COURSE OUTLINE

PSY408 Research Dissertation

School: School of Health - Psychology

2026 | Trimester 2

UniSC Sunshine Coast
UniSC Moreton Bay

BLENDED LEARNING

Most of your course is on campus but you may be able to do some components of this course online.

Please go to unisc.edu.au for up to date information on the teaching sessions and campuses where this course is usually offered.

1. What is this course about?

1.1. Description

This course is the dissertation component of the Psychology Honours program and will provide you the opportunity to engage in all parts of the research process. You will undertake a research project with your dissertation supervisor that makes an original contribution to the broad discipline of psychology. In the first trimester of enrolment, you will develop and commence the research proposal (PSY408A) and in the second trimester (PSY408B) of enrolment, your research activities of data collection and analysis will culminate with the writing of your dissertation.

1.2. How will this course be delivered?

ACTIVITY	HOURS	BEGINNING WEEK	FREQUENCY
BLENDED LEARNING			
Independent Study/Research – Total of 150 learning hours which will include directed study hours (including online if required), selfdirected learning and completion of assessable tasks.	150hrs	Week 1	Once Only

1.3. Course Topics

The specific topics that are covered in the dissertation will depend on the topic of the student's individual research project.

Each thesis will explore the following

- theoretical or conceptual frameworks,
- current research literature,
- methods and measures,
- data analyses and interpretation of the topic,
- critical analysis of each aspect
- Synthesis of findings with research literature

2. What level is this course?

400 Level (Graduate)

Demonstrating coherence and breadth or depth of knowledge and skills. Independent application of knowledge and skills in unfamiliar contexts. Meeting professional requirements and AQF descriptors for the degree. May require pre-requisites where discipline specific introductory or developing knowledge or skills is necessary. Normally undertaken in the third or fourth full-time study year of an undergraduate program.

3. What is the unit value of this course?

48 units (taught over 2 delivery periods)

4. How does this course contribute to my learning?

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES On successful completion of this course, you should be able to...	GRADUATE QUALITIES MAPPING Completing these tasks successfully will contribute to you becoming...	PROFESSIONAL STANDARD MAPPING * Australian Psychology Accreditation Council
1 Demonstrate knowledge and to evaluate advanced theoretical knowledge in the core area of psychology in which they have chosen to undertake their dissertation	Knowledgeable Empowered	2, 2.5
2 Apply critical analysis to investigate research literature to formulate hypotheses and design a research method to suitably test the hypotheses.	Creative and critical thinker Empowered	2, 2.5
3 Demonstrate competence in the preparation and submission of an ethics proposal and in ethical conduct of research project	Knowledgeable Ethical	2, 2.5
4 Demonstrate competence in gathering, analysing and reporting research data relevant to a set of research predictions.	Empowered Sustainability-focussed	2, 2.5
5 Demonstrate competence to develop, organise, and produce a substantial psychology-based research report	Knowledgeable Creative and critical thinker	2, 2.5

* Competencies by Professional Body

CODE	COMPETENCY
AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGY ACCREDITATION COUNCIL	
2	PRE-PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES: Graduates of programs at this level have basic knowledge and skills in the professional practice of psychology and the independent conduct and evaluation of scientific research. Programs for pre-professional competencies are typically a Bachelor Honours Degree or Graduate Diploma (if the graduate competencies in research can be met).
2.5	Taking into account broad diversity, and consistent with current relevant legal frameworks and codes of ethical practice, graduates apply psychological knowledge to competently and ethically investigate a substantive individual research question relevant to the discipline of psychology.

5. Am I eligible to enrol in this course?

Refer to the UniSC Glossary of terms for definitions of “pre-requisites, co-requisites and anti-requisites”.

5.1. Pre-requisites

SC407 or AR403 or (AR405 and PSY300, PSY301, PSY302, PSY303, PSY304, PSY305, PSY306 AND PSY307)

5.2. Co-requisites

Not applicable

5.3. Anti-requisites

Not applicable

5.4. Specific assumed prior knowledge and skills (where applicable)

Not applicable

5.5. Microcredential Information

Not applicable

6. How am I going to be assessed?

6.1. Grading Scale

Standard Grading (GRD)

High Distinction (HD), Distinction (DN), Credit (CR), Pass (PS), Fail (FL).

