

General Requirements for Honors in Psychology

August 2024

The Honor's Program provides a capstone experience for our majors. It features the opportunity to conduct an empirical research project under the direction of a psychology faculty member, write a thesis describing the findings, and defend it to a faculty committee. It also features the opportunity to take a graduate course. These experiences stretch you as a scholar and provide you with an informative window on your future.

Admission Requirements

Students are admitted to the Honors Program after the second semester of their junior year. Admission requires:

- (a) an overall GPA of 3.70 (or higher) by the beginning of the senior year;
- (b) a GPA of 3.70 (or higher) in the major by the beginning of the senior year;
- (c) successful completion of PSYC 200W by the end of the second semester of the junior year. Students are not eligible for honors in psychology if they have not completed PSYC 200W by the time they enter the first semester of the Honors Program (which is typically the first semester of the senior year). Petitions to waive this requirement will not be entertained.
- (d) formation of a relationship with a potential faculty mentor for your thesis, typically by working in the research lab of a psychology faculty member. The earlier you establish this relationship the better, so well before your honors year, get thee to a lab!

All Emory grades are considered in the calculation of the cumulative GPA. The psychology GPA is based on grades in all courses that count toward the major, and may include 3 credits of PSYC 499R or 494R as an elective.

(See "Petitions," below, for information on what to do if the GPA requirements are not met.)

Admission Process

There is no formal application for the Honors Program in psychology. Instead, you and your faculty advisor (see more on Advising, below) will complete and sign an honors contract form (forms available in the Psychology office or from Ms. Lorenza Houser; lhouser@emory.edu). The form must be turned in to Ms. Houser by Add/Drop/Swap of the fall semester of the honors year. Upon receipt of the signed contract, Ms. Houser will verify your eligibility for the Honors Program and if you meet the requirements, she will enroll you in the Program and in the Honors Seminar for the fall (see below).

Many faculty are reluctant to accept an honors student with whom they have not worked in a research setting. Accordingly, students are strongly encouraged to establish a research relationship with a psychology faculty member well in advance of the honors year.

Program Requirements

To be eligible for honors upon graduation, in addition to maintaining the GPA eligibility requirements, students will be expected to (a) enroll and participate in the Honors Seminar (PSYC 495A-1; 3 credits) in the first semester of their honors year, (b) enroll in a 3-credit graduate seminar or course (numbered 500 or higher) during their honors year, (c) complete a research project and describe it in a written thesis, and (d) successfully defend the thesis to a committee.

Honors Seminar. The Honors Seminar is offered only in the fall. Students undertaking honors in the fall and spring semesters of their senior year will enroll in the Honors Seminar in the fall of their senior year. Students who plan to graduate in December of their senior year will enroll in the Honors Seminar in the fall of their junior year. The Honors Seminar is a required element of the Honors Program, so please plan accordingly. Also, please note that enrollment in the Honors Seminar (PSYC 495A-1) is by permission only. Once you have completed and turned in your honors contract, you will be enrolled in the seminar by psychology department staff.

Graduate Seminar or Course. To fulfill the College requirement, students are required to take (and pass!) a graduate seminar or course. The course must have a designation of 500-level or higher. The course must be at least 3 credits. In addition:

- (a) Grade base. If the course is offered for a letter grade, then students must take the course for a letter grade. Taking the course S/U will not satisfy the College requirement. If the course/seminar is taken for a letter grade, then it can count as one of your electives for the psychology major. On the other hand, if the course/seminar is offered only on an S/U basis (i.e., a letter grade is not an option), then taking it S/U will satisfy the College requirement. However, it will not count as one of your electives for the major.
- (b) Disciplinary home of course/seminar. We strongly encourage students to take a psychology graduate course (PSYC 500+). However, if you are unable to find a PSYC 500+ course in which to enroll (most require instructor approval and have a limited number of seats), you may seek approval to enroll in a class outside the psychology department. The class must be in the College and you will need advanced approval of the honors director in order for the course to count toward the Honors Program requirement. (Approval will not be granted retrospectively.) You may seek approval for a course outside the College only if it is a statistics course (the most likely source would be the Rollins School of Public Health). A graduate course outside of Emory will not count toward the Honors Program requirement.

Levels of Honors

Upon successful completion of the written thesis and oral defense of it, the student's committee will make a recommendation for the degree of honors (honors, high honors, highest honors). Medals indicating the degree of honors are presented to successful candidates by the College and are worn at commencement.

Honors represents satisfactory completion of the program, with an overall average of 3.70.

High Honors represents completion of the program with outstanding performance, including an overall average of 3.70 and a thesis of quality sufficient for oral presentation to scholars in the candidate's field.

Highest Honors represents completion of the program with exceptional performance, including an overall average of 3.70 and a thesis of a quality suitable for publication.

