

## Honours Application and Program FAQs

### 2024-2025

#### HOW DO I APPLY TO HONOURS?

In Psychology & Neuroscience, students first apply to the **Department** (STEP 1). After acceptance has been processed, students will work with the Honours Coordinators to complete the formal application form for the **Registrar's Office** (STEP 2).

##### STEP 1. Department Application:

Students apply to the program to the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience for admission through an ONLINE MS Forms form specific to psychology or neuroscience.

The form will **OPEN** on **April 19th, 2024**, and **CLOSE** on **May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024**. This is a firm deadline and failure to apply by this deadline may result in denied admission.

Please note that there is no 'cap' to the number of students admitted, although the number in the program is limited by the ability to find a supervisor.

The form requires students to provide the following information:

- Student name, ID number, email
- Honours program type (([NESC Concentrated Honours](#), [NESC Combined Honours](#), [PSYO Concentrated Honours](#), [PSYO Combined Honours](#))
- Name of confirmed supervisor (supervisor must also email the Honours Coordinators to confirm)
  - Supervisors CANNOT confirm until **March 1<sup>st</sup> of the application year**, but conversations can happen earlier and are encouraged.
  - Supervisors MUST email the PSYO or NESC Honours Coordinator to confirm supervision when the student applies for admission.
- Unofficial transcript, including **winter 2024** grades (please note that grades from summer 2024 CANNOT be included).
  - Transfer students are asked to provide both unofficial transcripts from both Dalhousie AND from all previous institutions.

##### STEP 2. Registrar's Application:

This step is completed after being admitted to honours by the Department of Psychology & Neuroscience. The application is due early **September** of your honours year. You will work with the Honours Coordinators the summer prior to honours to complete this.

#### WHAT DO I NEED TO GAIN ADMISSION INTO THE PROGRAM?

- B+ in NESC/PSYO 2000\* (Note: B required for students who started at Dal prior to Fall 2019).  
*\*NESC 2000 is equivalent to NESC 2007.*
- An A- average in the last **six** (not counting 1000-level or NESC/PSYO 2000\*) PSYO or NESC courses, including winter grades the year of your application
- Students need a supervisor to agree to supervise their Honours (and email the honours coordinator to confirm this when students submit their departmental application form)
- Please see other FAQs for information on admission for transfer students and for students returning to Dalhousie

Some other requirements govern remaining in the program and graduation. None of these need to be met to apply to the program.

- A minimum grade of B- is required in 4901 (fall term of honours) in order to continue into 4902 (winter term of honours).
- To graduate with honours, courses that are counted towards the Honours program requirements must have a minimum grade of C. This is a university level requirement.
- To graduate with honours, students must also complete all departmental requirements for the Honours programs, which are found in the following academic calendar sections: [NESC Concentrated Honours](#), [NESC Combined Honours](#), [PSYO Concentrated Honours](#), [PSYO Combined Honours](#)

## HOW CAN I TELL IF I MEET A- REQUIREMENT?

As long as you have received the required grade in NESC/PSYO 2000 (see Deadlines and Requirements) and have secured a supervisor, admittance into the Honours program requires an A- average in program-required courses (i.e., NESC or PSYO). Using the table below, an A- would be **zero**, and you need 0 or higher for acceptance.

For example, if your last six psychology or neuroscience courses were B+, A-, A, B, A+, A, you would be admitted because  $(-1) + 0 + 1 + (-2) + 2 + 1 = 1$  (assuming that you have a willing and eligible supervisor).

Grade	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D
Numerical Conversion	+2	+1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7

### Which courses are counted?

- The six most recent NESC or PSYO courses (excluding 1000-level and NESC/PSYO 2000\*) are used to calculate the average (count backwards from **winter term** of application cycle).
- Multi-term courses spanning two terms (i.e., 3100/3101; 3011/3012) will be counted as two of these six (e.g., a grade of A in Independent Research (3100/3101) would count as two A's).

- Summer courses count in all of these calculations, as long as they were completed prior to the application deadline. Summer courses taken the summer before a September start of honours **cannot** be considered, as grades are not available when students apply to the honours program.
- If there is more than one course that *can* count within the same semester, the course with the higher grade will be used.
- For NESC students, BIOL 2020 *can* count in the six more recent courses because it is a required course.

