**Psychology & Neuroscience Independent Research Project Courses: Guidelines**

**[revised and updated May 5, 2025]**

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# **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR THE SUPERVISORS**

Independent study/research projects **can only be supervised by Dalhousie University faculty members, or researchers at an institution that holds a formal supervisory agreement with the Department, e.g., NSHA institutions**. The research project must be in the area(s) of psychology and/or neuroscience, and the supervisor must demonstrate, through their academic degrees and/or published research, that they have expertise in the domain(s) of psychology and/or neuroscience. **Faculty outside the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience must provide a current Curriculum Vitae, in addition to the project description, to facilitate this assessment**. Decisions as to the suitability of the project and supervisor will be made by the independent study/research course coordinator.

These projects may be supervised by a graduate student or postdoc. However, in such situations it is required that a faculty member meeting the requirements above be named as a co-supervisor on the application for the course. The faculty member must co-sign the agreement and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the course work and assessments meet Dalhousie University’s academic standards.

Any project requiring the use of animal subjects or human participants **must provide confirmation of ethics approval**.

* For one-term projects (3001 and 3002), ethics approval must be provided to the independent study/research course coordinator before the agreement/syllabus (see below) is signed (i.e., before the add/drop date at the latest).
* For 3100/3101, ethics approval must be confirmed in the first week of the second (Winter) term.
* Please consult the “important dates” page of the Dalhousie website.
* Students whose projects involve research with humans **must provide a certificate of completion of the TCPS CORE training** before they are permitted to register. Students whose research will involve animals **must provide a certificate of completion of Dalhousie University’s animal research training certificate** before they are permitted to register.

Grades are due on the last day of the final exam period. Please consult the “important dates” or the exam timetable for the exact date. The coordinator will submit an INC if no grades are provided. A change can be applied within a month of submitting that grade.

# **COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:**

## **NESC/PSYO 3001 Directed Research (or 3002, but only if done after completion of a 3001)**

**For upper-year students who wish to gain research experience. Requirements include a minimum grade of B in PSYO 2000/NESC 2000, a high level of performance in other Psychology courses, an overall B+ (GPA 3.30) average, and securing a faculty advisor to supervise the research project.**

A directed research project is a single-term project (3 credit hours). This project should be designed to ensure all work can be completed in a 12-week span. The term ‘directed’ is used in the course title because it is expected that the supervisor will play a larger role in developing the project – primarily to ensure it is a reasonable plan considering the time constraints. For example, a 3001 project might involve a student analyzing data that has already been collected but that has yet to be processed. The final product of this project is often a final paper. These projects can be completed in any term: Fall, Winter, or Summer.

***NESC/PSYO 3002***: Students who have already completed a 3001 project have the option of completing a second 3-credit hour, single term project with the same supervisor or a different supervisor. The guidelines are identical for 3002 as for 3001. A 3002 project must have distinct beginning and end points **and CANNOT be a continuation of a 3001 project** (*though the topic can be similar, it must be a new project*).

## **NESC/PSYO 3100/3101 Independent Research**

**For upper-year students who wish to gain research experience. Requirements include a minimum grade of B in PSYO 2000/NESC 2000, a high level of performance in other Psychology or Neuroscience courses, an overall B+ (GPA 3.30) average, and securing a faculty advisor to supervise the research project. This course is not offered during the Spring/Summer terms.**

An independent research project spans the Fall and Winter terms (6 credit hours). This project should be designed to span two full terms (from September to April). The term ‘independent’ is used in the course title because it is expected that students will play a larger role in helping to develop the project, collect and analyze the data, interpret the results, and create a finished product (e.g., full report and/or poster and/or presentation). **This course satisfies 3 credit hours towards the laboratory component of our Psychology and Neuroscience programs** – supervisors should keep this in mind when designing the project (to ensure the student is gaining appropriate lab-skills – e.g., experimental design, data collection, data analysis/interpretation, etc.). This project can only be completed during the consecutive Fall and Winter terms of the **same** academic year.

