

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (HONOURS) IN PSYCHOLOGY

(Correct at 11 August 2011)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

N.B. These questions are relevant to students who wish to enrol in an Honours year of study after they have finished their undergraduate training in psychology. If you are already a student in the Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) program at the Springfield campus, please consult staff there for further information about your fourth year of study.

What is Honours in psychology?

Honours in psychology is a program consisting of eight units of study that students complete after they have finished their undergraduate degree in psychology. It is accredited by the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC). Students must complete the Honours year or equivalent if they want to apply for provisional registration with the Psychology Board of Australia. Please check the following web site for details.

<http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/en.aspx>

How long does it take to complete Honours?

Students would usually complete the program in one year full-time or two years part-time. This period can sometimes be extended in extenuating circumstances that can be documented. However, any extensions of time would need to be approved in advance by the Honours coordinator and the Associate Dean Academic in the Faculty of Sciences.

Can I study externally?

Yes and no. Honours is run in workshop mode, rather than weekly classes. All students, regardless of whether they are enrolled as on-campus or external students, must attend four one-week workshops during the year. Each workshop usually runs for four to eight days, though part-time students only need to attend the workshop days for the courses in which they are enrolled. That is, part-time students would still attend workshops four times a year, but will only attend some of the days at those workshops. Full-time students would be required every day.

When are the workshops held?

The workshop timetable is usually available from January each year. Successful applicants are sent the timetable with their letter of offer. If you live at a distance, you will need to organise your own accommodation for the workshop blocks. Information about possible avenues for accommodation will also be included in your offer letter.

Workshops usually occur outside of the normal semester teaching weeks (i.e., semester breaks). The likely dates for the 2012 workshops are as follows:

Workshop 1: 15-24 February
Workshop 2: 10-16 April *
Workshop 3: 5-12 July **
Workshop 4: 17-20 September

* Please note that the April workshop will also include classes on Saturday and Sunday. We usually try to avoid this, but it will be necessary in 2012 due to the Easter weekend occurring in the middle of the semester break. If we did not include teaching on the weekend of 14-15 April, the other alternative would have been to split the workshops on either side of Easter. (N.B. There are no weekend classes during the other workshop blocks).

** There may be some slight adjustment of the July dates due to some staffing requirements.

What if I am unable to attend some workshop days?

Workshops are compulsory. If you are not able to attend the workshops, you cannot enrol in the Honours program. If you are unavailable some days during workshops, you would usually not be able to continue in the courses you missed. Attendance at workshops is one of the requirements for our program accreditation.

Can I choose between the Toowoomba and Springfield campuses?

The Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) program offered at the Springfield campus is accredited as a four-year sequence, whereas the Bachelor of Science (Honours) offered at the Toowoomba campus is a separate program for those who have already completed an undergraduate accredited sequence in psychology either at the USQ or elsewhere. Therefore, students would usually need to complete their Honours year at their home campus. That is, students would usually only do their Honours year at the Springfield campus if they had already completed their undergraduate degree at that campus. If students had completed their undergraduate degree at the Toowoomba campus or at another university, they would usually have to do their Honours year at the Toowoomba campus. Although fourth year courses are similar at the two campuses, there are some differences in content and the way in which the courses are delivered. The Springfield campus runs weekly classes, so it would only be suitable for students who could attend each week. The Toowoomba campus runs Honours in workshop mode, so students would need to attend the four workshop blocks each year.

Sometimes, a small number of students who have not completed their undergraduate studies at the Springfield campus may be able to complete Honours at the Springfield campus if they are able to attend weekly classes. This would be dependent on the quota for each year and cannot be guaranteed. Students interested in that option should discuss the requirements with psychology staff at the Springfield campus. Once a student has commenced their Honours program at one campus, they would usually be expected to complete the program at the same campus. If a student's circumstances change and they need to switch campuses, they would need to discuss their case with the Honours coordinator.

Are overseas students able to do the Honours program?

