



## School of Psychology Honours Guidelines



EMBEDDED HONOURS PROGRAM TITLES	HONOURS CONTACT DETAILS
1865 Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) 1500/1834 Bachelor of Psychology (Embedded Honours)	4 <sup>th</sup> Year Academic Program Adviser <a href="mailto:Psychology-Year4-ACA@westernsydney.edu.au">Psychology-Year4-ACA@westernsydney.edu.au</a>
END-ON / STAND-ALONE HONOURS PROGRAM TITLES	
1905 Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours)	

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# Honours Guidelines and Procedures

These Honours Guidelines contain procedural information specific to the conduct of Honours programs in the School of Psychology at Western Sydney University. Some guidelines are specific to the discipline of Psychology, whose Honours programs must comply with the Accreditation Standards of the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC).

The Honours Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the University's *Honours Procedures* which describe the framework for all Honours courses (both end-on and embedded) at Western Sydney University: <http://policies.uws.edu.au/view.current.php?id=00156>

## Application Process

### Application Assessment

In accordance with the *Honours Procedures (Clauses 9-10)* Honours applications and admission within the School of Psychology are considered by a designated staff member who determines eligibility against the admission criteria, then “*approves or declines admission and advises the Office of Student and University Planning, which arranges administrative/system requirements and communication to the student*”. In the School of Psychology this is carried out by the 4<sup>th</sup> year Academic Program Adviser under supervision from the relevant Director of Academic Program, in accordance with the program-specific rules specified below.

### Program rules

#### Embedded Honours Programs

Students in 1865 Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) or 1500/1834 Bachelor of Psychology (Embedded Honours) are automatically assessed for eligibility to progress to Honours at the completion of their 1-3 year sequence.

Entry to the fourth year of the Bachelor of Psychology (Honours) is limited to students who have achieved an Admission Average Mark (AAM) of 70+ across Level 2 and 3 psychology subjects [65+ across all level 2 and 3 subjects for versions 1500 and 1834]. Students who have successfully completed the first three years, but who do not achieve this standard will exit early and graduate with an APAC-accredited 1-3 year Bachelor of Psychological Science.

#### End-on Honours Programs

Application for the end-on 1905 Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours) is open to students who have:

1. satisfactorily completed all subjects of the first three years of an accredited three-year WSU undergraduate Psychology program within the last 10 years. This includes completion of the following programs:
  - Bachelor of Psychological Science
  - Bachelor of Psychological and Social Sciences
  - Bachelor of Social Sciences (Psychology)
  - Graduate Diploma of Psychological Studies
  - Bachelor of Arts with a Key Program in Psychology
  - Bachelor of Arts/ Bachelor of Laws with a Key Program in Psychology
2. obtained an Admission Average Mark of 70+ across their level 2 and 3 psychology subjects.

Entry into 1905 Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours) is restricted by supervisory capacity. Limited places are available in this program and meeting the admission criteria does not guarantee entry. Where the number of applicants exceeds the availability of supervised places, the 4<sup>th</sup> year Academic Program Adviser ranks applicants based on Admission Average Marks (AAMs) and any other admission criteria, in accordance with recommendations by the School Academic Committee. Offers are made based on this ranking process and the number of supervised places available each year.

- Students apply for 1905 Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours) via the WSU Online Application Portal: <https://westernsydney.uac.edu.au/ws/>.
- Applications for entry into Honours for the following year open mid-August and close October 31 each year.

The Bachelor of Psychological Science (Honours) is not open to applicants who completed their accredited psychology degree at an institution other than Western Sydney University (WSU). External applicants should consider applying for the Graduate Diploma in Psychology.

## Deferment

Regardless of program, there is no provision for deferring an offer of a place. If a student cannot enrol in the recommended sequence of subjects either full-time or part-time as outlined in the Handbook (i.e., no variations), the student may apply again in subsequent years if they are still eligible. However, entry into honours is not guaranteed in subsequent applications.

## Criteria for Application

In accordance with the *Honours Procedures (Clause 12)* the criteria for application to a end-on or embedded Honours Program in the School of Psychology are as follows:

- a. *Achievement of a threshold Admission Average Mark (AAM)*. For psychology, the AAM is 70+.
- b. *Statement of Intent or School equivalent*. For psychology applicants, there is no need for a Statement of Intent. Instead, successful applicants are invited rank their preferences for project topic areas, as provided by the coordinator for the thesis subject (BEHV4004: Psychology Research Thesis). Students may request a specific supervisor, and this will be taken into consideration when supervisors are allocated. However, there is no guarantee of allocation to a particular topic area or supervisor.
- c. *Appointment of a principal supervisor by the Dean of the School*. In the School of Psychology this is delegated to the BEHV4004 subject coordinator and year 4 Academic Program Adviser, under supervision from the relevant Director of Academic Program.
- d. *Demonstrated satisfactory academic writing skills appropriate to the discipline*. In the School of Psychology this is demonstrated through the AAM admission requirement and prior completion of an APAC-accredited 1-3 psychology sequence.
- e. *Completion of a specified number of credit points in the applicant's undergraduate degree*. In the School of Psychology this condition is met through the required completion of an APAC-accredited 1-3 psychology sequence prior to consideration for the Honours year.

