

# PSY408 Research Dissertation

School: School of Health - Psychology

2024 | Semester 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 [usc.edu.au](http://usc.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 semester of enrolment, you will develop and commence the research proposal (PSY408A) and in the second semester (PSY408B) of enrolment, your research activities of data collection and analysis will culminate with the writing of your dissertation. The course can be commenced in Semester 1 or 2.

### 1.2. How will this course be delivered?

ACTIVITY	HOURS	BEGINNING WEEK	FREQUENCY
<b>BLENDED LEARNING</b>			
<b>Independent Study/Research</b> – 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	GRADUATE QUALITIES MAPPING	PROFESSIONAL STANDARD MAPPING *
On successful completion of this course, you should be able to...	Completing these tasks successfully will contribute to you becoming...	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

Enrolled in Program AR403, AR405

#### 5.2. Co-requisites

Not applicable

#### 5.3. Anti-requisites

Not applicable

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

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 each week during semester 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%	Part A: 10 minutes presentation, comprising a 5 minute talk about design of the research project and 5 minutes to answer questions. Part B: 15 minutes, comprising 10 minutes about the findings of the research project and 5 minutes to answer questions.	Delivery Period 1 - Refer to Format	In Class
All	3	Written Piece	Individual	0%	5000 words	Delivery Period 1 - Week 13	To Supervisor
All	4	Written Piece	Individual	100%	9,000 to 11,000 words	Delivery Period 2 - Week 12	Online Assignment Submission with plagiarism check

**All - Assessment Task 1:** UniSC HREC Ethics Application

<b>GOAL:</b>	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.	
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Artefact - Technical and Scientific, and Written Piece	
<b>FORMAT:</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>	
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
	1 Submission of application to ethics secretary and satisfactory responses to any requested amendments.	1 2 3

All - Assessment Task 2: Honours Research Conferences

<b>GOAL:</b>	<p>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. You will give two presentations, one in first semester of enrolment (Part A, as a student in PSY408A), and the second in the second semester of enrolment (Part B, as a student in PSY408B)</p> <p>These presentations will provide you with an opportunity to receive additional, considered feedback on your thesis. Part A will give formative feedback on the proposal's design and Part B will give formative feedback on the outcomes of the project, to assist with preparation of these findings for publication.</p> <p>It is expected that students will submit the abstract from their dissertation (Task 4) to the Psychology Honours Coordinator for inclusion in a Book of Abstracts as an output of the Honours Research Conference.</p>	
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Artefact - Creative	
<b>FORMAT:</b>	<p>The format for the posters will be in-person and you will be advised by the Honours Program Coordinator of the specific locations on campus for Part A and Part B.</p> <p>Part A will be held at the Moreton Bay Campus in Week 10 of the semester when you are enrolled in PSY408A Part B will be held at the Sippy Downs campus in Week 17 of the semester when you are enrolled in PSY408B.</p> <p>Poster presentation for Part A and Part B: The poster must be no larger than A0 size (1189 x 841mm) and arranged in portrait orientation. Headings should be at least 72-point font and text within each section should be in at least 36-point font single spaced in upper and lower case. However, the references may be in 16-point font or smaller, using APA format (7th Ed.). You may use dot points or illustrations to summarise key points under each heading.</p> <p>Part A: The poster will include the following components and you should be able to talk about each point.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction (including the theoretical framework and aims);</li> <li>• Hypotheses for your research project;</li> <li>• Participants (e.g., describe the proposed sample, expected N);</li> <li>• Measures, and/or Experimental Equipment, and Procedures as appropriate for your study;</li> <li>• Design and Analyses (describe the statistical design and analyses to be used);</li> <li>• References (list the key references for theory, area of interest, and measures).</li> </ul> <p>Part B: The presentation should include the following components, as would be expected in an academic conference poster. You should be able to talk about each point and be able to identify at least 2 journals for which your manuscript would be suitable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction, as research area, theoretical or conceptual framework, relevant literature, and research questions/hypotheses for your research project</li> <li>• Methods, as participants, measures, information about experiments, and data analysis used</li> <li>• Results, as main findings, summary of secondary findings</li> <li>• Discussion, as synthesis of main findings with research questions/hypotheses and identifying limitations and future directions</li> <li>• References, as appropriate to the sources used for the poster.</li> </ul>	
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
	1 (Parts A and B) Ability to articulate the theoretical framework, area of interest, gaps in the research, and research questions	1
	2 (Parts A and B) Explanation of participants (expected/actual N) and their recruitment, research design and statistical analyses	1 2 4
	3 (Part B only) Explanation of significant and interesting findings of the study	1 4
	4 (Part B only) Explanation of research findings and synthesis with hypotheses and previous literature	5
	5 (Parts A and B) Ability to answer questions about the research proposal and the methods used in a reasoned and succinct manner	5
	6 (Parts A and B) 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

