



**Bachelor of Arts with a Major in Psychology
Honours Stream Program Information Package**

2025-2026

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The Purpose of an Honours Degree

An Honours degree provides a more extensive exposure to the knowledge and practice of the discipline; and in particular, the research process. In addition to the courses required to obtain a BA in Psychology, Honours students write an Honours thesis (PSYC 490; described in more detail below), which non-Honours students do not. Because admission to the Honours stream is based partially on GPA, only those who have excelled as undergraduate students are accepted into the stream. This academic excellence is recognized with the Honours distinction.

In addition to illustrating academic excellence, completion of an Honours degree indicates that you have engaged in some form of independent learning, in the form of your Honours thesis (PSYC 490), under the guidance of a faculty supervisor, over and above that required by regular degree-related course work. The research experience gained (and independent work) in the completion of the Honours thesis is considered an important admission criterion by many graduate schools. Therefore, it is recommended that if you meet the application requirements and are considering pursuing graduate studies you apply for admission to the Honours stream.

Admission Requirements

The application form can be found at the end of this document. In addition to the application form students must also submit a 1-page statement of interest (more details can be found below). Students are eligible to apply into the Honours stream if they have met the following requirements:

- A cumulative GPA of 3.0 in the 30 most recent overall credits;
- A minimum grade of B or higher in each 300 and 400 level Psychology course;
- Completed PSYC 312A and PSYC 312B with a minimum grade of B or higher
AND;
- Have no more than 1 D or D+ in non-Psychology courses

Important Notes:

- Students are strongly advised to consult with Academic Advisors prior to submitting their application (including the statement of interest).
- Meeting the minimum requirements (as indicated above) does not guarantee admission to the program. The number of students admitted each year to the Honours stream in Psychology will be limited. This means that the application process will be competitive, and not everyone who applies to the Honours stream will be accepted. Acceptance will be based on overall GPA and the student's statement of interest (considering the compatibility with faculty research interests and faculty availability).

Application Process

Prior to submitting your application, you are strongly encouraged to contact individual faculty members with whom you may wish to work with on an Honours thesis. This will help you get to know their area of expertise and fine-tune your own interests in research.

You must submit your online application to the Honours stream by the **first working day of May** of the year before your final year of your degree.

Admission Process

Successful applicants will be issued a letter of acceptance in early June.

Successful students must accept or decline their Honours placement, in writing to the Registrar, no later than June 30th. Students who do not reply by this date will not be accepted into the Honours stream. Shortly after this time, those students who were not accepted into the Honours stream will be notified.

Once a faculty member has agreed to supervise a student, a Supervisory Agreement will be issued to the student for their signature. This agreement will outline the expectations and responsibilities of both Faculty and students working on an Honours thesis. This must be signed by both parties no later than the first day of the Fall semester.

Continuation/Honours requirements

Students who are accepted into the Honours stream do not automatically receive their degree with the Honours distinction. In addition to satisfying the *General Degree Requirements* (below) of the BA Psychology degree, an Honours student in Psychology must:

- maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0
- maintain a grade of B or better in each 300- and 400-level psychology course.
- achieve a grade of B or above in PSYC 490
- not receive a grade of F in any course during participation in the Honours stream
- receive no more than one D or D+ in non-psychology courses (including in terms prior to entrance into the Honours stream)

Students not meeting these requirements will automatically be deregistered from the Honours stream and will revert to the 4-year major stream.

General Degree Requirements

- Completion of 120 credits, 60 of which must be completed at STMU. Also, a minimum of 21 Psychology credits must be completed at STMU.
- Completion of at least 72 credits at the senior level (300 or 400)
- Completion of Liberal Arts core
- Completion of breadth requirements
- Completion of core psychology requirements
- Completion of 6 *additional senior elective psychology credits*
- Maximum of 72 credits in Psychology

PSYC 490 – The Honours Thesis

Students who are accepted into the Honours stream will be required to register for PSYC 490. This means that they will write an Honours thesis, in which they research, design, and analyze the results of an independently executed study. This study is carried out in collaboration with a thesis supervisor (faculty member), who will provide advice, direction, and resources for carrying out the study. This will culminate in a year-end conference in which students will present their research findings to their St. Mary's peers and professors as well as to the wider community.

Note that Honours students must receive a grade of B or higher in order to graduate with the Honours distinction.

Students will be required to write a formal research proposal in the Fall term. If collecting data from humans, students will need to apply for ethics approval and be approved before conducting their research in the Winter term. Following the completion of data collection and analyses, students will write a manuscript. This takes the format of a typical research article and will comply with current APA standards. More details on the writing of the proposal and manuscript will be distributed by the faculty supervisor. Finally, students will present their research at a year-end conference on the St. Mary's University campus.

Student Supervision/Statement of Interest

Students planning to apply for the Honours stream, who have met the minimum requirements outlined above, must prepare a 1-page statement of interest to submit with their online application by the deadline of the 1st working day of May. In this document, students will outline their research interest as well as address their motivation for applying to the Honours stream (more information provided below). This document will be used when assessing the applicant for entrance into the Honours stream. Psychology Faculty research bios are available for students to peruse when considering their own research interests (see Academic Advising or visit the STMU faculty and staff website). Students are advised to become familiar with the faculty research profiles and possibly meet with a potential supervisor to put forward the best application possible. Evaluation of statements will be done in a manner that a) assesses their quality, b) complements student and faculty interests, and c) is equitable for all psychology faculty team members. The number of places in the honours program may vary from year to year – this, in combination with its competitive nature, means a spot in the Honours stream is in no way guaranteed. At the time students are notified of their acceptance into the Honours stream, they will also be notified of their assigned supervisor (which is not negotiable).