6.2. Details of early feedback on progress

You will receive feedback on the progress of your dissertation from your supervisor during the meetings held in the trimester and this feedback will inform the direction and content of your dissertation.

6.3. Assessment tasks

DELIVERY MODE	TASK NO.	ASSESSMENT PRODUCT	INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP	WEIGHTING %	WHAT IS THE DURATION / LENGTH?	WHEN SHOULD I SUBMIT?	WHERE SHOULD I SUBMIT IT?
All	1	Artefact - Technical and Scientific, and Written Piece	Individual	0%	As per HREC's or AEC's requirements	Delivery Period 1 - Week 8	To Supervisor
All	2	Artefact - Creative	Individual	0%	10 minutes poster presentation (refer to format).	Delivery Period 1 - Refer to Format	In Class
All	3	Written Piece	Individual	0%	5000 words	Delivery Period 1 - Week 12	To Supervisor
All	4	Written Piece	Individual	100%	9,000 to 11,000 words	Delivery Period 2 - Week 11	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check

All - Assessment Task 1: UniSC HREC Ethics Application

GOAL:	The goal of this assessment task is to prepare and submit the ethics application for your thesis research project. You will work with your thesis supervisor to develop and finalise your ethics application, which will meet the requirements of the relevant University Ethics Committees. Once you have received approval for your proposed project, you can proceed with the research and it is important to ensure that you have sufficient time after receiving these permissions to complete the dissertation in time for submission.
PRODUCT:	Artefact - Technical and Scientific, and Written Piece
AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT:	
FORMAT:	Your ethics application should include all materials required for an ethics application at UniSC, e.g., the research protocol, HREA application form, information and consent forms, data collection instruments, and permissions to survey possible participants. It is recommended that you complete the background section of the Research Protocol by the end of Week 5 to allow sufficient time for feedback on this important part of the ethics application. This section should be 700 to 1000 words in length, excluding references. With your supervisor, ensure that a Peer Review Assessment of your project occurs, followed by submission to the Faculty Authorising Officer, and finally submission of all required documents to UniSC Ethics. You must consult the information shown in Research Ethics and Integrity, available through Canvas, to ensure that you have all the forms and processes that are currently used to prepare and apply for research ethics. Importantly, you must adhere to what is the current standard practice at the time you are applying for ethics. In addition to the documents specified by Research Ethics and Integrity, you must allow sufficient time to obtain any permissions to survey students (e.g., through SIAU, the first year psychology pool, or Take Part), or people in the community (e.g., letters of support from businesses, government departments, and/or community organisations). Delays associated with these procedures are not a justification for an extension of submission of your thesis. Note that any reports or information sent to participants or supporting organisations once the project is completed must be approved by your supervisor before being sent
CRITERIA:	**No.** / **Learning Outcome assessed** 1 Submission of application to ethics secretary and satisfactory responses to any requested amendments. — 1 2 3
GENERIC SKILLS:	

All - Assessment Task 2: Poster presentation

GOAL:	The goal of this assessment is to showcase your proposed thesis research project to your peers and other thesis supervisors, using a poster and an oral explanation about the research proposal as part of PSY408A. This presentation will provide you with an opportunity to receive additional, considered feedback on your project. You will receive formative feedback on the proposal's design.
PRODUCT:	Artefact - Creative
AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT:	
FORMAT:	The format for the poster presentation will be in-person or online (refer to format). This assessment task will be due between weeks 8 - 12 of the teaching trimester. The final date of submission for this task will be determined once public holidays and the course timetable have been published prior to the commencement of trimester. Please refer to your course Canvas site at the commencement of the teaching trimester to confirm the due date for this assessment task.