*\*NESC 2000 is equivalent to NESC 2007.*

## **I ALREADY COMPLETED A DEGREE IN PSYCHOLOGY OR NEUROSCIENCE AT DALHOUSIE. HOW DOES MY APPLICATION GET ASSESSED?**

**Previous Dalhousie Students (Honours Conversion):** Students can apply to complete an Honours conversion after the end of their Dalhousie Psychology/Neuroscience degree. Please note that **only courses taken within the last 10 years** can be considered towards admission into an Honours conversion.

For admission to Dalhousie, students must consult with the Registrar's Office about returning as a special undergraduate student. It is not possible to complete a degree at another university and simply do an "Honours conversion" at Dalhousie.

*See also "How is Admission into the Program Calculated?" FAQ section.*

## **I'M A TRANSFER STUDENT. HOW DOES MY APPLICATION GET ASSESSED?**

Students transferring from other institutions are required to complete **one full year** (i.e., fall and winter term) of study at Dalhousie and to accumulate six or more 3-credit hour 2000/3000-level Dalhousie Psychology/Neuroscience classes before seeking admission to the Honours Program. They must also obtain credit for all Honours prerequisites. Transfer students will need to submit grades from prior institutions upon applying for honours and applications will be considered on a case by case basis.

It is HIGHLY recommended that any transfer student interested in the Honours program, contact a Departmental Academic Advisor as soon as possible (ideally, before transferring) to ensure they have (or will have) all necessary requirements.

*See also "How is Admission into the Program Calculated?" FAQ section.*

## **WHAT IS AN HONOURS DEGREE?**

An Honours degree is an intensive, independent research project. Work is performed under the supervision of a professor (or post-doctoral fellow) to complete a novel research project. Students design, conduct, collect and analyze data, interpret, and write a thesis. The final grade is based on originality, skill, writing, a proposal presentation in Fall term, and a final presentation at the end of Winter term. Completing an honours project often involves other commitments, such as regular meetings with the student's supervisor, submitting multiple thesis drafts to the supervisor, attending lab meetings, availability for data collection, etc. When discussing honours with potential supervisors, it's a good idea for students to ask about expectations and the work associated with doing an honours project in their lab.

In addition to being admitted to the Honours program and meeting university- and departmental-requirements, to receive an Honours degree from the Department of Psychology & Neuroscience, you will need to take the full-year Honours class (NESC/PSYO 4901 and 4902) the year of honours. Additionally, you will be required to complete an advanced statistics course (PSYO 3502) and two PSYO or NESC honours seminars (4000-level courses, aside from NESC/PSYO 4901 and 4902).

## **WHY MIGHT I WANT TO DO AN HONOURS DEGREE?**

Honours is useful for students interested in research. It can help you to better understand the process of scientific research and to gain research skills.

Honours can also be useful for those who are interested in gaining transferable skills. You will gain experience in a laboratory setting and acquire research skills. Some of these include learning to manage a project (your Honours), communication (in writing and orally) and collaboration (with others in the lab and your supervisor). All of these are transferable to many other domains both within research and beyond! However, keep in mind that honours projects are intensive—they take a lot of time and dedication to the research. If you aren't interested in research, there are many other ways to gain these transferrable skills. Consider what you want out of your education, and look for opportunities that are most aligned with your goals!

Honours can also be useful for those considering applying to Master or PhD programs. Some Master's programs require Honours, including those in Clinical Psychology. This is, in part, because of the research skills that you gain, but also because working with an honours supervisor on a project can be one way to get a strong, detailed letter of reference that is often needed for graduate school.

Other programs emphasise work and/or volunteer experience as a part of the evaluation process, so honours is certainly not required for all master's programs.

## **WHAT ARE OTHER OPPORTUNITIES TO GAIN RESEARCH EXPERIENCE?**

Students can complete **third year research projects** in the department (NESC/PSYO 3100/3101 or NESC/PSYO 3001). These students need to secure a supervisor, just like for Honours. These can be done in either the third or fourth year of study and so they are useful for students in preparing for Honours or

for those who do not want to do Honours. To be admitted to this, you need a grade of B or higher in NESC/PSYO 2000 and an average of B+ or higher in last six (6) NESC/PSYO courses

**Summer USRAs.** Applications for these summer jobs in research are in January of each year.

You can also **volunteer in a lab**. When considering these opportunities, be clear about what kind of time commitment you can make and what is expected of you, both in terms of time and role.