## **NESC/PSYO 4000 Directed Reading**

**For upper-year students who wish to gain research experience. Requirements include a minimum grade of B in PSYO 2000/NESC 2000, a high level of performance in other Psychology or Neuroscience courses, an overall B+ (GPA 3.30) average, and securing a faculty advisor to supervise the research project.**

A directed reading project is a single-term project (3 credit hours). This project is a reading/study course designed to allow **Honours students** to focus on a specific topic or set of issues, outside of our regular programming. The scope of this project should allow for completion in a 12-week span. The final product of this project is typically a review article (often intended for publication), a summary paper, or an annotative bibliography. These projects can be completed in any term: Fall, Winter, or Summer.

**Important Note**: *Students are only permitted to complete 6-credit hours of independent research during their NESC or PSYO program. As such, they can only receive credit for 3001 + 3002 OR 3100/3101. NESC/PSYO 4000 is a directed reading course and must be designed so that there is no overlap with our research classes (i.e., no new research or data collection) to ensure a clear distinction between the classes and that our students can continue to receive credit for both.*

**STUDENT REQUIREMENTS FOR PERMISSION:**

**Note that I will require the grades of the last term completed before the start of the project. For example, if you are registering for the Winter term, I will need the Fall term grades. If you are registering for the Summer term, I will need the Winter term grades.**

**NESC/PSYO 3001 (or 3002) Directed Research**

* Grade of B or higher in NESC/PSYO 2000.
* Average of B+ or higher in all completed 2000-level and above NESC/PSYO courses
* **Willing supervisor that is Faculty at Dalhousie University or equivalent at an institution that holds a formal supervisory agreement with Dalhousie University, e.g., a NSHA institution.**
* **Electronic copy** of signed syllabus sent to Psych\_NeuroIndependentStudyProjects@dal.ca in the first week of the term. Please start from the template syllabus found in this document.
* **All ethics (animal and/or human) approved.**

**NESC/PSYO 3100/3101 Independent Research**

* Grade of B or higher in NESC/PSYO 2000.
* Average of B+ or higher in all completed 2000-level and above NESC/PSYO courses
* **Willing supervisor that is Faculty at Dalhousie University or equivalent at an institution that holds a formal supervisory agreement with Dalhousie University, e.g., a NSHA institution.**
* **Electronic copy** of signed syllabus sent to [Psych\_NeuroIndependentStudyProjects@dal.ca](mailto:pnistud@dal.ca) in the first week of the term. Please start from the template syllabus found in this document.
* **All ethics (animal and/or human) approved by the beginning of the second term.**

**NESC/PSYO 4000 Directed Reading**

* Approved Honours student.
* **Willing supervisor (different from Honours supervisor) that is Faculty at Dalhousie University or equivalent at an institution that holds a formal supervisory agreement with Dalhousie University, e.g., a NSHA institution.**
* **Electronic copy** of signed syllabus sent to Psych\_NeuroIndependentStudyProjects@dal.ca in the first week of the term. Please start from the template syllabus found in this document.

# **REQUIRED COMPONENTS OF SYLLABUS** (SEE EXAMPLE TEMPLATES ON FOLLOWING PAGES):

1. Project description.
2. Appropriate project timeline (e.g., if 3001/2 project, must be reasonable for 12-week term).
3. All assessment deadlines.
4. Grade breakdown.
5. **Commitment to final grade submission for last day of exams for corresponding term.**

# **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

* Students**: The deadline to apply** is within the first week of class. Changes cannot be made beyond the ADD/DROP date of the corresponding start term.
* In submitting the signed document to Independent Course Coordinator, **you explicitely grant access to your transcript so they can check that you have fulfilled all the necessary requirements**.
* Supervisors**: Deadline for final grade submission** to the Independent Course Coordinator is the **last day of exams** of the term. If this deadline cannot be met, the coordinator should be contacted ASAP and student should be included in any discussion regarding an interim grades. (most likely, “INC”). Remember, a final grade of INC is factored into student’s academic standing as an F, at the start of the following term (before it ever shows as an ‘F’ on their transcript).
* Supervisors & Students:
  + Your syllabus/contract may contain additional information/details, but you must include the basics provided in the templates.
  + A grade in **3100/3101** will be **submitted at the end of the Winter** term only.