Yes, but overseas students can only do the Honours program if they can enrol as full-time on-campus students at the Toowoomba campus for the duration of the Honours year. We are not accredited to run the program offshore. If overseas students do come to the Toowoomba campus for their Honours year, they still just do the four workshop blocks with the other students; they do not have extra classes in between. However, they will be able to work on their thesis and other assignment work in between workshops. It is due to immigration and visa requirements that overseas students must study full-time on campus for the Honours year.

What are the entry requirements for Honours?

The entry requirements are as follows:

- You must have an APAC-accredited undergraduate degree majoring in psychology. Overseas students who have not completed their undergraduate studies through USQ will need to have their degree assessed by the Australian Psychological Society (APS) before applying for the Honours program. The APS charges a fee for this assessment. For further information, go to the APS web site:

<http://www.psychology.org.au/>

Click on “Study and Careers” and then “Assessing Psychology Qualifications”.

- Your undergraduate studies in psychology must have been completed no more than three years prior to applying for Honours. So if you are interested in applying for the 2012 intake, you would have needed to complete your undergraduate psychology studies no later than Semester 2, 2008.
- You must have a Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 5, according to our Honours formula. However, please note that the actual GPA for entry is usually higher than that, as there are limited places available each year.

What formula do you use to calculate GPA for entry into Honours?

The Grade Point Average for entry into Honours is based just on the straight average of all of your psychology courses (i.e., all those that have a PSY code at USQ or the equivalent at other universities). We do not usually count fails. If you have repeated any subjects, we count the higher of the two grades.

What is the GPA cutoff each year?

While the minimum requirement is a GPA of at least 5.0, the actual cutoff is usually higher than that. It varies each year, depending on the number of applicants, the number of staff available for thesis supervision, and the quota we are given. In most years, the cutoff has been between 5.4 and 5.7, though it has gone a bit lower in some years.

How many Honours places are offered each year?

The number fluctuates each year depending on staffing, resources, and other university factors. We usually take between 40 and 50 new students, though the number has been lower or higher in some years.

What can I do if my undergraduate studies were completed more than three years ago?

If they were completed between three and five years ago, we would usually recommend that you do four undergraduate courses to regain currency. These courses would usually be:

- PSY2100 Research Methods in Psychology A
- PSY3111 Research Methods in Psychology B (i.e., formerly PSY2110)
- Plus two third-level psychology courses

If your undergraduate studies were completed more than five years ago, we would usually recommend that you complete the Graduate Diploma of Psychological Studies, which involves eight courses and three pre-requisites. Please contact the Honours coordinator for advice before enrolling in further studies.

What can I do if my Grade Point Average is too low?

If you are close to the cutoff, it would be worthwhile repeating some subjects and applying again the following year. If you are interested in this option, please contact the Honours Coordinator for specific advice regarding the subjects that you should do. If your GPA is very low, just repeating a few subjects is unlikely to increase your chances of gaining entry into Honours. In those cases, it may be better for you to enrol in the Graduate Diploma of Psychological Studies. This would involve studying eight courses (plus an additional three courses if it is more than five years since you have done the pre-requisites). However, the advantage is that we would only count those subjects when calculating your GPA for entry into Honours. Therefore, if you performed better in the Graduate Diploma of Psychological Studies, you would improve your chances of being accepted into the Honours program. (N.B. If you gained any exemptions in the Graduate Diploma, we would still count the grades you got for the exempted subjects). Please note that completion of the Graduate Diploma of Psychological Studies does not guarantee you a place in the Honours program. Entry is still competitive. For more information on the Graduate Diploma, go to the following web site and click "show all sections" on the left-hand menu.

<http://www.usq.edu.au/handbook/current/sci/GDPS.html>

Can I do the Graduate Diploma of Psychological Studies instead of Honours?

No. The Graduate Diploma of Psychological Studies is equivalent to the undergraduate accredited sequence in psychology. It provides you with the pre-requisite so that you can apply for Honours. It is not equivalent to Honours. Some other universities have a Graduate Diploma or Postgraduate Diploma that is equivalent to Honours, but they are different programs than the Graduate Diploma of Psychological Studies that we run.

Should I apply to other universities as well as USQ?

