

Undergraduate Departmental Honors in Psychology Handbook University of Kansas

Current Undergraduate Psychology Honors Program Director:

Amber Watts, PhD
Associate Professor of Psychology
amberwatts@ku.edu
Fraser 417
785-864-2604

I. Program Overview

Undergraduate Departmental Honors in Psychology is a program that guides students in conducting an independent research project that will qualify them for graduation with Honors. This program is distinct from [College Honors](#). A student may earn College Honors, Psychology Honors, neither, or both. The Psychology Honors program requires students to have a faculty research mentor, take **two** semesters of PSYC 460: Honors Thesis (formerly called Honors in Psychology), complete a research project, and present their findings in a public forum (such as the Symposium for Undergraduate Psychology Engagement in Research (SUPER) or the Undergraduate Research Symposium). Per the college rules, students must complete the course with a grade of B or higher. Per the college rules, the completion of these requirements must be certified to the departmental honors director by at least three members of the college faculty who have read the report of the independent research.

II. Requirements to Apply for and Graduate with Departmental Honors

To APPLY for Psychology Departmental Honors

To be eligible to apply for departmental honors in psychology, you must have a **minimum of 3.5 Major GPA** in your Psychology coursework.

To GRADUATE WITH Psychology Departmental Honors

To be eligible to graduate with departmental honors in psychology, you must:

- Maintain your minimum 3.5 Major GPA in your Psychology coursework
- Complete 4 credits (2 semesters) of PSYC 460: Honors Thesis (formerly Honors in Psychology) and pass the course with a grade of B or higher.
- Complete an Honors project and have it approved by the Psychology Honors Program Director and two other faculty members, who will communicate the approval to the college honors office.

IIA. Details about GPA requirements

1. The major GPA will include work completed at other institutions, as well as at KU, including both upper- and lower-level courses.
2. Previously there was a college requirement that the overall GPA had to be 3.25 or higher to qualify for departmental honors, however that policy is no longer a requirement per a policy change approved by College Academic Council (CAC) in March 2019.

3. The Major GPA is not the same as the KU Major Jr/Sr GPA on the DPR form. That includes all KU coursework in the major at the 300 level and above.

III. Instructions to Apply for Undergraduate Departmental Honors in Psychology

There are three steps in the application process to be considered for the Departmental Honors in Psychology program.

1. Find a Faculty Mentor willing to sponsor your Psychology Honors Research Project
2. Request permission from the Undergraduate Psychology Honors Program Director to enroll in PSYC 460: Honors Thesis (*Formerly called Honors in Psychology*). Note: permission is based on meeting GPA requirements, and verification of mentor agreement.
3. Fill out the Honors Intent Form <https://deptsec.ku.edu/~clasforms/forms/form/47>

IIIA. Finding a faculty mentor

- We highly recommend beginning to work on research in a faculty member's lab early in your time at KU, rather than waiting until your senior year. You can typically participate in research with a faculty member as part of a PSYC 480 course or as a volunteer.
- To find a faculty mentor for Honors, try talking to a faculty member who you have taken a class with or look at the list of Psychology department faculty and their areas of research interest ([Psychology Faculty Mentors List: https://psychology.ku.edu/faculty](https://psychology.ku.edu/faculty)). Please note that some faculty also have a separate website with more details about their research.
- Reach out to the faculty member (by email, in class, or during their office hours) and ask if they are willing and available to serve as your research mentor during the **two** semesters in which you plan to enroll in the Honors Thesis course (PSYC 460), usually Fall and Spring of your senior year.
- Please note that not all faculty members will be available, so we recommend having 2-3 possible faculty mentors in mind.
- On rare occasions, you may petition to have a faculty mentor who is not a member of the Psychology department. In these cases, you must get approval from the Honors Director in addition to getting agreement from the faculty member. Even if your mentor is not in the Department of Psychology, your Honors project must be within the field of psychology. Faculty members must be tenure track in a psychology-related field to be approved as a faculty mentor of an Honors project.

III B. Honors Intent Form

- Once your departmental honors intent form is received, the college office will calculate your Major GPA to confirm you are on track to meet the requirement by the end of your graduating semester. If you are not on track to meet the requirements, College Advising and Student Services will notify you and your faculty advisor by email.

