

## **Procedures and Policies for Psychology 495 (Independent Study)**

Approved by the Faculty November 11, 1998

(Revised 8/10/00)

### I. General information

- A. PSYC 495 is for students who are assisting with department research activities, doing independent readings, or engaging in practicum work under the supervision of a faculty member. Students have the option of taking PSYC 495 as a writing course by registering for section WR. Enrollment in PSYC 495 requires the consent of a faculty member who agrees to supervise the student.
- B. PSYC 495 may be taken for between 1 and 3 credits, and may be repeated. Normally two sections of PSYC 495 are offered each semester so students may if they wish enroll in two PSYC 495 projects in a given semester. PSYC 495 credits do not count toward the 32 credits needed for the major, but do count toward the maximum 44 credits that can be counted toward the degree. Although students may take as many credits of PSYC 495 as they wish, no more than 10 credits of PSYC 495 may be applied toward the 128 credits needed to graduate.
- C. Students are expected to spend about 3 hours per week per credit hour on PSYC 495 activities during a regular 15-week semester. Thus a student enrolled for 3 credits of PSYC 495 should devote 9 hours per week to PSYC 495 activities. The student's supervisor and the student should discuss the student's schedule of available times before determining the number of credits for which the student should enroll. During the summer and other times when the PSYC 495 activities do not fit the usual semester format, the student should plan on a total of about 45 hours for 1 credit, 90 hours for 2 credits, and 135 hours for 3 credits devoted to PSYC 495 activities.

In general, students should spend about the same amount of time each week on PSYC 495 activities. Anticipated variation from this schedule should be specified on the students' contract (see below).

### II. Matching interested students with faculty members willing to supervise PSYC 495

- A. PSYC 495 bulletin board
  - 1. A bulletin board on the first floor of the Life Sciences Building provides information to students on how to seek appropriate PSYC 495 opportunities. This information emphasizes that PSYC 495 must be arranged with an individual faculty member. Students interested in PSYC 495 are advised to complete an application for PSYC 495 (see II.B. below) and/or to contact faculty or graduate students with compatible interests (see II.A.2. and II.A.3.).

2. "Advertisements" for students to participation in PSYC 495 may be posted on the PSYC 495 bulletin board. The advertisements should be no larger than 8 ½ by 11 inches and should minimally contain the following information: the title (or description) of the study or activity, when students are needed (the semester and times of day or week if relevant), nature of the work (data collection, coding, library research, etc.), and whom to contact (name and telephone or office number).
3. A current list of faculty members and their research interests is maintained on the bulletin board to aid students in approaching appropriate faculty members about PSYC 495 opportunities. Faculty members who may be open to supervising PSYC 495 students may not have "advertised" this possibility, so it is wise for students to approach them.

B. Application forms

1. Students seeking PSYC 495 opportunities may complete an application in the Student Records Office.
2. These applications are available for perusal by faculty and graduate students seeking students for PSYC 495.
3. If students express an interest in working with a specific faculty member or graduate student, a copy of the application is forwarded to them, but the original form is kept in the Student Records Office.

C. Other approaches

1. Faculty and graduate students should inform the Undergraduate Secretary that they are seeking students for PSYC 495. She often gets many inquiries from interested students.
2. Announcements may be made in classes concerning PSYC 495 opportunities (with permission of the instructor).

III. Enrollment procedures

- A. Enrollment in PSYC 495 requires the consent of a faculty member and a completed contract (blank contracts can be obtained in the Student Records Office). Course Registration Approval Forms for PSYC 495 will be given to students by the Undergraduate Secretary only upon receipt of a completed contract signed by a faculty member. Students who obtain Approval Forms directly from faculty members or graduate students will be deleted from the course.

- B. Students participating in one PSYC 495 project for no more than 3 credits should enroll in section 1. Students participating in a writing section should enroll in section WR. Students participating in more than one PSYC 495 project or for more than 3 credits on one project should also enroll in section 2.

