it may be too late by the start of your senior year to make arrangements to complete the honors thesis. We recommend a *minimum* of three semesters to complete the required research experience, plan the thesis, submit your Phase 5 application, and then complete the thesis (taking PSY 4998 and PSY 4999 in consecutive semesters). You should still contact the Honors Faculty Advisor to discuss your unique situation and examine your options.

Q: What is the PSY 4988/4999 sequence, and how do I sign up for it?

A: PSY 4998/4999 is the Honors Thesis course sequence (Phase 6), which guides students through completion of their Honors Thesis project, presentation, and final written product. Students must enroll, and exhibit satisfactory performance, in **both** courses for completion of the Honors Track in Psychology. Students can only enroll in these courses after approval of their Phase 5 application. All students whose Honors Thesis Proposal has been approved are guaranteed a spot within PSY 4998 (this course will never “fill up”!). Permission codes are given out by the HFA.

Q: If a faculty member has agreed to have me work in their lab as a Research Assistant (RA), does that mean that the faculty member has agreed to supervise my Honors Thesis?

A: No, this is a separate determination, and often based on your performance as a Research Assistant in a faculty member's lab. If you are having a good learning experience in your current lab, and you have a strong interest in the research areas covered by the lab, you should ask the faculty member supervising the lab to meet with you to discuss whether he or she is willing to supervise your Honors Thesis. These decisions are made on an individual basis, and may depend on things like a faculty member's other advising commitments, sabbatical leave (if they are not "in residence," they will be hard for you to find and probably not a good choice to supervise your thesis), and other responsibilities. If a faculty member declines to supervise you for the Honors Thesis, it does not necessarily mean that he or she doubts your capabilities as a student. Instead, the professor may simply be overcommitted. In that case, ask if the faculty member might recommend you to another faculty member as you work with the HFA and Honors TA to find another Faculty Research Advisor.

Petition Process and Student Evaluation

We encourage students to be both active and *proactive* in seeking help from the HFA, the Honors TA, their Faculty Research Advisor, and the Psychology Lead Advisor and Honors College Advisors in making sure that they stay on track to complete the Honors Thesis. If a student is not on track to complete their Psychology Honors Thesis, it is recommended that they reach out to these sources of support to formulate a plan to get back on track following any issues or delays.

Student evaluation and continuation in the Honors Track. Although the Honors Advisory Committee (HAC) will officially admit students to the departmental honors track, individual faculty members retain full discretion in agreeing to supervise students for the Honors Thesis. For example, a Faculty Research Advisor may elect to admit an honors student to his or her lab on a provisional basis prior to formally agreeing to supervise an Honors Thesis. If the student demonstrates insufficient performance or does not meet deadlines, the Faculty Research Advisor must first notify the student in writing that they are not meeting the expectations and standards of the Departmental Honors Track (with copies to the HFA and HAC). This notification must set clear guidelines for steps that a student must take to remain in good standing in the lab and complete an Honors Thesis. Following major issues or repeated performance issues, a Faculty Research Advisor may decide to discontinue advising a student in their lab and/or may decline to supervise the student's Honors Thesis. The HAC will provide guidance to faculty and students on ways that faculty should communicate their individual expectations concerning the quality, amount, and timeliness of research productivity they expect from Honors students. The HAC can further provide feedback to students on how to meet these expectations.

In addition to the discretion of the Faculty Research Advisor, the HAC also has discretion concerning whether to allow students to remain enrolled in the Departmental Honors Track. For any of the following reasons, the HAC may review a student's progress in order to evaluate continuation in the program:

