

Frequently asked questions about Honours

When do I apply to Honours?

There are two steps for applying to honours; STEP 1 is the Departmental application and STEP 2 is the Registrar's Office application.

- **STEP 1. Department Application**
 - You first apply to the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience for admission to the Honours program.
 - There is ONE application period.
 - Opens April 1 and closes May 10th (after winter grades posted)
 - This will be done through MS Forms, with a link to be shared in due course.
 - Applications MUST include all winter grades
 - Requires signature of supervisor + application
 - Supervisors CANNOT confirm until March 1 (this is a NEW rule that is approved by the dep't). Conversations can happen earlier (encouraged)
 - 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.
- **STEP 2. Registrar's application form. AFTER being admitted to honours in the dep't.**
 - Due by Sept. of 4th year
 - Work with honours instructors on this through the summer prior to honours

How is admission into the program calculated?

- All students need:
 - a supervisor to agree to supervise their Honours (and sign the departmental application form)
 - a B in NESC/PSYO 2000 (Note: B+ will be required for students who started at Dal in Fall 2019 or later)
 - Minimum grades in psychology/neuroscience courses (not counting 1000-level or NESC/PSYO 2000)
 - an A- average in the last six psychology/neuroscience courses
 - **MUST include winter grades**
 - **CANNOT include summer courses taken the summer prior to Sept start of honours.**
 - To graduate with honours, students are required to have a minimum grade of C in all program related courses. This is a university level requirement. It's not required for admission to the program, but it does need to be secured prior to graduation.
- **Please see below for information on admission for transfer students and for students returning to Dalhousie.**

How can I tell if I meet the A- requirement?

Lets take an example of early admission into the Honours program; this requires an A- average in the last 6 courses and can be figured out simply. Using the table below, an A- is **zero**. 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 of course, 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 in meeting the A- requirement?

- Do this calculation once winter grades are in for the year in which you are applying.
- Counting backward from the most recent courses taken including spring/summer courses, **six** PSYO or NESC course are used for the average .
- Please note that 6.0 credit hour classes (i.e. independent study) will count as 2 of these 6.
- Summer courses count in these calculations, as long as they are from prior to the application point. (note that summer courses taken just before Sept start of honours cannot count)
- If there is more than one course that *can* count within the same semester, the course with the higher grade will be used.
- Note that for Neuroscience students, BIOL 2020 *can* count in the six courses because it is a required course.
- For students with transfer credits, please submit a transcript from the original institution if at all possible.
- Applications of students who have been on exchange will be considered on a case by case basis.

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, students require:
 - an A- average in the last **6** (not counting 1000-level or NESC/PSYO 2000) psychology/neuroscience courses
 - a B in NESC/PSYO 2000 (Note: B+ will be required for students who started at Dal in Fall 2019 or later)
- All students need a supervisor to agree to supervise their Honours (and sign the departmental application form) in order to apply.

I'm a transfer student. How does my application get assessed?

- Students transferring from other institutions are required to complete one full year of study at Dalhousie and to accumulate **six** or more half-credits of 2000/3000-level Dalhousie Psychology/Neuroscience classes before seeking admission to the Honours Program. They must also obtain credit for all Honours prerequisites. Any transfer student should contact an Honours Advisor as soon as possible after arriving at Dalhousie (or before, if possible) to ensure that they have or will have all appropriate/required courses. It is not possible to complete a degree at another university and simply do an "Honours conversion" at Dalhousie.
- All students need a supervisor to agree to supervise their Honours (and sign the departmental application form) in order to apply.

What is an Honours degree?

- Intensive, independent research project
 - Work under the supervision of professor (or post-doc student) 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, and oral presentation (at In-House conference)
- You need to take the Honours class (NESC/PSYO 4501/4502), Two 4000-level seminar classes and an advanced statistics course (3502), in addition to being admitted to the program.

Why might I want to do an Honours?

- 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!
- Honours is also useful for those considering applying to Master or PhD programs. Many Masters programs require Honours, including those in Clinical Psychology This is in part because of the skills that you gain. It is 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 honours.

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. More information is available [here](#). These also require a signature from a supervisor.
- 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, including linking to their websites to try to get a sense of who might be a fit in terms of interests. Please know that the 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.

Note that supervisors cannot confirm their ability to supervise students until March 1.

How do I contact potential supervisors?

Email individual faculty members to let them know of your interest. It often helps to let faculty know why you're interested in their area of research. It can also help to attach an unofficial transcript and CV or resume if you have one. 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 a good idea 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.

Many students volunteer in labs to gain research experience prior to doing an Honours. This is not required, but it is helpful.

Note that supervisors cannot confirm their ability to supervise students until March 1.

When should I 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. However, supervisors cannot confirm their ability to supervise students until March 1., though students are encouraged to discuss shared interests prior to this point.

Who can be a supervisor?

Core faculty in the department can be supervisors. See the link here.

https://www.dal.ca/faculty/science/psychology_neuroscience/faculty-staff.html

In addition to core faculty in the Department of Psychology & Neuroscience, other faculty across the Dalhousie campus and affiliated with the hospitals *may* be eligible to supervise Honours students; these faculty are listed in the adjunct and cross-appointed lists on the departmental website. If you are unsure of the eligibility for acting as an Honours supervisor, the onus is on you to contact an Honours Advisor to ask. In some cases, faculty from other departments or centers may be eligible, but there may be the need for oversight by someone internal to the Department of Psychology & Neuroscience. This is at the discretion of the Honours Advisor.

Please note that having secured a willing and eligible supervisor is a requirement to apply for admission, but *does not* guarantee admission into the honours program.