## HOW DO I CHOOSE OR FIND A SUPERVISOR?

You can begin by thinking about the courses and/or topics that interest you. Those are good indications of your areas of interest. Look through faculty research descriptions and review their websites to try to get a sense of who might be a fit in terms of interests. Please know that completing Honours can be a useful learning experience, even if you don't work on exactly your topic of primary interest. There are many skills, beyond a specific topic area, that you will learn, and honours will prepare you for research-based graduate programs in other areas.

The Honours program is intended for students that will go on to graduate school and should not be undertaken without a strong desire to do research. A third-year independent research project can be undertaken by students that are not certain of their need for honours and/or do not meet the requirements for honours.

**Note that supervisors cannot confirm their ability to supervise students until March 1<sup>st</sup> of the application year.**

## HOW DO I CONTACT POTENTIAL SUPERVISORS?

Read through the lab websites of individual faculty members (see also below re “who can be a supervisor”) Start by identifying a small set—say 3 or 4—that you're interested in working with and email those individual faculty members. It often helps to let faculty know why you're interested in their area of research, to attach an unofficial transcript and CV or resume, and to tell them about some of the skills you can bring. This can give them an idea of your background. Ask to meet with them to discuss a possible Honours project; you are welcome to bring your own ideas, but it is also good to be open to their ideas, including joining ongoing projects.

It's possible that some faculty might not respond. This might indicate that they are currently not taking on Honours students. You can always contact faculty a second time, and you can also contact other potential supervisors, beyond this initial set of a few. Start with those you are most interested in and work out from there. Many students volunteer in labs to gain research experience prior to doing an Honours. This is not required, but can be helpful.

**Note that supervisors cannot confirm their ability to supervise students until March 1<sup>st</sup> of the application year.**

## **WHEN TO CONTACT POTENTIAL SUPERVISORS**

There is no perfect time to contact faculty, though typically earlier is better. Typically, students begin to establish connections with potential supervisors in the fall or early winter of their 3rd year (or year prior to doing honours). Please note that supervisors CANNOT confirm their ability to supervise students until **March 1**, though conversations can happen earlier (encouraged).

## **WHO CAN BE A SUPERVISOR?**

Faculty members in the Department of Psychology & Neuroscience are eligible to supervise, as are faculty listed in the adjunct and cross-appointed lists on the departmental website.

[Our People - Department of Psychology and Neuroscience - Dalhousie University](#)

With permission of the appropriate Honours Coordinator, faculty from other departments or universities may be eligible. The project still must have a focus on Psychology or Neuroscience. Students must apply for external faculty member to be approved as a supervisor. To do so, contact the honours coordinator for your program by April 19<sup>th</sup> of 2024.

All projects need to be relevant to Psychology and/or Neuroscience.

**Please note that having secured a willing supervisor *does not* guarantee admittance into the program. Students must meet all admission requirements.**

## **DOES MY PROJECT HAVE TO EXPLICITLY 'MATCH' MY PROGRAM?**

There does not need to be an explicit match. Students in Psychology and Neuroscience completing an honours project are allowed to complete their project on any topic connected to either Psychology or Neuroscience. For example, an Honours student who is majoring in Psychology could complete a project investigating seasonal brain changes in songbirds, or a student majoring in Neuroscience could complete a project on the motivations of drinking behaviours in dating couples. Honours projects are intended to provide students with the opportunity to engage the research process, analyze and interpret data, and (ideally) contribute novel findings to the field of psychology and/or neuroscience broadly.

Keep in mind that individual supervisors may require students working in their labs to have specific courses or background to ensure they are successful; as such, students should discuss these expectations with potential supervisors in advance of the application deadline.

## **WHAT MIGHT I NEED AN HONOURS DEGREE FOR?**

An Honours degree is a common requirement for research-based post-graduate programs. For example, MSc's and PhD's in Clinical Psychology, Experimental Psychology, and Neuroscience, all typically require students to have completed an Honours program or Honours-equivalent program.

Many professional programs (e.g., medicine, dentistry, occupational therapy, audiology, etc.) do not require an Honours for admission. These often emphasise volunteer and/or work experience. Students often need to choose how to best allocate their time (e.g., gaining community experience versus doing an honours) to optimise their application to specific programs. It's best to check out the full admissions requirements for any programs you may be interested in to help inform your decision.