1. If a student changes their proposed thesis project, they will need to petition the HAC and submit a new written proposal, which the committee will review before determining whether a student may continue in the program. Note that this petition and new proposal are only required for major changes. If questions arise about what constitutes a major change, we recommend early consultation with the HFA.
2. If a Faculty Research Advisor is no longer willing to advise a student (due to performance issues or changes in a faculty member's availability to supervise the thesis), the Faculty Research Advisor shall advise the HAC. Unless a new advisor can be secured within 2 months, the student will be terminated from the Departmental Honors Track. If a new Faculty Research Advisor is secured, then a new proposal must be submitted and a consultation with the HAC must occur before continuation in the program is granted.
3. If a student cannot complete all Honors Thesis requirements on time while enrolled in PSY 4998/4999, they must petition the Honors Advisory Committee with reasons for the delay and a timeline for completing the requirements (see "Petition Process" section on the next page for more information on submission and evaluation of student petitions). Petitions for Honors Thesis extensions must be signed by the student's Faculty Research Advisor to indicate they have agreed to a revised timeline and are willing to continue to supervise the thesis. If the HAC approves, then the student will have no more than one year from the completion of PSY 4999 to finish the Honors Thesis. If the student does not complete the Honors Thesis and meet the requirement for presentation in a public forum within the established timeline, they will be terminated from the Departmental Honors Track and will not receive a passing grade in either PSY 4998 or 4999.
4. If a student is not making sufficient progress in PSY 4998 per the HFA or the Honors TA, then a formal meeting of the HFA with the student and the student's Faculty Research Advisor must occur before the student may enroll in PSY 4999.

Petition process. The HAC will evaluate all student petitions regarding the Psychology Honors Track. These evaluations will be completed on a rolling basis (at least monthly), with all decisions communicated in writing (typically email) to students, their Faculty Research Advisors, and the Lead Psychology Advisor. This handbook notes when petitions are needed for various exceptions or delays, including but not limited to the following:

- Course substitutions for the Honors Track Requirements should be submitted here before the Phase 5 application: <https://psych.utah.edu/undergraduate/course-petition.php>
- Petitions for extension or delays of the Honors Thesis should be submitted via email to the HFA (see point 3 on p. 13).
- Petitions for substitution of required research experience should be submitted prior to the Phase 5 application.
- If a student changes their proposed thesis project, they should email the HFA as soon as possible, who will provide guidelines on creating the petition and forward the information to the HAC for review if needed.
- If you encounter issues or delays for which you are unsure how to proceed during your Honors Thesis, please contact the HFA for advisement and additional information on any required petitions or memos.

Remediation and reinstatement. The HAC will work with individual students and Faculty Research Advisors in cases where a student is making insufficient progress in either the research experience requirements or the Honors Thesis (including PSY 4998/4999) or needs to repeat a course to maintain his or her GPA at the 3.5 level required for successful completion of the program. In all such cases, a written plan of remediation and conditions for reinstatement to full Departmental Honors status will be formulated, and student progress will be monitored through CSBS Advising as needed.

Presentation Opportunities, Celebration Lunch & Recognition

Presentation Opportunities. All Honors students are *required* to present their work in poster form at one of the following venues: the [CSBS Student Research Day](#), the University of Utah [Undergraduate Research Symposium](#), or any other special undergraduate research presentation events on campus (or virtually). Students may also present their work at other state-wide and national research conferences, as well as University of Utah student research days at the state legislature (e.g., [Research on Capitol Hill](#)) and other professional and community venues as appropriate.

Psychology Honors Celebration Lunch. Each semester, the Department of Psychology hosts a special lunch event for graduating Honors students and their research advisors. We look forward to celebrating your success! The Honors Faculty Advisor and Honors TA will provide information to students about this event during Psy 4999.

Outstanding Psychology Honors Thesis Award. The department will award a prize for the most Outstanding Psychology Honors Thesis in the amount of \$500 each year. Approximately one month prior to Spring graduation, the Honors Faculty Advisor will solicit drafts or final projects to be included for consideration for the department thesis award. Self-nominations for the award are allowed. Interested students should notify the HFA. The review of submissions and selection for the award is conducted by the Department of Psychology Undergraduate Committee. Although submissions are due in Spring, students completing their thesis in either the Fall or Spring semesters are eligible for the award.

Other Publication & Recognition Opportunities at the U

Publication in the University of Utah Undergraduate Research Journal (URJ). Students have the option to submit their Honors Thesis Research to the [University of Utah Undergraduate Research Journal](#). Submitting one's research to the URJ should be discussed in consultation with your Faculty Research Advisor. This is not a requirement of the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology.

Undergraduate Research Scholar Designation. [This designation](#) appears in the awards section of student transcripts to recognize a student's commitment to their development as an undergraduate researcher. To be eligible for this optional designation, you must both present at the Undergraduate Research Symposium and publish your work in the Undergraduate Research Journal (see above). This is not a requirement of the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology.

Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and Funding. Students can optionally apply for the UROP program (<https://our.utah.edu/urop/>) or small research grants (<https://our.utah.edu/for-students/travel-small-grants/>) through the Office of Undergraduate Research. This is not a requirement of the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology and can be completed concurrently with the Research Experience course (PSY 4800-series) and the Honors Thesis work (PSY 4998/4999). That is, research experience and student research projects supported by UROP may be the same projects that students conduct to meet requirements of the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology. In this way, funding from UROP may help students meet these requirements.

Appendix 1

Honors Electives in Psychology

A total of 6 units of Psychology Honors electives is required for the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology. The courses listed in this appendix meet this requirement. Students may petition to have an Honors course from any other department or program on campus count toward this elective requirements (see petition process on page 14).

Note that there are two different kinds of official Honors Electives that may be taken to meet this requirement. **Honors-designated sections and classes (HON)** may be used toward the 6 required Honors elective credits. If you are signing up for a course that has an official Honors section and a regular section, be sure that you are enrolling in the Honors section. Otherwise, you cannot use the course to meet the Honors elective requirement. **Classes at the 5000-level**, whether they are in psychology or other departments, also count as Honors electives.

Below is a list of Honors electives that may be offered in Fall and Spring semesters, but offerings will vary by semester. Remember always to check the class schedule for the official list of courses offered in a particular semester, and be sure you are enrolling in the Honors section of the course if it has more than one section. Courses meeting the Psychology Honors Elective requirement are rarely if ever offered in the summer, so it's important to plan carefully based on Fall and Spring offerings.

Honors Courses and Honors Sections

- 3461 Honors Health Psychology (3 units)
- 4080 History and Theories of Psychology (3) (students must enroll in Honors section or 4081)
- 4131 Cognition in the Wild (3)
- 4451 Honors Intergroup Relations (3)
- 4460 Social Psychology of Health and Illness (3) (students must enroll in Honors section or 4461)
- 4960 Honors Topics in Clinical Psychology (3)
- 4961 Honors Topics in Developmental Psychology(3)
- 4962 Honors Topics in Cognitive Psychology (3)
- 4963 Honors Topics in Personality & Social Psychology (3)
- 4964 Honors Topics in Health Psychology (3)

5000-Level Classes (except 5950 and 5951)

Instructor consent is required to enroll in any of the courses below.

- 5120 Advanced Human Cognition (3)
- 5150 Advanced Cognitive Electrophysiology (3)
- 5220 Cognitive Development across the Lifespan (3)
- 5250 Applied Statistics (3)
- 5260 Social Development across the Lifespan (3)
- 5360 Biological Bases of Affective and Cognitive Processes (3)
- 5410 Advanced Social Psychology (3)
- 5420 Methods in Social Psychology (3)
- 5499 Introduction to Quantitative Methods (single-semester advanced stats class) (3)
- 5700 Neuropsychology (3)
- 5770 Sexual & Gender Diversity (3)
- 5775 History & Psychology of the Gay Family in America: Origins, Context, & Implications (3)

Preapproved Honors Electives Taught Outside of the Psychology Department

Below are preapproved courses outside of the Psychology Department that may count for one elective. Only one course from this list may be taken as a Psychology Honors elective.

Note that you may petition to have Honors electives from any other department, program, or college, including the Honors College, count toward the Psychology Honors Elective requirement.

<https://psych.utah.edu/undergraduate/course-petition.php>

- ED PS 5060 Forgiveness & Anger Reduction (3)
- ED PS 5061 Change Using Positive Psychology
- ED PS 5062 Coping with Difficult People (2)
- ED PS 5063 Enhancing Happiness and Life Satisfaction (3)
- ED PS 5064 Resilience after Divorce: Life Reconstruction
- ED PS 5065 Quality Intimate Relationships (3)
- ED PS 5066 Growing from Traumatic Life Experiences (3)
- ED PS 5067 Overcoming Self-Defeating Behavior (3)
- ED PS 5068 Meditation & Stress Reduction (3)
- ED PS 5069 Change Addictive Thinking (3)
- ED PS 5070 Changing Children's Behavior Using Positive Methods (3)
- ED PS 5072 Positive Psychology of Work & Career (3)
- ED PS 5073 Positive Psychology of Disability (3)
- ED PS 5074 Developing a Healthy Body Image (3)
- ED PS 5960 Special Topics in Educational Psychology
- LING 5240 Child Language Acquisition (3)
- HONOR 3200 Research University (3) (may only count if a different course is used to fulfill the Honors writing requirement)
- HONOR 3214 Foundations in Social Sciences (3)
- HONOR 3300 Deductive Logic (3) (may only count of the different courses used to fulfill the Honors Science Core Requirement)
- PBHLT 5530 Global Health