#### IV. Procedures for monitoring activities of students enrolled in PSYC 495

- A. The contract represents an agreement between the PSYC 495 student and the supervising faculty member prior to the beginning of the PSYC 495 concerning expectations and procedures related to the PSYC 495 experience. The purpose of the contract is to protect both parties against misunderstandings about the PSYC 495 experience. Contracts will be reviewed by the Director of Undergraduate Training to insure that the proposed activities follow the general guidelines for appropriate activities listed in section IV.C.
- B. Students enrolled in PSYC 495 must complete web-based assignments at the beginning and end of the semester. The appropriate web address, user ID, and password will be provided to students enrolled in the course. The beginning-of-semester assignment covers what are appropriate and inappropriate activities for students enrolled in PSYC 495, amount of time to be spent on PSYC 495 activities, research ethics and appropriate behavior toward subjects, etc. The end-of-semester assignment provides an opportunity for students to evaluate the PSYC 495 experience and to provide suggestions and feedback concerning what they actually did during the semester. Students who fail to complete these assignments will receive midterm and/or final grades of F.
- C. Appropriate activities for PSYC 495
  1. Faculty and graduate student supervisors should insure that PSYC 495 is a significant learning experience for undergraduate students.
  2. Students enrolled in a research PSYC 495 should be exposed to as many components of the research process as feasible. These components and appropriate PSYC 495 activities include, but are not limited to: literature review (conducting library searches, reading and summarizing articles), research design (participation in meetings, writing proposals), preparation of Institutional Review Board protocols, subject recruitment, data collection, data coding, computer data input, data analysis, and writing drafts of a report.

3. Students enrolled in a readings PSYC 495 may in some cases be given a specified reading list. In other cases they may be expected to conduct their own literature search. Appropriate activities include using PsycLit, Psychological Abstracts, and other sources, reading journal articles and books, and writing reports, preferably using APA style.
4. Students enrolled in a practicum PSYC 495 should be exposed to a variety of activities related to working with clients.
5. PSYC 495 students should not spend an excessive amount of their time on routine, repetitive, uneducational, or clerical tasks. Although some of these tasks may be initially educational, students should not be spending the majority of their time repeating tasks they have already learned. Many of the routine or clerical tasks associated with research or clinical work should be done by the principal investigators on the project or by individuals who are paid for their time (such as work-study students, secretaries, paid research assistants, or other staff members).
6. Obviously, some of the repetitive tasks that are integral to research and clinical work require training and stability in personnel (such as data collection, data coding, and clinical assessment). These tasks may be appropriate for PSYC 495 students as long as they represent only a portion of the student's activities and are combined with other educational activities. A suggested guideline is that at least 25% of the student's time should be spent on non-routine activities (such as research meetings, reading, and writing).
7. Students enrolled in PSYC 495 should attend regular (preferably weekly) meetings, during which a variety of research and/or clinical issues are discussed. These meetings may also include discussion of readings or presentations by group members. Faculty supervisors are expected to attend at least some (and preferably all) of these meetings. Faculty supervisors should keep in mind the difficulty of finding a compatible meeting time when recruiting students for PSYC 495 to guarantee that group meetings are possible.
8. Other suggested methods of ensuring the educational value of the PSYC 495 experience include assigning students relevant readings, having them keep a journal about their activities and their relevance to psychology, or having them develop a research proposal related to the research or clinical work which they are assisting.

9. Both graduate student and faculty supervisors of PSYC 495 students are responsible for making PSYC 495 an educational experience. However, faculty supervisors have ultimate responsibility for designing and closely monitoring the PSYC 495 experience for students enrolled with them. Faculty supervisors are expected to meet regularly with PSYC 495 students (either in groups or individually) and to ensure that PSYC 495 students are provided with sufficient appropriate activities to fulfill their time obligation.

