

The University of Hong Kong
Department of Psychology
An Overview of Thesis in Psychology (PSYC4008)
(For students admitted in or before 2021/22)

Psychology major students will conduct an independent empirical investigation of a psychological problem. Thesis research will be supervised individually by teaching members of the Department. The thesis should be about 8000 to 10,000 words (exclusive of tables, bibliographies and appendices) and should follow the practice of communication in top psychology journals. Eligible students will be invited by the Department to apply for admission into this course, and the admission is subject to the approval by the Department.

Assessment: 100% coursework.

Prerequisites: PSYC1001 and PSYC1004 and PSYC2060; and

Co-requisites: PSYC3051 or PSYC3052 or PSYC3053 or PSYC3054 or PSYC3061 or PSYC3064 or PSYC3068.

Overview

A thesis writing or an independent research project is usually required by postgraduate programme(s). Some students who want to pursue further studies in Psychology and related fields would want to do a more ambitious thesis project (e.g., multiple studies, labor-intensive experiments and interview studies) supervised by a teaching staff in the department.

The thesis should include the followings:

- Title Page
- Table of Contents
- Abstract
- Acknowledgement (if needed)
- Introduction
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion
- Reference

The grading criteria will be based on:

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| ● Knowledge of the research topic | 10% |
| ● Critical analysis | 20% |
| ● Potential contribution and significance | 10% |
| ● Design of study | 20% |
| ● Data analysis and presentation | 20% |
| ● Writing and organization | 20% |

Eligibility

A student needs to have an average GPA of 3.50 or above in advanced psychology courses taken in HKU by the end of the 3rd year in the 4-year curriculum or 4th year for BEd&BSocSc students. Eligible students will be invited by the department at the beginning of July.

Application

A student, who meets the above criterion and wants to take this course, is required to complete an online [Supervisor Preference Form](#) **before the end of course selection period (4pm, August 11, 2025)**. Your form will be sent to potential supervisors for consideration in the order of your preferences. The results of supervisor matching will be announced before the end of add/drop period in September (i.e. **September 15, 2025**). Late application will not be considered.

If you will participate in an exchange programme and want to take PSYC4008 in the same year, you have to seek prior approval for special arrangement. A [Special Approval Application form](#) should be submitted to the General Office **before the end of course selection period (4pm, August 11, 2025)**. Late application will not be considered.

Presentation of Research Project Proposal

Around the end of November or early December, each student has to present his/her research project proposal to a small group of fellow students and two members of the departmental teaching staff. Each presentation and discussion will last about 20 minutes. This offers each student an opportunity to get more input before finalizing the research design for data collection.

Ethics Application

Undergraduate thesis research is required to undergo ethics review by the Departmental Research Ethics Committee. Applications should be submitted on or before **two weeks after the research proposal presentation**.

Students on overseas exchange and have applied to start doing their project in the 2nd semester, have to submit their application on or before **1st March**.

Failure to submit an ethics application will lead to a failure in the course. Please read the [Overview of Ethics Application](#) for more details.

Submission of Thesis

1. Please submit your thesis to Moodle before the deadline.
 - a) Please submit as one single file in PDF format including all the chapters.
 - b) All covering pages, pictures, tables and charts must be included in appropriate position of the file.
 - c) There is no need to submit SPSS, Excel or other files separately.
2. The deadline of submission is **23:59, 15th April**.
3. The penalty for late submission is 2 marks for each calendar day, including Saturday, Sunday and public holidays providing that the student has informed his/her supervisor(s) regarding the late submission of thesis report at least 24 hours prior to the original submission deadline. If the student fails to inform his/her supervisor(s) about the late submission 24 hours prior to the original deadline but submits the thesis after the deadline, the late submission will result in an “F” grade.
4. Requests for deadline extension will not be permitted, except for medical reasons or other extenuating circumstances, students should submit a formal application for an extension of the thesis report submission deadline, with strong justifications supplemented by supporting document(s), to the supervisor(s) and the Chief Examiner for consideration and approval.
5. Make sure that due acknowledgement is given when referring or quoting from literature, books, webpages, essays or any other information sources.
6. The softcopy will be checked for plagiarism against a database of articles, books, webpages, and essays submitted by students at HKU and other universities. No credit will be given if the work contains plagiarized materials. Further penalties will also be applied, including a zero mark for the course. Plagiarism will also be reported to your Faculty for consideration of possible disciplinary action. Please be sure to read the website to know more about how to avoid plagiarism: <https://tl.hku.hk/plagiarism/how-to-avoid-plagiarism/>
7. All raw data and research materials must be retained. The department may invite you for an oral examination in addition to the submission of thesis.

Presentation of Research Project

In the revision week of the second semester, students will be invited to present his/her research project findings in the form of a poster presentation.