**TEMPLATES**:

The next pages offer the basic template for a syllabus for each course. Note that they contain the minimal information required for approval by the coordinator. All the information given here will be checked and follow-ups should be expected for ethics approvals.

Template for NESC/PSYO 3001 or 3002 Syllabus

Department of Psychology & Neuroscience

NESC or PSYO 3001 or 3002\*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Course: Specify if **NESC** or **PSYO;** alsoif **3001** or **3002\*** |  |
| Term: **Fall**, **Winter**, **Summer A,** **Summer B** |  |
| Supervisor’s name |  |
| Supervisor’s email address |  |
| Supervisor’s affiliation (department; and **must be Dalhousie or equivalent at an institution that holds a formal supervisory agreement with Dalhousie University, e.g., NSHA**) |  |
| Co-supervisor. Typically the PI of a lab if the project is supervised by a PhD student or a post doc. **Specify name and email address**. |  |
| Student’s name |  |
| Student’s id number |  |
| Student’s Dalhousie email address |  |
| The student has a B or higher in NESC/PSYO 2000 and a B+ average in previous NESC/PSYO courses: **Type the letter grades.** | NESC/PSYO 2000 letter grade:  Overall NESC/PSYO average (letter grade): |
| Student’s UCLA/CCAC (animal ethics) certification # | # |
| Student’s TCPS human research ethics training certification # | # |
| Human (REB) or animal (UCLA) ethics approval #. It may be cross-checked with the relevant committee. **Project ethics approval must be in place for 3001 and 3002 prior to the start of the project, i.e., at the time of the signing of this document.** | # |
| Time investment expectation (hours/week) | /week |

**\* 3002 is only for students that have already completed 3001**

**Detailed Project Description**

Explain details of the proposed project – specifically focusing on the role of the student completing the project. Outline target population, data collection, intended approach for data analysis, and expected final product.

**Required Materials**

* List any required materials (e.g., lab coat, essential books, tablet, computer, phones, etc.)

**Assessments**

Include dates and times for all project assessments (e.g., drafts of paper, participation/skills development, training certifications, etc.)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Components** | **Weight (% of final grade)** | **Due Date** |
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**Course Requirements**

List expectations/requirements for hours/week spent in lab, expectations (and mode) for communication, etc.

**Dalhousie Common Grade Scale (mandatory; do not alter the values below)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | 65-69 | 70-72 | 73-76 | 77-79 | 80-84 | 85-89 | 90-100 |
| F | D | C- | C | C+ | B- | B | B+ | A- | A | A+ |

**Course Policies**

List your policy on issues such as late assignments, missed lab time, lack of communication, etc. Explain your policy on approved collaboration (if any) and plagiarism/cheating.

**Student-Supervisor Agreement**

I (student’s name) agree to the above course syllabus and will work to ensure I meet all of the deadlines and expectations.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: | Date: |

I (supervisor’s name) agree to the above course syllabus and will work to ensure the above-named student is supported and provided with appropriate and timely feedback and grades.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: | Date: |

I (co-supervisor’s name) agree to the above course syllabus and will work to ensure the above-named student is supported and provided with appropriate and timely feedback and grades.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: | Date: |

Template for NESC/PSYO 3100/3101 Syllabus

Department of Psychology & Neuroscience

NESC or PSYO 3100/3101

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Course: Specify if **NESC** or **PSYO** |  |
| Term: Year (default) | Year (Fall and Winter) |
| Supervisor’s name |  |
| Supervisor’s email address |  |
| Supervisor’s affiliation (department; and **must be Dalhousie or equivalent at an institution that holds a formal supervisory agreement with Dalhousie University, e.g., NSHA**). |  |
| Co-supervisor. Typically the PI of a lab if the project is supervised by a PhD student or a post doc. **Specify name and email address**. |  |
| Student’s name |  |
| Student’s id number |  |
| Student’s Dalhousie email address |  |
| The student has a B or higher in NESC/PSYO 2000 and a B+ average in previous NESC/PSYO courses. **Type the letter grades.** | NESC/PSYO 2000 letter grade:  Overall NESC/PSYO average (letter grade): |
| Student’s UCLA/CCAC (animal ethics) certification # | # |
| Student’s TCPS human research ethics training certification # | # |
| Human (REB) or animal (UCLA) ethics approval #. It may be cross-checked with the relevant committee. **If the project is not yet approved, you must send the approval # as soon as received and you cannot start lab or field work with subjects/participants until approved.** | # |
| Time investment expectation (hours/week) | /week |

**Detailed Project Description**

Explain details of the proposed project – specifically focusing on the role of the student completing the project. Outline target population, data collection, intended approach for data analysis, and expected final product.