## Calculation of the Admission Average Mark (AAM)

The AAM for psychology Honours programs is calculated as the average mark across all level 2 and 3 psychology subjects (core and elective). Please note:

- Where a student achieved an F or FNS grade for a subject which they subsequently re-took and passed, the F and FNS instances of the subject are not included in AAM calculation.
- Where a student has advanced standing specified for a named WSU level 2 or 3 psychology subject, marks for the externally completed subject contribute to AAM calculation. Students must provide transcripts from the other institution(s) as requested. Where only a grade is available on a transcript, the mid-point mark for that grade band will be used.

## Research Requirement in Psychology Honours

The research component of the psychology Honours program is directed by APAC Accreditation standards. As specified in the APAC Evidence Guide v1.3, for a Bachelor Honours Degree...

*Students will undertake a research project that includes a research question, empirical literature review, data analysis, reporting of results and discussion. The research project should be structured so that students participate in the key steps involved, including the formulation of research questions, the analysis of data to test the research question, the interpretation of the findings and the writing of the report.*

In the School of Psychology these accreditation requirements are met through the completion of a substantive thesis within the subject BEHV4004: Psychology Research Thesis. The required length and format of the Honours thesis are detailed in the BEHV4004 subject learning guide.

## Thesis supervision

As specified in the *Honours Procedures (Clauses 18-19)*, all Honours candidates must have a principal supervisor, and may have one or more co-supervisors. Principal supervisors should be qualified at the PhD or Masters level (AQF level 9 or higher), or have equivalence in professional standing, as well as having an established publishing and research track record.

## Appointment of Supervisors

Appointment of supervisors takes place once a successful applicant has accepted their offer and enrolled into the thesis subject (BEHV4004). In the School of Psychology, appointment of supervisors is managed by the BEHV4004 subject coordinator and 4<sup>th</sup> year Academic Program Adviser, under supervision from the relevant Director of Academic Program.

## Procedures for Addressing Supervision Issues

As per the *Honours Procedures (Clause 20)*: “Where a student has issues or concerns regarding the supervision of their Honours studies, they should approach the School Honours Coordinator or equivalent position within their School for help managing the issues.” In the School of Psychology, this role is carried out by the BEHV4004 subject coordinator.

If the BEHV4004 subject coordinator is involved in supervision of the student, the student should approach the 4<sup>th</sup> year Academic Program Adviser. If both the BEHV4004 subject coordinator and 4<sup>th</sup> year Academic Program Adviser are involved in supervision of the student, the student may approach the relevant Director of Academic Program, the School's Associate Dean (Research and HDR), or the Deputy Dean for advice.

## Ethics Approval

All research carried out at WSU involving human participants must be in accordance with the *Research Code of Practice*, guided by the following national guidelines:

- Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007)
- National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007).

Any Honours research that involves undertaking experiments, surveys, interviews, focus groups, or any other methodological approach involving human participants, requires ethics approval, the first step of which is submission to the university's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). This Committee examines the research merit and integrity of applications to undertake Honours research. It is essential that students submit application for ethics approval as a matter of **priority** at the earliest possible time during the Honours program. In accordance with the *Honours Procedures (Clause 17)* no experiment, data collection or fieldwork can be undertaken without the appropriate ethics approvals.

WSU uses the Human Research Ethics Application (HREA) for ethics applications to the HREC. Guidance on completing this form can be obtained from [https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research\\_ethics\\_and\\_integrity/human\\_ethics/apply\\_for\\_human\\_research\\_ethics\\_review](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research_ethics_and_integrity/human_ethics/apply_for_human_research_ethics_review)

Students work closely with their supervisor(s) to complete and submit the HREA application and other required forms to the HREC. Supervisors are named on the HREAs submitted for their student's research.

In some instances, students will conduct a study based on a project design for which their supervisor has already received ethics approval. In these cases, the student is usually required to submit an amendment to the original HREA.