CRITERIA:

No.		Learning Outcome assessed
1	Ability to articulate the theoretical framework, area of interest, gaps in the research, and research questions	1
2	Explanation of participants (expected/actual N) and their recruitment, research design and statistical analyses	1 2 4
3	Ability to answer questions about the research proposal and the methods used in a reasoned and succinct manner	5
4	Organisation of poster to be clear and easy to read (i.e., conference standard) and effective use of colour, tables and text that makes the poster interesting and engaging	5

GENERIC SKILLS:	Communication, Organisation, Information literacy

All - Assessment Task 3: Research proposal

GOAL:	The goal of this assessment is to write a research proposal that sets out the background, theoretical framework and current research in your area of interest, and to outline the methods that you propose to use in your dissertation research project.
PRODUCT:	Written Piece
AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT:	
FORMAT:	The research proposal for your dissertation will include an introduction (including a review of the relevant literature) and a methods section, which will be developed following discussions with your supervisor. The introduction will begin with a section that provides an overview of the research topic and a clear rationale for the research questions to be addressed, explicitly state the overall study objectives, and the specific aims of the investigation. Next, the introduction will provide a review of the literature to provide a critical review of relevant literature, identify knowledge gaps, and address the relationship of the literature to the thesis aims. The method section will describe the specifics of investigation design, participant recruitment, ethical approvals, measurements employed, procedures, and data analysis. Additional guidance is provided in the Psychology Honours page and the PSY408 A/B course sites in Canvas. The combined document should be approximately 5000 words in length, and this word count does not include the title page, abstract, or reference list, but does include all headings and citations, inside and outside the brackets.
CRITERIA:	

No.		Learning Outcome assessed
1	Abstract, as a succinct and informative summary of the proposal	1 2 4
2	Extent, relevance, and detail of the current research literature used	1 2
3	Critical analysis of the research literature and understanding of the chosen topic area.	1 2
4	Description and integration the appropriate theoretical framework throughout the research proposal	1
5	Conclusions and rationale for the research questions to be addressed.	5
6	Detail of the methods to be used in the proposal, including participants, measures and materials, procedure, and proposed data analysis/es	4
7	The overall study objectives and the specific aims of the investigation.	2 4
8	Use of APA formatting and use of formal, academic writing.	5

GENERIC SKILLS:	Organisation

All - Assessment Task 4: Dissertation

GOAL:	The goal of this task is to write your dissertation as the summative component of your Honours research project, building on the research proposal submitted for Task 3.
PRODUCT:	Written Piece
AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT:	

FORMAT:

The format of the dissertation takes the form of a review of the literature and a research article manuscript, with a combined word count between 9,000 to 11,000 words. Both documents will be combined into one PDF document for submission. Page numbering will be consecutive for all the document and using an appropriate running head throughout the document.
The current format, specifications, and marking rubric for the dissertation are available in the PSY408 A/B course page and in the Psychology Honours page in Canvas.
The review of literature will be between 4000 and 5000 words (not including the abstract, the reference list, and any appendices).
The research article manuscript will be between 5000 and 6000 words (not including the abstract, reference list, and any appendices), for both quantitative and qualitative research.
It is expected that the research article manuscript will fit within the research areas identified by the review of the literature.
A USB stick with the thesis document (review of literature and article manuscript), and the data set and final output should be handed to the Psychology Honours Program Coordinator's office (or posted to them) on the day (or the first working day thereafter) that the thesis has been electronically submitted.

CRITERIA:

No.		Learning Outcome assessed
1	Review of the literature - Abstract: succinct summary of the content of the review of the literature	1 2 4 5
2	Review of the literature - Introduction to the area of research that establishes the importance, relevance and context of area of interest	1 2 4 5
3	Review of the literature - Explanation and integration of theoretical/conceptual framework	1
4	Review of the literature - Extent, relevance, and currency of experimental research applied to the review, and the detail provided of these studies	2
5	Review of the literature - Evidence of critical analysis of the research and original thinking	1 2
6	Review of the literature - Logic and clarity of critical literature review and argument about a theoretical problem leading to researchable problem/s.	1 2 5
7	Review of the literature - Use of APA formatting and style and use of formal, academic language throughout	5
8	Research article manuscript Abstract: succinct summary of research question, participants, methods and results and conclusions of the research	1 2 4 5
9	Introduction: situating research in topic area, use of theoretical/conceptual framework, extent and relevance of current research literature, critical analysis and synthesis of proposed research with area of interest, and statement of hypotheses	1 2
10	Research article manuscript - Methods: description of participants, measures, procedures, and data analysis, appropriateness of research design to test hypotheses	4
11	Research article manuscript - Results: description and analysis of research data and presentation of results	4
12	Research article manuscript- Use of APA formatting and style and use of formal, academic language throughout	5
13	Research article manuscript - Discussion: understanding and explanation of findings, critical analysis and synthesis with previous research, consideration of alternative explanations, limitations, and conclusion	1 2 4 5

