

Course Outline

Code: PSY408 A/B Title: Research Dissertation

School:	Social Sciences
Teaching Session:	Semester 1
Year:	2020
Course Coordinator:	Dr Prudence Millear – pmillear@usc.edu.au
Course Moderator:	Dr Marcus Bussey - mbussey@usc.edu.au

Please go to the USC website 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 (PSY408 A) and in the second semester (PSY408 B) 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 Field trips, WIL placements or activities required by professional accreditation

Activity	Details
Nil	Nil

2. What level is this course?

400 level Graduate - Independent application of graduate knowledge and skills. Meets AQF and professional requirements. May require pre-requisites and developing level knowledge/skills. Normally taken in the 4th year of an undergraduate program.

3. What is the unit value of this course?

48 units

4. How does this course contribute to my learning?

Specific Learning Outcomes	Assessment tasks	Graduate Qualities or Professional Standards mapping
On successful completion of this course, you should be able to:	You will be assessed on the learning outcomes in task/s:	Completing these tasks successfully will contribute to:
Demonstrate knowledge and to evaluate advanced theoretical knowledge in the core area of psychology in which they have chosen to undertake their dissertation	1, 2, 3, and 4	Knowledgeable Engaged

Specific Learning Outcomes On successful completion of this course, you should be able to:	Assessment tasks You will be assessed on the learning outcomes in task/s:	Graduate Qualities or Professional Standards mapping Completing these tasks successfully will contribute to:
Apply critical analysis to investigate research literature to formulate hypotheses and design a research method to suitably test the hypotheses.	1, 2, 3, and 4	Creative and critical thinkers Empowered
Demonstrate competence in the preparation and submission of an ethics proposal and in ethical conduct of research project	1 and 4	Ethical Knowledgeable
Demonstrate competence in gathering, analysing and reporting research data relevant to a set of research predictions.	4	Empowered Sustainability-focused
Demonstrate competence to develop, organise, and produce a substantial psychology-based research report	3 and 4	Critical and creative thinkers Knowledgeable

5. Am I eligible to enrol in this course?

Refer to the [USC Glossary of terms](#) for definitions of “pre-requisites, co-requisites and anti-requisites”.

5.1 Enrolment restrictions

Must be enrolled in AR403 or AR405 (4th year only)

5.2 Pre-requisites

Nil

5.3 Co-requisites

Nil

5.4 Anti-requisites

Nil

5.5 Specific assumed prior knowledge and skills (where applicable)

Nil

6. How am I going to be assessed?

6.1 Grading scale

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

6.2 Details of early feedback on progress

In the first semester of your enrolment, you will receive formative feedback on your research proposal in two ways: informally, through weekly discussions with your supervisor, and formally, as written responses to Task 3, the Research Project proposal. You will also receive additional feedback on your project from other research supervisors when you present your proposed research project in Task 2, the Poster Presentation .

In the second semester of your enrolment, 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

Task No.	Assessment Product	Individual or Group	Weighting %	What is the duration / length?	When should I submit?	Where should I submit it?
1	Artefact - Technical and Scientific, and Written Piece	Individual	Program requirement	As per HREC's or AEC's requirements	Week 8 of semester of enrolment in PSY408 A	To Supervisor
2	Artefact - Creative	Individual	Program requirement	A0 poster	Week 10 of semester of enrolment in PSY408 A	In Class
3	Written Piece	Individual	Program requirement	5000 words	Week 13 of semester of enrolment in PSY408 A	To Supervisor
4	Written Piece	Individual	100%	9,000 to 12,000 words	Week 12 of semester of enrolment in PSY408 B	Online Assignment submission with Plagiarism Check
			100%			

Assessment Task 1: USC 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
Format:	<p>Your ethics application should include all materials required for an ethics application at USC, 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 USC Ethics.</p> <p>You must consult the information shown in Research Ethics and Integrity, available through Blackboard, 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>
Criteria:	Submission of application to ethics secretary and satisfactory responses to any requested amendments.

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 of the content of the research proposal. This presentation will provide you with an opportunity to receive additional, considered feedback on your thesis proposal.
Product:	Artefact - Creative
Format:	<p>The poster must be no larger than AO size (1189 x 841mm) and arranged in portrait orientation. You may use dot points or illustrations to summarise key points under each heading</p> <p>The poster should contain the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction (including the theoretical framework and aims); • Hypotheses for your research project; • Participants (e.g., describe the proposed sample, expected N); • Measures, and/or Experimental Equipment, and Procedures as appropriate for your study; • Design and Analyses (describe the statistical design and analyses to be used); • References (list the key references for theory, area of interest, and measures). <p>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 (6th Ed.).</p>
Criteria:	<p>The poster presentation will be assessed on the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to articulate the theoretical framework, area of interest, gaps in the research, and research questions • Explanation of research design and proposed statistical analyses • Explanation of how and where participants will be found and recruited, and the expected N required so that the research is likely to find significant results • Ability to answer questions about the research proposal and the methods used in a reasoned and succinct manner • Organisation of poster to be clear and easy to read (i.e., conference standard) • Effective use of colour, tables and text that makes the poster interesting and engaging