It is usually a good idea to apply to other universities, especially if you think your GPA may be too low. The APAC web site lists the accredited psychology programs in Australia. You will then have to contact other universities to find out their requirements. Other universities will probably have a different calculation for GPA and some also have other requirements. The web address for APAC is:

<http://www.apac.psychology.org.au/>

Click onto "Search for courses in Australasia" and then follow the prompts.

My grades were affected by extenuating circumstances. Can I get special consideration?

Some students may have extenuating circumstances that have contributed to a lower GPA (e.g., poor health or personal issues). Such students can apply for special consideration. There are two types of special consideration.

1. If students had a lower performance at a particular point in their undergraduate program due to major extenuating circumstances that can be documented (e.g., serious illness, death in the family), they can include the relevant documentation with their application and ask that the grades for one particular semester be excluded when calculating the GPA. The Honours Coordinator would usually only agree to this if it was clear from the student's academic history that the period of poor performance was most likely due to the extenuating circumstances (e.g., if the student usually attained A's and B's, but received C's in the semester during which the extenuating circumstance occurred). Again, only the grades for one semester could be waived (if at all).

2. If students have a circumstance that has affected their entire degree (e.g., prolonged illness), they can also ask for special consideration. In order to be given special consideration, however, they would still need to be within .2 of the cutoff in that year. For example, if the cutoff for a given year was 5.5, a student with 5.3 could be considered for special consideration if they had appropriate documentation indicating how their undergraduate performance had been affected by the particular circumstance.

While students are welcome to apply for special consideration, it should be noted that there are no guarantees that their application will be successful. We do not have a set number of places kept aside for students with special circumstances. In some years, no special consideration offers are made.

Can I choose whether to start in Semester 1 or Semester 2?

Our main intake is at the start of Semester 1. We usually do not have a mid-year entry, though that can change from year to year.

If I am offered a place, can I defer my studies?

No. Due to the large number of applicants we have each year, we cannot keep a place open for someone who wishes to defer. If you are unable to take up your offer for the start of Semester 1, you would need to decline your offer and apply again for the following year. Please note that there is no guarantee you would necessarily be offered a place again the following year, as it always depends on the cutoff for that year. However, if you commence your Honours program and then have an extenuating circumstance that affects your ability to complete the program, the Honours coordinator can discuss various options with you including deferment of your studies.

How do I apply for the Honours program?

Applications must be received at the USQ by 31 October in order to be considered for the following year. Late applications cannot be accepted. If you have already sent in an application using a Direct Entry Form, that is fine. However, the online application system is now up and running. You can submit an online application at the following link.

<http://applyonline.usq.edu.au/?RightNowID=StudentAdmin01>

In the box for type of program, select "undergraduate".

Can I apply earlier than October?

Yes, you can apply earlier. However, we cannot usually process your application until the end of Semester 2 when all of the Semester 2 results are known.

How can I apply by 31 October if I won't finish my undergraduate studies until the end of Semester 2?

If you are a USQ student, we will add your Semester 2 results when they become available. If you are not a USQ student, please send in your Semester 2 results as soon as they are available.

Can I finish my undergraduate studies in summer term and still start Honours in Semester 1?

It depends. If you are just finishing one or two non-psychology electives in Summer Term, then that wouldn't change your GPA. If you had met the GPA cutoff for that year, we would usually offer you a place with the condition that you pass your summer term courses. If you are completing any psychology subjects over summer, that is a little trickier. If you already have a high GPA, then we may still offer you a conditional place. However, if your GPA is already close to the cutoff, we may not be able to offer you a place. We look at those applications on a case-by-case basis. Overseas students with summer term courses to complete would usually not be offered a conditional place because the results would not be finalised in time for those students to make visa applications. Students who are completing summer term courses need to be aware of the tight time frame, as we run our first workshop round about the time that the summer term results are released. Some students also find it very demanding to study for summer term courses and then go straight into the Honours program, though others cope well.

What courses do I study in Honours?

There are eight units of study in the Honours year.