IV. Timeline

The psychology department requires students to complete **two** semesters of PSYC 460: Honors Thesis (formerly Honors in Psychology). Therefore, students must declare their intention **no later than** the second to last undergraduate semester (the first semester of the senior year), but preferably in the second semester of the junior year. An ideal timeline is given below, though alternate timelines are

possible. Please discuss your plans with the Honors Program Director as soon as possible. **We are unlikely to approve requests to join the Honors Program once the course is already in session, especially for a student who does not yet have a faculty mentor.**

Ideal Timeline

Junior year

- Student identifies honors research project mentor
- Student submits honors intent form to College Undergraduate Academic Services
- Student contacts Psychology Honors Director to request permission to enroll in PSYC 460 for the next semester
- Psychology Honors Director verifies student's GPA is on track to meet the graduation requirements of a minimum Major GPA of 3.5

First (usually Fall) semester of Senior year

- Student enrolls in PSYC 460: Honors Thesis (*formerly Honors in Psychology*)
- Student creates research proposal in collaboration with project mentor and PSYC 460 course requirements
- Student seeks permission to enroll in PSYC 460 for the required second semester

Second (usually Spring) semester of Senior year

- Student enrolls in PSYC 460: Honors Thesis (*formerly Honors in Psychology*)
- Student completes research project and course requirements with a grade of B or higher
- Course instructor verifies with the college that the project has been completed
- College verifies that student achieved a Major GPA of 3.5 or higher

V. Course Description - PSYC 460: Honors Thesis (formerly Honors in Psychology)

A seminar to guide Psychology majors who meet minimum GPA requirements through an honors thesis project, leading to graduation with Honors in Psychology. Enrollment for two credits in each of two semesters during the junior or senior year is required, along with permission from the instructor and identification of a faculty member as research mentor.

VI. Requirements of the Honors Project

- Students must complete a research project and publicly present their findings under the direction of a mentor. Opportunities for public presentation include the PSYC 460: Honors Thesis course, the Undergraduate Research Symposium, the Psychology Symposium for Undergraduate Psychology Engagement in Research (SUPER) poster session, or others with prior approval from the director of the Psychology Honors Program.
- Students must make an independent contribution to the research, even if it is a part of ongoing research by the faculty mentor or other researchers in the lab.
- It is NOT required for students to collect their own data. They may use secondary analysis of existing data to meet program requirements.
- Typically, data analysis is part of the process, though some mentors may opt to have students conduct a systematic literature review or meta-analysis.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. The honors project may NOT be the same project submitted for McNair, Global Scholars, or other research and scholarship programs.
2. The student must be able to attend the PSYC 460 course. If the time of the course conflicts with students' other courses, they may not be able to complete the requirements to graduate with honors.
3. It is not required to take both semesters of the course in a row (e.g., Fall 2024, Spring 2025). It is possible to complete the two semesters of the PSYC 460 course with a gap in between (e.g., Spring 2024, Spring 2025).
4. PSYC 460 (Honors Thesis) is separate from PSYC 480 (Independent Study). It is possible to enroll in both simultaneously and work on the same project for both courses.

Notes For Faculty & Staff

- Ensure that PSYC 460 requires a permission code
- Major GPA eligibility can be confirmed in the degree progress report (DPR)
- The course instructor will communicate with the faculty mentors about course requirements, timelines, and project expectations
- The course instructor will require the students and faculty mentors to complete a survey listing details about the role the student will take in the project, the project goals, and details of the mentoring agreement (e.g., type and frequency of meetings).
- The department can petition to make an exception if the student does not meet all college and departmental requirements

For Additional Information

Department Website: <https://psychology.ku.edu/psychology-undergraduate-program>

College Website: <https://collegeundergrad.ku.edu/departmental-honors>

Canvas Page for Psychology Advising: <https://canvas.ku.edu/courses/106244>

College Contact

Courtney McKay mckayc@ku.edu 785-864-3500 109 Strong Hall

Department Advisor Contact

Shelly Mann shellymann@ku.edu 785-864-2816 205E Bailey Hall