Further information about ethics can be found at:

[https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research\\_ethics\\_and\\_integrity](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/research/research_ethics_and_integrity)

## Thesis Progression and Submission

### Timeframe and Submission Dates

The normal period of candidature for students enrolled in a psychology Honours program is one year full-time, or its part-time equivalent. The timeframe for the examination process for Honours theses is restricted to ensure all School Honours candidates are allocated an equitable amount of time to complete candidature requirements and to ensure that all candidates' grades are processed in time for consideration of higher degree applications and scholarships.

The thesis submission date and other key dates relating to the honours research project in the School of Psychology are detailed in the BEHV4004 subject learning guide.

### Lodgement of Thesis

School of Psychology Honours theses are to be submitted to the BEHV4004 subject coordinator via Turnitin through the BEHV4004 vUWS site.

### Procedure for Applying for an Extension of Submission Date

Extensions for submission of an Honours thesis are only granted under unforeseen, extenuating circumstances, in compliance with the WSU *Disruption to Studies Policy*:

<https://policies.westernsydney.edu.au/view.current.php?id=00205>

In accordance with this policy, students should submit a *Disruption to Studies* application within five working days of the disruption commencing, where the disruption has lasted at least three consecutive days.

Please note the following clauses from the *Honours Procedure* regarding applications for an extension to submit an Honours thesis:

*(23) A student may apply for an extension of time for thesis submission up to three working days before their originally approved submission date.*

*(25) The [BEHV4004] Subject Coordinator must approve applications for extensions and advise the student of the decision.*

Honours students should note that extensions are not normally granted beyond the end of semester 2 (spring semester) and cannot extend beyond the census date for the following semester (i.e., autumn semester of the next year). Students and supervisors also need to be aware that regardless of circumstances, late submission may make a student ineligible for consideration for a postgraduate scholarship determined at the December meeting of the University Research Committee, and may delay or otherwise impact the student's applications to Master programs commencing in the following year.

Further information on applying for *Disruption to Studies* can be found here:

[https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/currentstudents/current\\_students/services\\_and\\_facilities/special\\_consideration](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/services_and_facilities/special_consideration)

## Thesis Examination Procedures

### Examination

#### Appointment of Examiners

Examiners should be suitably qualified. As per the *Honours Procedures (Clause 27)*, "at least one examiner must hold a qualification at or above Honours and have a record of research or scholarly attainment in a relevant field". In psychology, examiners:

- are normally internal to the School (except where the specialised nature of the topic requires the appointment of an external examiner), and
- typically hold a research Masters, PhD or Professional Doctorate, or equivalent professional standing and research experience in the field relevant to the thesis.

Honours thesis examiners in the School of Psychology are reviewed, approved, and assigned theses to mark by the BEHV4004 subject coordinator, in consultation with the 4<sup>th</sup> year Academic Program Adviser, under supervision of the relevant Director of Academic Program. Consistent with Clause 30 in the *Honours Procedures*, examiners will not be supervisors or co-supervisors of any thesis they are marking, and ideally will have had no or minimal contact with the student in terms of their recent degree or Honours program.

As specified in the *Honours Procedure (Clauses 27, 30, 31)*, each thesis is marked by two examiners who make independent determinations on the thesis, and award a mark out of 100. These two marks are averaged to give a total score for the thesis. Examiners are not informed who else is marking a given thesis until both examiners' marks have been submitted.

#### Materials Sent to Examiners

Materials forwarded by Schools to examiners include:

- a letter inviting the examiner to formally examine the thesis;
- the title of the thesis to be examined;
- specific information concerning the School's expectations of the nature, structure, length and presentation requirements of the research component of an Honours degree;
- information concerning the School's expectations of the examiner (e.g., time frame by which examination needs to be completed, typically 2 weeks; what materials need to be forwarded back to the School to complete the examination process, how the examiner can advise the School as to whether they do or do not give their permission for their name to be released to the student at the conclusion of the examination process);
- the criteria and standards by which the examiner is expected to evaluate the research component with a sheet that summarises the examiner's score out of 100.

## The Use of Third Examiner (Arbiters)

As per the *Honours Procedures (Clause 31)*, where there is a discrepancy of 10 or more marks between thesis examiners, or a difference in the examiner-recommended grade level, the BEHV4004 subject coordinator may:

- invite the examiners to confer with each other and/or with the School's Research and Higher Degrees Committee with a view to presenting a consolidated recommendation, and/or
- appoint an experienced marker of Bachelor (honours) theses as a third examiner who will act as an arbiter; following review of the thesis and the other examiners' reports the arbiter determines the mark and grade based on the published criteria and standards for the thesis. This is the final examination result for recommendation to the School Academic Committee.