Semester 1

PSY4001 Applied Psychology Project 1 (1.5 units) *
 PSY4111 Multivariate Analysis (1 unit)
 PSY4020 Ethical and Professional Practice (1 unit)
 PSY4030 Skills and Issues in Counselling (1 unit)

Semester 2

PSY4002 Applied Psychology Project 2 (1.5 units) *
 PSY4040 Advanced Psychological Theory (1 unit) **
 PSY4070 Advanced Assessment (1 unit)

* PSY4001 and PSY4002 make up the Honours thesis.

** Students studying at the Springfield campus would usually study PSY4065 Positive Psychology: Theory and Application in place of PSY4040.

Part-time students would usually do the coursework subjects in their first year (i.e., PSY4020, PSY4030, PSY4040, and PSY4070) and the thesis and statistics subjects in their second year (i.e., PSY4001, PSY4002, and PSY4111).

For more information about these courses, please consult the course specifications:

<http://www.usq.edu.au/course/specification/>

Click on the most recent year, then "P", then scroll down to the courses in which you're interested.

Can I get any exemptions for courses in the Honours year?

No. All courses are compulsory.

Do I have to think of a thesis topic in advance?

No. Staff members nominate the thesis project areas and these are advertised on our web site prior to the start of workshops. Once the list is posted on the web site, students contact different lecturers to enquire about supervision. Students also contribute to the design of the research. If

your application for Honours is successful, you will get more information about the thesis when you receive your offer letter.

When are the offers made?

We try to make the first round of offers within a week of the Semester 2 results being released and definitely before Christmas. It may take a while for your official offer to arrive, as Student Administration deals with programs right across campus and that is a peak time for them. However, we send an email to let successful candidates know that they will be receiving an official offer in due course. If you are likely to be away round about that time or if you change your email address, please let us know.

Do you have a second round of offers?

We don't have a set date for second round offers. However, we keep making offers if places become available (e.g., if someone with a first-round offer declines their place). We usually keep making offers until close to the start of workshops if places are available. However, if you are an overseas student, you may find that it would be too late to make your visa application if you receive a second-round offer. Some distance students may also find a late offer difficult.

What is the main difference between studying as an undergraduate student and studying as an Honours student?

The main difference is that Honours students are seen as professionals in training. Therefore, we expect that Honours students will be able to take more initiative for their own learning. Staff will certainly provide relevant materials and guidance throughout the program, but students will also need to be more proactive in searching out relevant literature, analysing the material they are learning, and engaging in regular discussion group forums. High levels of critical thinking and in-depth analysis are required and there is more of a focus on the application of knowledge and acquisition of skills. While a good academic performance in the undergraduate program provides a solid foundation or baseline for further study, the Honours program will challenge you in new ways. For example, you will be further developing skills in counselling, professional ethics, assessment, and intervention and will be more fully engaged in research. Some students may also need to brush up on their statistics skills and knowledge of SPSS prior to commencing the Honours year, especially if it has been several years since they last studied statistics. If you have aspirations of going on to further postgraduate study after Honours, you would usually need to get a 2A class of Honours which would mean you would need to get a GPA of 5.5 or greater. Some universities may accept students with lower GPAs than that, but many require at least a 2A. Therefore, you may find you need to perform at a higher level than in your undergraduate studies in order to achieve the desired result. Although this may sound challenging, staff will guide you as you rise to meet these challenges. Hopefully, you will find the Honours program to be very rewarding both professionally and personally.

How much does it cost to do the Honours program?

For details regarding fees, please go to the following web site and click onto "course fee finder":

<http://www.usq.edu.au/fees/default.htm>

For further information, current students should contact Student Administration on fees@usq.edu.au

Prospective students can lodge a query at the following site:

<http://usqstudy.custhelp.com/cgi-bin/usqstudy.cfg/php/enduser/ask.php>

As well as the fees, students will need to purchase textbooks for each course, and download some course materials. Students will also need to download and/or print articles required for their thesis. Distance students will also have the added costs of travel and accommodation during workshop weeks.

Who do I contact if I have further questions?

You should contact the Honours coordinator:

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University of Southern Queensland
Toowoomba QLD 4350

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FAX: 07-4631 2721

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