#### V. Writing PSYC 495s

- A. The writing section of PSYC 495 requires students to enroll for three credits, necessitates direct supervision by a faculty member, and requires a written product of between 12 and 15 pages in addition to any other requirements of the course. This section of the course is open only to Psychology majors who have completed English 2.
- B. The written product required must relate directly to the other activities engaged in by the student. Thus, the written product may take any of the following forms: a research proposal, a literature review, a report of research findings (or some portion of the final report, if the study is complex), or a report based on a practicum experience.
- C. Schedule of writing activities: The approximate time line for the minimally required writing components follows. Many faculty members will require more preliminary drafts of components of the report and some portions of the report may be completed later than indicated here because data collection and analysis may not be completed until later in the semester.
  - Week 4 First draft of an outline of the report due.
  - Week 6 Final draft of an outline of the report due.
  - Week 8 First draft of the introduction section due.
  - Week 10 First draft of the remaining sections due.
  - Week 12 Draft of the entire report due.
  - Week 15 Final report due.
- D. Methods of reviewing and evaluating written work
  1. Feedback should focus on both the content and form of the written products. The American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual should

serve as a reference for format and writing style. Faculty members should provide extensive commentary and notation on outlines and early drafts. No grades are assigned for these early drafts. Course grades are based on the supervising faculty members' assessment of the final written product and the other activities the student engaged in as part of the course. The written report must contribute between 20% and 50% of the course grade. The student must be informed of the percentage of the course grade to be determined by the writing component on the signed contract.

2. Final written products are evaluated based on the following aspects of an excellent scientific proposal or report:

General content. The content of the paper must be organized according to APA style. The content should be logically organized within sections and explicitly related to the topic of the study. The importance of the study should be clearly and convincingly conveyed.

Literature review. The literature reviewed should be relevant to the topic and sufficiently comprehensive. The presentation of the literature reviewed should appropriately relate this literature to the topic of the student's report. References must be properly cited.

Clarity of expression. The paper should communicate information in an easily understood yet accurate manner. Information should be logically organized. Statistical information must be presented according to APA style.

Technical writing. The paper should be free of grammar, spelling, and construction errors. APA format should be followed throughout the paper.

## VI. Grades

- A. PSYC 495, sections 1 and 2, is graded pass-fail. Letter grades are assigned in the writing section. Standards for grading should be communicated on the contract.
- B. Procedure for reporting grades. The Undergraduate Secretary distributes grade forms to faculty containing the names of the PSYC 495 students they supervise. The faculty then return these forms and the Secretary records the grades on the grade sheets and submits them to Admissions and Records. PSYC 495 students who do not have a contract on file or who fail to complete the beginning- and end-of-semester assignments will be given a grade of F, regardless of the grade submitted by the supervising faculty member. When the student completes the missing work, the grade will be changed to the grade submitted by the faculty member. These grade changes may be processed by Student Records Office staff only.

## VII. Graduate student supervision of PSYC 495 students

- A. Graduate students may provide supervision for PSYC 495 students only with the approval and close monitoring of a faculty member (see section IV.C.). The inclusion of a graduate student supervisor for PSYC 495 students does not diminish the responsibility of the faculty supervisor for developing and signing each PSYC 495 contract, enrolling PSYC 495 students, designing and monitoring the course, meeting regularly with PSYC 495 students, and assigning a grade for each PSYC 495 student.
- B. Graduate students who provide supervision for PSYC 495 students must familiarize themselves with and follow these guidelines. Review of these guidelines will be provided each year during new graduate student orientation.

### VIII. Evaluation

- A. Student evaluation of the PSYC 495 experience is conducted as part of the end-of-semester web-based assignment. Students complete both a form concerning their overall experience with PSYC 495 and the Department-approved individual faculty supervision form.
- B. Evaluation of the PSYC 495 course as a whole is conducted regularly by the Undergraduate Training Committee.
- C. Individual faculty supervision forms are submitted to the Undergraduate Secretary for processing according to Department Faculty Evaluation guidelines.
  - 1. Faculty members are encouraged to provide documentation to the Faculty Evaluation Committee concerning their teaching of PSYC 495.
  - 2. Faculty members who do not wish to be evaluated must submit a written request to the Director of Undergraduate Training prior to the last week of classes. The forms will then be discarded.