Psychology Thesis Stream
Important Information

Competition for the 2026-2027 Academic Year
Priority of consideration application deadline: March 2, 2026

Overview
Most undergraduate degree programs in psychology offer students formal opportunities to enhance their research skills and experience. The most common means of doing this is by completing a series of research and methods-focused courses and an undergraduate thesis. Besides providing a unique chance to work individually with a faculty member on an original research project, the completion of an undergraduate thesis is often an important step for students contemplating graduate school. Acceptance into the thesis option is determined by a competitive application process in the student's penultimate (that is, next-to-last) year of their program. This document provides an overview of the thesis stream and how to apply.

Requirements
Thesis-stream students will need to complete PSY 961 (Thesis Project I) and PSY 971 (Thesis Project II) as part of the 40 courses in their program. Successful completion of PSY 961 is required for entry into PSY 971.

Admission into the thesis stream is competitive because there is a limited number of faculty members who can serve as thesis supervisors in a given year. The number of applicants typically exceeds the number of available supervision spots. Key factors that affect your chances of success are your CV and GPA at the time of application, completion of PSY 511, and interviews with faculty. Having previous research experience also helps, but is not an absolute requirement.

- The **minimum CGPA at the time of application is 3.50**. Meeting this minimum does not guarantee admission; most successful applicants have GPAs in the A- range or higher.
- Completion of PSY 511 is mandatory to participate in the thesis stream. Students who have not yet taken PSY 511 at the time of application may be granted special permission to take it concurrently with PSY 961. Also be aware that there may be a competitive disadvantage relative to students who have already completed PSY 511 as faculty members may give preference to students with a stronger background in research methods and statistics.

Application Process
Students must apply during the second term of their penultimate year in the program (i.e., the Winter semester of 3rd year for most students).

Step 1: Prepare
Educate yourself about the thesis stream by reading the information on the thesis stream website and by attending the virtual thesis stream information session in February. The date

and time of the information session will be announced by mid-January. Students must register for the session. A recording of the session will be made available to all registered students after the session. You should also familiarize yourself with the list of faculty supervisors which will be available on the thesis stream website by mid-January. Spend some time looking up their research profiles, lab websites, and recent publications.

Step 2: Apply (Deadline: March 2, 2026)
The priority of consideration deadline is **March 2, 2026**. A link to the application form will go live on the thesis stream website in mid-February. The application will require the following:

- Name and email address
- Unofficial transcript (will be checked to ensure that you meet the minimum GPA requirement; will also be shared with potential supervisors so they can see your academic record)
- A CV (curriculum vitae; academic resume)
- For applicants who have not yet completed PSY 511: A confirmation of their intention to take PSY 511 concurrent with PSY 961
- Description of research experience or other relevant experience (100 words max)
- Specific research and faculty supervisor preferences (note that being flexible with regard to both may increase your chances of admission into the thesis stream)

The information collected from you will be shared with all potential faculty supervisors.

Step 3: Interviews (March 10-31, 2026)
All interviews are initiated by faculty supervisors; students should **not** contact faculty members to request interviews. Faculty supervisors will review the applicant list and will invite the applicants of their choice for individual interviews that will be scheduled **between March 10 and March 31**. You should closely monitor your TMU email during this period so that you don't miss any correspondence with potential supervisors. You may receive multiple interview requests. Interviews can be online or in-person and usually last 30 minutes or less. Interviews typically focus on applicants' research interests and relevant experiences. Interviews also give applicants a chance to ask questions.

Step 4: Submit your supervisor preferences (Deadline: April 3, 2026)
Once interviews are completed, all applicants will submit their updated research and supervisor preferences via an Applicant Survey. A link to the survey will be emailed to them on April 1st. Similarly, all faculty supervisors will receive a link to a Faculty Survey that will collect their applicant preferences. Responses to these surveys will be due **April 3, 2026**. Based on both surveys, the thesis coordinator and the Undergraduate Program Office will identify preliminary student-supervisor matches. Students and supervisors will be informed of their preliminary matches in early April. Supervisors (and students) without matches will have the opportunity to conduct additional interviews in April.

Step 5: Official acceptance (early May, 2025)
Once Winter grades are posted, the Undergraduate Program Office will check applicants' updated transcripts to ensure that they still clear the minimum GPA requirement. Note that applicants will not need to submit their updated transcripts; the Undergraduate Program will

access them through MyServiceHub. Following this, successful applicants will receive an official notice of acceptance by email, with their faculty supervisors copied. Further enrollment information will be provided at that time.

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS A THESIS?

An undergraduate thesis involves empirical research supervised by a faculty member. The description of the project, including the results and interpretation of the research, are ultimately described in a scholarly paper typically known as a "thesis". For most students, this will be the first opportunity to do their own research from conception of the idea through data collection, analysis and presentation.

WHO SHOULD DO AN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS?