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
Format:	<p>The research proposal for your dissertation will include an introduction, review of the literature, and a methods section, which will be developed following discussions with your supervisor.</p> <p>The introduction should include 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. The literature review should 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 PSY4xx A/B course site in Blackboard.</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>
Criteria:	<p>The research proposal, including introduction, literature review, and methods will be assessed on the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstract, as a succinct and informative summary of the proposal • Extent, relevance, and detail of the current research literature used • Critical analysis of the research literature and understanding of the chosen topic area. • Description and integration the appropriate theoretical framework throughout the research proposal

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusions and rationale for the research questions to be addressed. • Detail of the methods to be used in the proposal, including participants, measures and materials, procedure, and proposed data analysis/es • The overall study objectives and the specific aims of the investigation. • Use of APA formatting and use of formal, academic writing.
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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
Format:	<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 12,000 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 PSY4xx A/B course page and in the Psychology Honours page in Blackboard.</p> <p>The review of literature will be between 5000 and 6500 words (not including the abstract, the reference list, and any appendices) where the research that follows is quantitative, whilst it may be somewhat shorter where the research is qualitative (but no less than 10% of the minimum word count).</p> <p>The research article manuscript will be between 4000 and 5500 words (not including the abstract, reference list, and any appendices), where the research that follows is quantitative, whilst it may be somewhat longer where the research is qualitative (but no more than 10% of the maximum word count). It is expected that the research article manuscript will fit within the research areas identified by the review of the literature.</p> <p>If you are undertaking a qualitative research project, please consult the Course Coordinator and your supervisor for confirmation of word counts for your own project.</p> <p>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 Administration office, on the day (or the first working day thereafter) that the thesis has been electronically submitted.</p>
Criteria:	<p>The dissertation will be assessed on the following criteria:</p> <p>Review of the literature (40%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstract: succinct summary of the content of the review of the literature • Introduction to the area of research that establishes the importance, relevance and context of area of interest • Explanation and integration of theoretical/conceptual framework • Extent, relevance, and currency of experimental research applied to the review, and the detail provided of these studies • Evidence of critical analysis of the research and original thinking • Logic and clarity of critical literature review and argument about a theoretical problem leading to researchable problem/s. • Use of APA formatting and style and use of formal, academic language throughout <p>Research article manuscript (60%)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abstract: succinct summary of research question, participants, methods and results and conclusions of the research • 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 • Methods: description of participants, measures, procedures, and data analysis, appropriateness of research design to test hypotheses • Results: description and analysis of research data and presentation of results

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion: understanding and explanation of findings, critical analysis and synthesis with previous research, consideration of alternative explanations, limitations, and conclusion• Use of APA formatting and style and use of formal, academic language throughout |
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7. Directed study hours

The directed study hours listed here are a portion of the workload for this course. 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. Directed study hours may vary by location. Student workload is calculated at 12.5 learning hours per one unit.

There are no formal weekly class contact hours for this course. You, the student (hereafter you), meet weekly or fortnightly with your dissertation supervisor as per the schedule of meetings agreed on by the supervisor in consultation with you. There will be a one-day Honours Dissertation Conference in Week 10 of the semester in which you are enrolled in PSY408 A, at which you will present your research and defend your project.

The total weekly workload associated with this course is approximately 20 hours per week, including meetings with your supervisor and the preparation and submission of the dissertation.

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

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

8.1 Prescribed text(s) or course reader

Please note that you need to have regular access to the resource(s) listed on Blackboard as they are required.

8.2 Specific requirements

Nil

9. How are risks managed in this course?

Health and safety risks for this course have been assessed as low.

It is your responsibility as a student 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. It is also your responsibility to familiarise yourself with the University's general health and safety principles by reviewing the [online Health Safety and Wellbeing training module 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 Blackboard, are electronically checked through SafeAssign. This software allows for text comparisons to be made between your submitted assessment item and all other work that SafeAssign has access to.

10.2 Assessment: Additional requirements

If standard graded course, add:

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%
- b) The course is graded using the Standard Grading scale
- c) You have not failed an assessment task in the course due to academic misconduct

10.3 Assessment: Submission penalties

If standard graded course, add:

Late submission of assessment tasks will 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 and supply the required documentation to negotiate an outcome.

If Limited graded course, add:

You must contact your Course Coordinator and provide the required documentation if you require an extension or alternate assessment.

10.4 Study help

In the first instance, you should contact your tutor, then the Course Coordinator. Additional assistance is provided to all students through Academic Skills Advisers. To book an appointment or find a drop-in session go to [Student Hub](#).

Contact Student Central for further assistance: +61 7 5430 2890 or studentcentral@usc.edu.au

10.5 Wellbeing Services

Student Wellbeing Support Staff are available to assist on a wide range of personal, academic, social and psychological matters to foster positive mental health and wellbeing for your success. Student Wellbeing is comprised of professionally qualified staff in counselling, health and disability Services.

Ability Advisers ensure equal access to all aspects of university life. If your studies are affected by a disability, mental health issue, learning disorder, injury or illness, or you are a primary carer for someone with a disability, [AccessAbility Services](#) can provide assistance, advocacy and reasonable academic adjustments.

To book an appointment with either service go to [Student Hub](#), email studentwellbeing@usc.edu.au or accessability@usc.edu.au or call 07 5430 1226

10.6 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
- Administration of Central Examinations
- Deferred Examinations
- Student Academic Misconduct
- Students with a Disability

Visit the USC website:

<http://www.usc.edu.au/explore/policies-and-procedures#academic-learning-and-teaching>

10.7 General Enquiries

In person:

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

Tel: +61 7 5430 2890

Email: studentcentral@usc.edu.au