### All - Assessment Task 3: Research proposal

<b>GOAL:</b>	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.	
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Written Piece	
<b>FORMAT:</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	
<b>CRITERIA:</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Learning Outcome assessed</b>
	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

### All - Assessment Task 4: Dissertation

<b>GOAL:</b>	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.
<b>PRODUCT:</b>	Written Piece
<b>FORMAT:</b>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The review of literature will be between 4000 and 5000 words (not including the abstract, the reference list, and any appendices).</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>

**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

## 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

Your eligibility for supplementary assessment in a course is dependent of the following conditions applying:

The final mark is in the percentage range 47% to 49.4%

The course is graded using the Standard Grading scale

You have not failed an assessment task in the course due to academic misconduct

### 10.3. Assessment: Submission penalties

Late submission of assessment tasks may be penalised at the following maximum rate:

- 5% (of the assessment task's identified value) per day for the first two days from the date identified as the due date for the assessment task.

- 10% (of the assessment task's identified value) for the third day - 20% (of the assessment task's identified value) for the fourth day and subsequent days up to and including seven days from the date identified as the due date for the assessment task.

- A result of zero is awarded for an assessment task submitted after seven days from the date identified as the due date for the assessment task. Weekdays and weekends are included in the calculation of days late. To request an extension you must contact your course coordinator to negotiate an outcome.

### 10.4. SafeUniSC

UniSC is committed to a culture of respect and providing a safe and supportive environment for all members of our community. For immediate assistance on campus contact SafeUniSC by phone: [07 5430 1168](tel:0754301168) or using the [SafeZone](#) app. For general enquires contact the SafeUniSC team by phone [07 5456 3864](tel:0754563864) or email [safe@usc.edu.au](mailto:safe@usc.edu.au).

The SafeUniSC Specialist Service is a Student Wellbeing service that provides free and confidential support to students who may have experienced or observed behaviour that could cause fear, offence or trauma. To contact the service call [07 5430 1226](tel:0754301226) or email [studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au).

### 10.5. Study help

For help with course-specific advice, for example what information to include in your assessment, you should first contact your tutor, then your course coordinator, if needed.

If you require additional assistance, the Learning Advisers are trained professionals who are ready to help you develop a wide range of academic skills. Visit the [Learning Advisers](#) web page for more information, or contact Student Central for further assistance: +61 7 5430 2890 or [studentcentral@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentcentral@usc.edu.au).

### 10.6. Wellbeing Services

Student Wellbeing provide free and confidential counselling on a wide range of personal, academic, social and psychological matters, to foster positive mental health and wellbeing for your academic success.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email [studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au) or call 07 5430 1226.

### 10.7. AccessAbility Services

Ability Advisers ensure equal access to all aspects of university life. If your studies are affected by a disability, learning disorder mental health issue, injury or illness, or you are a primary carer for someone with a disability or who is considered frail and aged, [AccessAbility Services](#) can provide access to appropriate reasonable adjustments and practical advice about the support and facilities available to you throughout the University.

To book a confidential appointment go to [Student Hub](#), email [AccessAbility@usc.edu.au](mailto:AccessAbility@usc.edu.au) or call 07 5430 2890.



## 10.8. 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>

## 10.9. 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.

## 10.10. General Enquiries

### In person:

- **UniSC Sunshine Coast** - Student Central, Ground Floor, Building C, 90 Sippy Downs Drive, Sippy Downs
- **UniSC Moreton Bay** - Service Centre, Ground Floor, Foundation Building, Gympie Road, Petrie
- **UniSC SouthBank** - Student Central, Building A4 (SW1), 52 Merivale Street, South Brisbane
- **UniSC Gympie** - Student Central, 71 Cartwright Road, Gympie
- **UniSC Fraser Coast** - Student Central, Student Central, Building A, 161 Old Maryborough Rd, Hervey Bay
- **UniSC Caboolture** - Student Central, Level 1 Building J, Cnr Manley and Tallon Street, Caboolture

**Tel:** +61 7 5430 2890

**Email:** [studentcentral@usc.edu.au](mailto:studentcentral@usc.edu.au)