Completing a thesis is not the only way to explore psychological research at a deeper level, or to gain entrance into graduate school, but it is perhaps the most typical way. It gives students an opportunity to work closely with a faculty member on a project of mutual interest outside of a classroom setting. If you have a strong desire to do original research, including collecting and analyzing your own data, and you meet the entry requirements, you should consider this option. If you're at all thinking of graduate school, completing a thesis is strongly advised. Even if you're not thinking about graduate school, the thesis option can be a very rewarding and enriching experience- but it's not for everyone. Ask lots of questions before you apply.

HOW DOES COURSE REGISTRATION WORK?

If acceptance into the thesis stream is not confirmed until May, how do I complete my course intentions in March? And how do I register myself in these courses in the Fall term?

When planning your Fall and Winter schedules, you should organize course intentions independent of PSY 961/971 (i.e., as if you were NOT accepted into the thesis stream). If and when you are accepted (early in the Spring/Summer term), you will work with the Undergraduate Program Administrators to make the necessary adjustments to your timetable.

The most common path involves dropping a previously selected course to make room for PSY 961/971. Remember, in the Fall, you will not be able to enroll yourself. Since the thesis courses require department consent, you can only be enrolled directly by the Undergraduate Program office.

HOW/WHEN/WHERE CAN I FIND A SUPERVISOR?

As noted above, you have the opportunity to indicate research interests and preferred supervisors in your application. You will first want to find out about the kind of work the various faculty members in Psychology are doing. You can do this by reading faculty bios on the Psychology Department website. We will also have an up-to-date list of supervisors on our website who are interested in interviewing students for the upcoming year. Note that some of these potential supervisors may not have a faculty bio on our website (e.g., because they are adjunct faculty members whose primary appointment is at another institution). Please give these

"external" supervisors your full consideration. Once you have submitted your application, **potential supervisors will *reach out to you for an interview***.

If you are at an earlier stage in your program and are considering applying to the thesis stream down the line, you are strongly encouraged to seek out research opportunities to prepare you for a thesis. Examples include PSY 700 (Research Practicum), as well as paid or volunteer lab positions. Even if you are in first or second year, you should think about the thesis as a long-term plan and start making individual research connections with faculty members now.

Feel free to talk about your thesis interests with your professors -- in class, during office hours, or some other time. Although it may seem intimidating, remember that faculty members are typically delighted to have a chance to discuss their research with eager students, so go ahead and start that conversation. You can also ask graduate students who are TAs in some of your courses about their research and their experience completing their thesis. You should also think about attending a research talk/colloquium/ seminar in the department. These are held throughout the school year and this will give you a good idea what research really is and how it is communicated.

DO I NEED TO HAVE A RESEARCH PROJECT READY WHEN I MEET WITH POTENTIAL SUPERVISORS?

No. All you need at the interview stage is a general idea of the area in which you'd like to work. Developing the research proposal will take weeks or months and is part of the formal goals for PSY961. Often supervisors will have some suggestions of studies that they are already working on for you to get involved with. In other cases, you can suggest some ideas that your supervisor will help you narrow down. Certainly spend some time in advance finding out what work the professor you're interviewing with does in order to prepare for the meeting with them.

WHAT HAPPENS IN THE THESIS COURSES? DO STUDENTS ATTEND CLASSES LIKE IN OTHER COURSES?

In the first term (PSY 961) there will be a few mandatory meetings of all the thesis students and the thesis coordinator, but most of the students' work will be independent. Early in the term, students will attend a series of presentations on general information required to complete the thesis (e.g., writing ethics proposals, conducting literature searches, etc.). A special session will also be held on applying to graduate school. Students should be meeting with their faculty supervisors throughout the term (on a schedule determined between them), and should plan to spend several hours a week researching their topics and drafting their proposals. By the end of the term, students will present their research proposal in class, and submit a written copy. The written copy is submitted to the advisor and the thesis coordinator (as second reader) who will jointly assign a grade.

The course syllabus will be available by September. In some cases, students will start work on their thesis in the summer before they enroll in PSY 961.

In the second term, PSY 971 students will (with faculty oversight and guidance) typically gather and analyze their own data, and finally write the thesis. There will not be regular class meetings

throughout the term, but students will need to consult regularly with their supervisor as well as the thesis coordinator. The thesis will be presented as a poster on a special thesis poster presentation day at the end of the term. As is the case with PSY 961, the written copy of the thesis will be evaluated by both the advisor and the thesis coordinator.

IF I RECEIVE DEPARTMENTAL CONSENT TO ENROLL IN PSY961 THESIS I, WILL I AUTOMATICALLY BE ACCEPTED TO PSY971 THESIS II?

In the vast majority of cases, students who enroll in PSY 961 will move on to complete PSY 971. However, enrollment in PSY 971 is contingent on satisfactory completion of course requirements for PSY 961, including (but not limited to) receiving final approval for an ethics proposal, when applicable.

Contact for more information

Dr. Julia Spaniol, Professor and Undergraduate Thesis Coordinator, jspaniol@torontomu.ca