

Psychology Department Guidelines on Responsibilities for Supervision of Undergraduate Research

The McGill University community is moving towards greater transparency and accountability in its activities. This can mean explaining to students why they are being asked to do certain things, and specification of student and professorial responsibilities.

Supervisors of undergraduate research have the responsibility to provide students with a research experience in an apprentice context. The apprentice approach, by its nature, cannot be standardized for every student. However, the spirit of the approach is already clear to most Psychology professors. It should be made clearer to undergraduate students and to everyone who supervises undergraduate research.

Here are Department guidelines for the responsibilities of professors, co-supervisors, and undergraduate students (hereafter referred to as *students*):

1. Students should learn about all aspects of conducting the research.
2. Students should take some, but not all, responsibility for reviewing the literature, developing the methodology, collecting data, analyzing data, and writing the research report. For example, the supervisor may provide some literature and let the student search for other relevant articles. The supervisor might identify a participant sample, and the student would recruit participants and collect data. The supervisor might teach the student how to enter data and use statistical packages, and the student would process data and conduct analyses.
3. Students will spend as much time as necessary to do the research properly, but this will not extend to more than University and Faculty of Science regulations allow. These regulations specify up to about 3 hours per week for every credit per term awarded for an average student, which works out to an average of 18 hours per week for a 6-credit single-term course (such as PSYC 395) and 13.5 hours per week for a 9-credit two-term course (such as PSYC 380). These are maximum average values which will naturally fluctuate from week to week depending on factors such as impending deadlines and availability of participants. Supervisors with projects requiring more time than regulations allow should consider dividing these larger projects among multiple students. It is not defensible to implicitly or explicitly require more time from students than they are getting academic credit for. Students are typically taking as many as four or five courses per term, and excessive demands in any course can adversely affect their performance elsewhere. The amount of time students can spend on a research course includes time spent in their research seminar (if any), meeting with their advisor, reading, analyzing, writing, and basically all research-related activity.
4. Undergraduate research projects are expected to involve independent research, enabling academic accountability and evaluation of the work of each student. When more than one student is involved in a project, the roles of each student should be clearly specified in the course and research proposals so that some degree of independence can be assured.

5. Students will normally receive more than 30 minutes per week on average of a supervisor's time. Although some of this may be in group meetings, personal time is usually required to discuss a student's project. If meetings are to be initiated solely by the student, and no meeting takes place for several weeks, the supervisor should take responsibility for arranging meetings. It is not appropriate to neglect meeting with the student for as long as a month.
6. Research time may be spent with postdoctoral and graduate students and research assistants in addition to a professor. The responsibilities of these co-supervisors are to be specified in each case and with the agreement of all parties involved. Such arrangements do not entirely substitute for direct student-professor contact. A student should have some regular direct contact with a professor, and the scheduling of this contact should be made clear to all involved parties at the start of the course.
7. The supervising professor is responsible for reading research proposals and drafts of the final report, giving timely and constructive feedback, and submitting a grade for the project. Co-supervisors, e.g., postdocs, graduate students, or research assistants, may also be involved in reading and commenting on drafts of research reports.
8. The student is responsible for participating fully in course research seminars (if any) and lab meetings (if any), and meeting all deadlines for presentations and written assignments.
9. Eligible supervisors must be listed in the Psychology section of University Calendar under the heading of Emeritus Professors, Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, Associate Members, or Part-time Appointments.
10. To prevent student or supervisor disappointment based on miscommunicated expectations, supervisors, co-supervisors, and students must read and sign a copy of these guidelines and return this signed copy to the Undergraduate Program Coordinator, Julia Marussi. All signatures must be on the same form for each student and course.
11. These guidelines apply to all research courses in the Psychology Department, whether Honours or non-Honours, single-term or two-term, seminar or non-seminar.

Course Number: _____

Student Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____