**Required Materials**

* List any required materials (e.g., lab coat, essential books, etc.)

**Assessments**

Include dates and times for all project assessments (e.g., proposal, drafts of paper, participation/skills development, training certifications, etc.)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Components** | **Weight (% of final grade)** | **Due Date** |
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**Course Requirements**

List expectations/requirements for hours/week spent in lab, expectations (and mode) for communication, etc.

**Dalhousie Common Grade Scale (mandatory; do not alter the values below)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | 65-69 | 70-72 | 73-76 | 77-79 | 80-84 | 85-89 | 90-100 |
| F | D | C- | C | C+ | B- | B | B+ | A- | A | A+ |

**Course Policies**

List your policy on issues such as late assignments, missed lab time, lack of communication, etc. Explain your policy on approved collaboration (if any) and plagiarism/cheating.

**Student-Supervisor Agreement**

I (student’s name) agree to the above course syllabus and will work to ensure I meet all of the deadlines and expectations.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: | Date: |

I (supervisor’s name) agree to the above course syllabus and will work to ensure the above-named student is supported and provided with appropriate and timely feedback and grades.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: | Date: |

I (co-supervisor’s name) agree to the above course syllabus and will work to ensure the above-named student is supported and provided with appropriate and timely feedback and grades.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: | Date: |

Template for NESC/PSYO 4000 Syllabus

Department of Psychology & Neuroscience

NESC or PSYO 4000

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Course: Specify if **NESC** or **PSYO** |  |
| Term: **Fall**, **Winter**, **Summer A,** **Summer B** |  |
| Supervisor’s name |  |
| Supervisor’s email address |  |
| Supervisor’s affiliation (department; and **must be Dalhousie or equivalent at an institution that holds a formal supervisory agreement with Dalhousie University, e.g., NSHA).** |  |
| Co-supervisor. Typically the PI of a lab if the project is supervised by a PhD student or a post doc. **Specify name and email address**. |  |
| Student’s name |  |
| Student’s id number |  |
| Student’s email address |  |
| Admission approval to Honours program confirmed. **Type YES or NO and type the name/email of the Honours supervisor.** | Honours supervisor:  Email of supervisor: |
| Time investment expectation (hours/week) | /week |

**Detailed Project Description**

Explain details of the proposed project – what is the focus of this reading project and what is the end goal (e.g., review article intended for publication, annotated bibliography, etc.).

**Required Materials**

* List any required materials (e.g., required readings)

**Assessments**

Include dates and times for any assessments/progress reports/drafts

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Components** | **Weight (% of final grade)** | **Due Date** |
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**Course Requirements**

List any expectations for student (e.g., regular communications with supervisor)

**Dalhousie Common Grade Scale (mandatory; do not alter the values below)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 0-49 | 50-54 | 55-59 | 60-64 | 65-69 | 70-72 | 73-76 | 77-79 | 80-84 | 85-89 | 90-100 |
| F | D | C- | C | C+ | B- | B | B+ | A- | A | A+ |

**Course Policies**

List your policy on issues such as late drafts, lack of communication, etc. Explain your policy on approved collaboration (if any) and plagiarism/cheating.

**Student-Supervisor Agreement**

I (student’s name) agree to the above course syllabus and will work to ensure I meet all of the deadlines and expectations.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: | Date: |

I (supervisor’s name) agree to the above course syllabus and will work to ensure the above-named student is supported and provided with appropriate and timely feedback and grades.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: | Date: |

I (co-supervisor’s name) agree to the above course syllabus and will work to ensure the above-named student is supported and provided with appropriate and timely feedback and grades.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Signature: | Date: |