Appendix 2
Sample Timelines for Completing the Departmental Honors Track in Psychology

A. Students Who Start Their College Career at the U.

Year 2	Year 3		Year 4	
Fall/Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply to Honors College & Declare Honors Psychology Major (Phase 1) • Reach out to Honors TA for introductory meeting (Phase 2) • Begin applying to research labs – it's fine to start your research experience early! (Phase 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Honors Track Checklist • Make advising appointments with Psychology Lead Advisor and Honors College Advisor • Research Experience: PSY 4800-4806 (3 units, start of Phase 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin planning Honors Thesis research • Research Experience: PSY 4800-4806 (3 units) • Secure a Faculty Research Advisor • Submit Phase 5 application (deadline mid-June) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll in PSY 4998 (Phase 6) • Plan and conduct Honors Thesis research • Begin writing abstract, introduction, and method sections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll in PSY 4999 (Phase 6) • Analyze your data, write results and discussion sections • Write and submit Honors Thesis • Present your Honors Thesis research • Apply for graduation (yay!)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You need to complete a total of 6 units of Psychology Honors electives (or substitutes approved by petition). • It doesn't matter when you complete electives, but you should keep a close eye on the schedule of classes as specific courses may be offered only every other year or every 3 years. Ask the HFA or psychology advisors for a list of Psychology Honors electives or consult the Psychology Honors Track webpage. 				

B. Students Who Transfer to the U with More Than 59 Credits.

Year 3		Year 4	
Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply to Honors College & Declare Honors Psychology Major (Phase 1) • Reach out to Honors TA for introductory meeting (Phase 2) • Begin applying to research labs (Phase 3) • Make advising appointment with Psychology Lead Advisor and Honors College Advisor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Honors Track Checklist • Research Experience: PSY 4800-4806 (3 units, Phase 4) • Secure a Faculty Research Advisor • Begin planning Honors Thesis research • Submit Phase 5 application (deadline mid-June) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll in PSY 4998 (Phase 6) • Plan and conduct Honors Thesis Research • Begin writing abstract, introduction, and method sections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll in PSY 4999 (Phase 6) • Analyze your data, write results and discussion sections • Write and submit your Honors Thesis • Present your Honors Thesis Research • Apply for graduation (yay!)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You need to complete a total of 6 units of Psychology Honors electives (or substitutes approved by petition). • It doesn't matter when you complete electives, but you should keep a close eye on the schedule of classes as specific courses may be offered only every other year or every 3 years. Ask the HFA or psychology advisors for a list of Psychology Honors electives or consult the Psychology Honors Track webpage. 			

C. Students Who Start Their College Career at the U and plan to apply for a Fall Graduation

Year 2 Spring/Summer	Year 3 Fall Spring/Summer		Year 4 Fall Spring		Graduation Fall
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply to Honors College & Declare Honors Psychology Major (Phase 1) • Reach out to Honors TA for introductory meeting in Spring (Phase 2) • Begin applying for research labs – it's fine to start your research experience early! (Phase 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Honors Track Checklist • Make advising appointment with Psychology Lead Advisor and Honors College Advisor • Research experience: PSY 4800-4806 (Phase 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure a faculty mentor • Research Experience: PSY 4800-4806 (Phase 4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Phase 5 application (typically early November) • Research Experience: PSY 4800-4806 (Phase 4 may be finished here) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll in PSY 4998 (Phase 6) • Plan and conduct Honors Thesis Research • Begin writing abstract, introduction, and method sections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enroll in PSY 4999 (Phase 6) • Write and submit your Honors Thesis • Present your Honors Thesis Research • Apply for graduation (yay!)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You need to complete a total of 6 units of Psychology Honors electives (or substitutes approved by petition). • It doesn't matter when you complete electives, but you should keep a close eye on the schedule of classes as specific courses may be offered only every other year or every 3 years. Ask the HFA or psychology advisors for a list of Psychology Honors electives or consult the Psychology Honors Track webpage. 					