GENERIC SKILLS:

Communication, Problem solving

6.4. Assessment to competency mapping

PROGRAMME DELIVERY MODE	ASSESSMENT TYPE	TITLE	COMPETENCY	TEACHING METHODS
APAC AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGY ACCREDITATION COUNCIL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS: GRADUATE COMPETENCIES				
All delivery modes	Artefact - Creative	Poster presentation	1.6	Taught, Practiced
	Artefact - Technical and Scientific, and Written Piece	UniSC HREC Ethics Application	1.4	Taught, Practiced, Assessed
	Written Piece	Research proposal	1.6	Taught, Practiced
		Dissertation	1.6	Taught, Practiced, Assessed

7. Directed study hours

A 12-unit course will have total of 150 learning hours which will include directed study hours (including online if required), self-directed learning and completion of assessable tasks. Student workload is calculated at 12.5 learning hours per one unit.

8. What resources do I need to undertake this course?

Please note: Course information, including specific information of recommended readings, learning activities, resources, weekly readings, etc. are available on the course Canvas site– Please log in as soon as possible.

8.1. Prescribed text(s) or course reader

There are no required/recommended resources for this course.

8.2. Specific requirements

Not applicable

9. How are risks managed in this course?

Health and safety risks for this course have been assessed as low. It is your responsibility to review course material, search online, discuss with lecturers and peers and understand the health and safety risks associated with your specific course of study and to familiarise yourself with the University's general health and safety principles by reviewing the online induction training for students, and following the instructions of the University staff.

10. What administrative information is relevant to this course?

10.1. Assessment: Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the ethical standard of university participation. It ensures that students graduate as a result of proving they are competent in their discipline. This is integral in maintaining the value of academic qualifications. Each industry has expectations and standards of the skills and knowledge within that discipline and these are reflected in assessment.

Academic integrity means that you do not engage in any activity that is considered to be academic fraud; including plagiarism, collusion or outsourcing any part of any assessment item to any other person. You are expected to be honest and ethical by completing all work yourself and indicating in your work which ideas and information were developed by you and which were taken from others. You cannot provide your assessment work to others. You are also expected to provide evidence of wide and critical reading, usually by using appropriate academic references.

In order to minimise incidents of academic fraud, this course may require that some of its assessment tasks, when submitted to Canvas, are electronically checked through Turnitin. This software allows for text comparisons to be made between your submitted assessment item and all other work to which Turnitin has access.

10.2. Assessment: Additional Requirements

Eligibility for Supplementary Assessment

Your eligibility for supplementary assessment in a course is dependent of the following conditions applying:
(a) The final mark is in the percentage range 47% to 49.4%; and
(b) The course is graded using the Standard Grading scale

10.3. Assessment: Submission penalties

Late submissions may be penalised up to and including the following maximum percentage of the assessment task's identified value, with weekdays and weekends included in the calculation of days late:
(a) One day: deduct 5%;
(b) Two days: deduct 10%;
(c) Three days: deduct 20%;
(d) Four days: deduct 40%;
(e) Five days: deduct 60%;
(f) Six days: deduct 80%;
(g) Seven days: A result of zero is awarded for the assessment task.

The following penalties will apply for a late submission for an online examination:
Less than 15 minutes: No penalty
From 15 minutes to 30 minutes: 20% penalty
More than 30 minutes: 100% penalty

10.4. Links to relevant University policy and procedures

For more information on Academic Learning & Teaching categories including:

- Assessment: Courses and Coursework Programs
- Review of Assessment and Final Grades
- Supplementary Assessment
- Central Examinations
- Deferred Examinations
- Student Conduct
- Students with a Disability

For more information, visit https://www.usc.edu.au/explore/policies-and-procedures#academic-learning-and-teaching

10.5. Student Charter

UniSC is committed to excellence in teaching, research and engagement in an environment that is inclusive, inspiring, safe and respectful. The Student Charter sets out what students can expect from the University, and what in turn is expected of students, to achieve these outcomes.

10.6. General Enquiries

For course-specific questions, contact your teaching staff or Course Coordinator.

For other enquiries or to access support, please contact Student Central:

- UniSC Student Central
- UniSC Adelaide Student Central