Statement of Interest - Guidance

Write your statement in the form of a short essay, single-spaced, size 12 font, in no more than 1 page. Your statement must clearly address the following:

- Your specific area of academic interest. Describe one or two research topics you might want to work on.
- Describe how your past education and other experiences have prepared you to be successful in the honours stream.
- What you hope to achieve by completing the honours stream and how this relates to your plans for the future.

Tips:

- State any work you have done in this area already (mention specific skills/techniques you have picked up).
- Connect your area of interest to work being done in the program (mention specific faculty members and projects).
- Refer to academic publications that have informed your interest (use APA citations – however, a reference list is unnecessary).
- Discuss any plans for moving on to graduate school following your undergraduate degree.

Supervisory Agreement

The purpose of this document is to make explicit at the beginning of a supervisory relationship the respective responsibilities of the honours student and their supervisor. When a faculty member agrees to supervise the work of an honours student, the student and faculty member should discuss and amend this agreement as needed, and then sign the form, indicating that a mutually acceptable agreement has been negotiated. The student and supervisor are encouraged to keep a copy of the agreement.

Negotiations for amendments to the agreement may be initiated by either student or supervisor during the course of the project. If negotiations are not mutually satisfactory, the supervisory relationship may be terminated or the disagreement may be referred to the Area Chair for resolution.

Student Expectations:

1. Students can expect to have reasonable access to the supervisor to obtain guidance in developing and completing the research project. "Reasonable" is defined as an hour of face-to-face meeting approximately once a week. Depending on the stage of the project, more or less time may be required.
2. Students can expect to have a reasonable number of written drafts reviewed and returned by the supervisor within a reasonable amount of time. A reasonable number of drafts is typically 2 ~~or 3~~ drafts of a proposal or final paper. "Reasonable amount of time" is defined as within 2 weeks under normal circumstances. If there are extenuating circumstances resulting in a longer time required for the review, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to inform the student and to give the student an estimated completion date.
3. Students should be aware that the supervisor may not be willing to continue to supervise the project should they deem the student unreasonable or irresponsible. This includes if the student falls significantly behind, moves out of town before the project is completed, or if the project conflicts with a faculty member's planned sabbatical/maternity leave/etc. Under these circumstances the psychology Chair will arrange an area meeting, inviting the Dean of Arts & Sciences, to discuss possible alternatives. Should no appropriate alternatives be found the student will cease to be in the honours stream and revert to the psychology majors program.
4. All data must be stored securely. Faculty sign off on student ethics applications and therefore are also responsible for the manner in which data is handled.
5. Unless otherwise arranged by the student and supervisor, the student will prepare the thesis in a form which is suitable for journal submission, according to current APA style.

Amendments:

Signatures:

We have read and agreed to the expectations and amendments described above. Failure by either of us to comply with our stated responsibilities may lead to termination of the supervisory relationship. We recognize that changes in the future, such as the student leaving town, will require re-negotiation of this agreement.

Student

Supervisor

Date

Date

Psychology Faculty Research Profiles

Here is a little bit of information about the research interests of our full-time Psychology faculty. Please contact them directly if you would like to find out more information.

Dr. Mohammed Kalathil (mohammed.kalathil@stmu.ca)

Main areas of research:

- Metacognition in adults
- Cognition, memory processes, including false memory
- Unrecognized/under-recognized issues in the general population (anxiety, depression...)
- Stress related issues, personal loss, mindfulness, resilience, and coping
- Childhood trauma and its impact
- Social media addiction

Dr. Alisa McArthur (alisa.mcarthur@stmu.ca)

Main areas of research:

- Effects of animal-assisted activities on mood and stress
- Animal-assisted activity volunteer characteristics
- Aging anxiety and ageist attitudes

In general:

- Cognition - memory, attention, problem solving, perception
- Aging
- Animal-assisted interventions

Dr. Erin Shanahan (erin.shanahan@stmu.ca)

Main areas of research:

- Mindsets that increase engagement in well-being facilitating behaviours
- Perceptions of the benefits of and barriers to exercise
- Attribution for success vs. failure

In general:

- Social Psychology
- Well-being/Positive Psychology
- Motivation and Goal Pursuit
- Social Mobility and Economic Inequality

Dr. Corinne Syrnyk (corinne.syrnyk@stmu.ca)

Main areas of research:

- Best practices for working in schools with children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties;
- Best practices for adult, marginalized learners;
- Effects of animal-assisted therapy events;

In general:

- Child Psychology
- Adolescent Psychology
- Education Psychology
- Well-being and Human-Animal Interventions

Dr. Sarah Thackray (sarah.thackray@stmu.ca)

Main areas of research:

- Examining the link between the brain, mental health, and behaviour (diet, exercise, substances, etc.)
- Teaching and learning (in the areas of biopsychology, statistics, etc.)
- Resource creation to support learning in biopsychology and statistics

In general:

- Biopsychology/behavioural neuroscience
- Neuropsychopharmacology
- Statistics
- Cognition (learning, memory, etc.)
- Educational psychology