Typical procedure in the School of Psychology is as follows:

- When there is a difference in grade, the discrepancy is less than 10 marks and one marker recommends a fail, action (b) above will be adopted.
- When there is a difference in grade, the discrepancy is less than 10 marks, and both grades are Pass grades, action (a) above will be adopted.
- When the discrepancy is less than 10 marks within the same grade, the two marks will be averaged.

## Appointment of Arbiters

In the School of Psychology, arbiters are selected either as specialists in the thesis area, or as eminent, experienced academics (level C, D or E) with a strong background in supervising and examining Honours work. Arbiters are selected by the BEHV4004 subject coordinator, in consultation with the 4<sup>th</sup> year Academic Program Adviser, under supervision of the relevant Director of Academic Program.

## Arbitration Process and Outcomes

Materials forwarded by Schools to arbiters include:

- specific information concerning the School's expectations of the nature, structure, length and presentation requirements of the research component of an Honours degree,
- information concerning the School's expectations of the examiner (e.g., time frame by which examination needs to be completed), and
- the criteria and standards by which the arbiter is expected to evaluate the thesis.

The arbiter reads a clean copy of the thesis determining an independent mark. After having determined an independent mark, the arbiter is given copies of the reports completed by examiners 1 and 2. After reading the reports, the arbiter re-assesses all three marks and determines a final mark for the thesis within the



limits of the marks given by Examiners 1 and 2. The arbiter then prepares the standard report on the quality of the thesis as well as a brief report explaining the decision in relation to the reports of examiners 1 and 2. The arbiter forwards the reports to the BEHV4004 subject coordinator who is responsible for submitting them to the School Academic Committee.

## Moderation

In the School of Psychology, a random selection of 20% of the Honours theses submitted each year are reviewed by an external eminent, experienced academic (level C, D or E) with a strong background in supervising and examining Honours work. This moderator provides a report reviewing the quality, appropriateness, and cross-marker consistency of thesis marking in that year. Recommendations from the moderator are reviewed by the School Academic Committee and inform changes to the Honours guidelines from year-to-year.

## Honours Award Results

### Weighted Mark and Honours Level Calculation

A student's overall Honours mark is calculated as a weighted total score across the thesis and coursework components of the Honours program. The thesis subject (BEHV4004) is weighted as 37.5% of the overall mark. All other subjects are weighted as 12.5% per semester.

A student's Honours Class is determined by the final weighted mark out of 100 as shown here:

Honours Class	Final Honours Mark
Honours Class I	85% or above
Honours Class II Division 1	75% to 84%
Honours Class II Division 2	65% to 74%
Honours Class III	50% to 64%
Fail (Honours not awarded)	0% to 49%

Students must pass all subjects at the 4<sup>th</sup> year level to be eligible to graduate from their program. The minimum possible weighted Honours mark with a pass grade for each subject is 50%, Honours Class III. As such, there is no exit award available in lieu of Honours.

### Benchmarking

The Honours class calculations adopted by the School of Psychology are consistent with industry standards. For example, the following institutions also employ the same mark band criteria listed above:

- University of Newcastle
- University of New South Wales
- University of Wollongong

### Processing and Approving Honours Marks and Award Level

The 4<sup>th</sup> year Academic Program Adviser completes these calculations and submits them to the School Academic Committee, providing a final mark out of 100 for each candidate, the recommended Honours class for the candidate, a detailed statement as to the calculation of the scores, and a breakdown of all award component scores. The School Academic Committee undertakes the final endorsement of Honours award outcomes.

After each teaching session in which Honours awards are made, the School Academic Committee sends a report to the Bachelor (Honours) Committee of Academic Senate, including a summary of the approved Honours results, any significant variability, anomalies and trends, any extensions on thesis submission dates, and any recommendations about assessment policies and practices.

## **Release of Marks to Students**

As indicated in the Honours Procedures (Clause 32), final examination results are made available to students through the University's standard processes for releasing results.

## **Appeals and Review of Grade**

As noted in Sections 8 and 9 of the Honours Procedures:

- Appeals against marks for any subject in the Honours program, including the thesis subject (BEHV4004) are to be made in accordance with Western Sydney University's Review of Grade Policy: <https://policies.westernsydney.edu.au/document/view.current.php?id=203>
- Appeals against honours level are to be made in accordance with Western Sydney University's Academic Appeals Procedures with the only grounds for appeal being those arising from procedural irregularity: <https://policies.westernsydney.edu.au/document/view.current.php?id=338>