Frequently Asked Questions

1) Is “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology” or “PSYC4007 Independent study in psychology” compulsory for psychology major?

Ans: No, they are optional. However, thesis writing or an independent research project is usually preferred for applying postgraduate programme(s).

2) Am I qualified to take “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology”?

Ans: The eligibility is an average GPA of 3.50 or above in advanced psychology courses taken in HKU by the end of the 3rd year in the 4-year curriculum or 4th year for BEd&BSocSc students. The Department will invite students who meet this criterion to apply for course enrollment at the beginning of July.

3) Is there any quota for students to take “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology”?

Ans: No, there is no quota. Students who meet the criterion as stated in question 2 will be invited to take “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology” at the beginning of July.

4) When is the application deadline?

Ans: Students must complete the online “Supervisor Preference Form” **before the end of course selection period** in August. The results of supervisor matching will be announced before the end of add/drop period.

5) Will my course(s) taken on exchange be included for calculating the eligibility of taking “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology”?

Ans: No, the course(s) taken on exchange is(are) only recognized as credit transfer. The grades will not contribute to GPA calculation.

6) Will the advanced course(s) taken in year one be included for calculating the eligibility of taking “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology”?

Ans: All advanced PSYC courses with letter grades taken before the final year of study will be included for calculating the eligibility of taking “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology”.

7) May I take “PSYC4007 Independent study in psychology” if I am not qualified to take “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology”?

Ans: Yes, you may take “PSYC4007 Independent study in psychology” with the supervision of an advanced research postgraduate students or a demonstrator/teaching assistant.

8) **I have not yet taken the compulsory course “Research and Quantitative Methods in Psychology” (PSYC2060). May I take “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology” in my final year if I am qualified?**

Ans: You have to successfully complete PSYC2060 in the 1st semester. You have to start the thesis from the 2nd semester and extend to the summer semester or 1st semester of next year. Prior approval is needed by completing the [Special Approval Application form](#).

9) **Can I take an advanced lab course together with “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology” in the same semester?**

Ans: Yes, taking an advanced lab course together with the start of “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology” can fulfill the co-requisite requirement.

10) **I am planning to take an exchange programme in the 1st semester (or 2nd semester) of my final year. May I still be allowed taking “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology” or “PSYC4007 Independent study in psychology”?**

Ans: Yes, eligible students must seek prior approval (Click [Form](#)) for the special arrangement.

11) **I am not qualified to take “PSYC4008 Thesis in psychology”. What can I do if I really want to take it?**

Ans: You may seek special approval (Click [Form](#)) for a petition if your GPA in advanced psychology courses is 3.45 or above. If your special application be approved, your supervisor matching will be put into the second priority.

12) **How can I know which teaching staff are available to supervise our theses in the coming academic year?**

Ans: A list of potential supervisors will be sent to eligible students in the invitation email at the beginning of July.

13) **What will happen if all my 6 preferences do not select me as their supervisee?**

Ans: You will be contacted by the Department.

14) **Does the research topic of my Thesis/Independent Study has to be the same as the research area in the advanced lab course?**

Ans: No, the research topic of the Thesis/Independent Study can be different as the research area in the advanced lab course.

15) **What can I do if my research interest does not match the research area of my supervisor?**

Ans: Every supervisor has a limited quota in supervising undergraduate theses. Such case usually happens. You may have to follow the research area of your supervisor.

16) I am approved to continue my thesis writing / IS project during my exchange to overseas. May I apply to extend the submission deadline?

Ans: In case of extenuating circumstances (such as research reasons that are out of students' control) that you have genuine needs, you may seek special approval (Click [Form](#)) to extend the submission deadline. Two weeks extension may be granted if an application together with the schedule of your progress is received.

17) Why do I need to fill in 2 past theses in the Supervisor Preference form?

Ans: It is good for you to read past theses in a topic related to your proposal in advanced. By reading past theses, you may understand what a thesis is. It also shows you are prepared to do a thesis project of comparable scope.

18) Is it compulsory to present the research findings from my thesis project at the end of the 2nd semester?

Ans: Yes, you are required to present your research findings in the form of a poster presentation.

Standard Timeline for PSYC4008

Beginning of July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Department to invite eligible students to apply for taking thesis in the following academic year.
Before the end of course selection period in August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students to submit online <u>Supervisor Preference Form</u> for the Department to proceed supervisor matching. ● Late application will not be considered.
Before the end of add/drop period in September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Department to announce the results of supervisor matching to students via email.
Late November / early December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students to present his/her research project proposal.
Two weeks after the research proposal presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students to submit <u>ethics application</u>.
After presentation and ethics approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students to work on his/her research project and write up the theses.
23:59, 15 th April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Theses submission deadline</u>
Revision week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Poster Presentation</u>