For additional information, please see: <https://catalog.college.emory.edu/community/honors-program.html>

Advising & Co-Advising

Students undertaking the Honors Program in the Department of Psychology are very strongly encouraged to select an honors advisor from among the regular members of the psychology faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences (ECAS). (Rough-and-ready operationalization—those pictured on the

faculty board outside the main Psychology office.) In collaboration with their advisor, they also will select an honors committee that includes their advisor, another member of the regular ECAS psychology faculty, and a faculty member from outside the Department of Psychology.

In some cases, prior to their honors year, students may have been working in a psychology laboratory with an Emory faculty member who is not a regular ECAS psychology faculty member. They may desire to continue that ongoing research relationship for purposes of the honors thesis. (Though as stated above, students are very strongly encouraged to select an honors advisor from among the regular ECAS psychology faculty.) **If the primary advisor for the thesis is not a regular ECAS psychology faculty member, students are required to select a Co-Advisor who is a regular member of the ECAS psychology faculty** and to provide a justification for selection of both members of the advisory team. **The advisory team must be approved by the departmental Honors Committee by July 1st of the honors year.** (*Note:* students whose primary advisor is a regular ECAS psychology faculty member are not required to select a Co-Advisor.)

In the case of a primary advisor who is not a regular ECAS psychology faculty member, **in collaboration with both Co-Advisors, the student will be required to prepare and submit a proposal** outlining the major question(s) to be addressed in the thesis, as well as the proposed method and analytic plan (see below for guidelines on the proposal). **The proposal must be reviewed and fully approved by the Co-Advisors by August 1st of the honors year.** Upon approval, an e-mail outlining the arrangement and approval must be sent to the Director of the department Honors Program. Any subsequent substantive changes to the major question(s) and/or methods must be approved by both Co-Advisors. In addition, both Co-Advisors must approve the written thesis before it is defended and both must approve of the final version submitted to the College.

Proposal Guidelines:

The proposal should be a 1-2 page document in which you (a) clearly state the hypothesis(es) to be tested, (b) describe the proposed method and analytic plan, (c) describe the advising plan (e.g., how you will work with your Co-Advisors; professional meetings or additional coursework relevant to the honors research, etc.), and (c) outline the timeline for completion of the work.

Committee Composition

Your honors committee will have at least three members, two of whom must be regular ECAS psychology faculty members. (For purposes of committee composition, psychology faculty from Oxford College will be considered regular members of the ECAS psychology faculty.) There also must be a committee member who is a member of the Emory faculty from a department or program other than psychology. In addition to these requirements, the composition of the committee will depend on the home department (and institution) of your primary advisor:

(a) If your primary advisor is a regular ECAS psychology faculty member, your 2nd member also will be a regular ECAS psychology faculty member, and your 3rd member will be an Emory faculty member from outside of psychology. You may include additional members, as desired.

(b) If your primary advisor is an Emory faculty member but is not a regular ECAS psychology faculty member, then in addition to your Co-Advisor (who must be a regular ECAS psychology faculty member), you will need to appoint a second regular ECAS psychology faculty member, as well as an Emory faculty member from outside of psychology (for a total committee of 4 faculty).

(c) If your primary advisor is not an Emory faculty member, then in addition to your Co-Advisor (who must be a regular ECAS psychology faculty member), you will need to appoint a second regular ECAS psychology faculty member, as well as an Emory faculty member from outside of psychology (for a total committee of 4 faculty).

In summary, honors committees always will feature two members of the regular ECAS psychology faculty and an Emory faculty member from a department or program other than psychology. The exception will be a psychology faculty member from Oxford College, who for purposes of committee composition, will be considered a regular member of the ECAS psychology faculty. Committee members must have regular faculty status—staff members, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students are not eligible to serve in this capacity.

GPA Petitions

To be eligible for the Honors Program, by the beginning of the first semester in the Honors Program (typically the fall of the senior year), students must have an overall GPA of at least 3.70 and have a psychology GPA of at least 3.70. In some cases, students who wish to undertake honors may fall shy of this threshold either in terms of the overall GPA or the major GPA. In such cases, they may choose to submit a petition to waive the GPA requirement. Students who fall shy of BOTH the overall and major GPA requirements are not eligible to petition the GPA requirement.

Overall GPA. Petitions of the overall GPA requirement are made to Emory College of Arts and Sciences. Students who wish to petition must have at least a 3.45 cumulative GPA. (See ec.honorsprogram@emory.edu for more information on the GPA waiver petition process and requirements.) Generally, students whose overall GPA is below 3.70 have until the end of the fall semester of their honors year to bring it to 3.70. If they do not reach this benchmark, they are not eligible for honors.

Psychology GPA. Students who wish to petition must have at least a 3.45 GPA in the major. As for the cumulative GPA requirement, they have until the end of the fall semester of their honors year to bring it to 3.70. If they do not reach this benchmark, they are not eligible for honors. **The petition to the departmental Honors Committee must be made by August 1st of the honors year.** It must contain a statement of the current GPA and a clear plan for how the requirement of 3.70 can be met over the course of the fall semester.