The Psychology Graduate/Honours Peer Mentoring Program

MENTOR MANUAL &
STUDENT SUCCESS
SUPPLEMENTARY
MATERIAL

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Before You Begin

The aim of the Psychology Graduate/Honours Peer Mentoring Program is to help prepare Honours students to *transition out* of their undergraduate career and to provide some extra social support and encouragement to assist them in completing their Honours year. Each session is intended to give students some time to consider and reflect on their various options so that they can make the best possible decisions about their future work or study.

Graduate program mentors are trusted to get to know their mentees and use their knowledge and experience to tailor their program to provide mentees with the best experience possible. Mentors do not have to follow the outlines in this manual and are encouraged to make changes to the program in order to fit the needs of the student.

Time Commitment

The expected time commitment is expected to be fairly minor. It is expected you will only need a few hours for the online training module, reviewing relevant resources on unistudentwellbeing.edu.au, and the in-person induction. Once the program begins, you only need to commit to the monthly 1-hour meeting, any extra questions taken between meetings, and meeting preparation and post-meeting recap emails.

Question Finger 4 by Josh Tasman (Flickr) CC BY 2.0

Boundaries, Privacy & Confidentiality

Mentors need to maintain appropriate boundaries and respect the privacy of their mentees.

Mentors can provide academic skills support but not tutoring. For example, mentors can run a workshop and provide resources on how to structure a part of a thesis or essay, but not assist with assessed work itself.

Mentors can provide social support and encouragement but should be quick to refer more serious problems to the Honours Coordinators or appropriate support services.

Mentors can contact their mentees through any means that are *mutually agreeable* (e.g. phone, email, social media) but there should be no unrelated use or disclosure of contact information or other personal information. You should remember to BCC all email addresses until/unless you have mentees' permission to share their contact information with other group members. Mentors can also, at the request of a mentee, keep information confidential, unless the information received indicates a risk of harm to any person.

Program Outline

Room Bookings

It is recommended that you choose your own meeting location that suits your style, personality and session aims. This can be an informal location like the Library Lawn or the Whitehouse, or a formal setting like a meeting room in the Mathews Building. You can make room bookings on your own or email psychologypeermentoring@unsw.edu.au for help.

Suggested Schedule

Meeting	**Month**	
Introduction: Getting the Most Out of Honours	March	Group introductions. Discussion of general tips for a successful Honours year. Graduate employment program overview.
Time Management	April	Tips on planning out the Honours year and using their time efficiently. It's a marathon, not a sprint!
Writing Skills	May	Tips on writing. Discussion of the writing process. Review and discussion of their proposals.
Research Careers	June	The research career pathway from Honours to full Professor. An overview and discussion of pros and cons. Tips on how to pick a lab that is right for you.
Practitioner (Masters) Options + Life as a Masters Student	July	An overview of the various Masters options available within Australia. You may want to bring in a Masters student for this session to do a Q&A. If you are having trouble finding someone, email psychologypeermentoring@unsw.edu.au
Registration/Volunteering/Internships + Life as a Masters Student	August	Overview of options leading to registration, touching on the 4+2 and 5+1 internship pathways. You could do a second Q&A with a Masters student from a different program as this is a popular session with the students.
Writing Up	September	Tips on writing up a full thesis. Discussion of the dos and don'ts that they should be looking out for. Writing workshop.
THESIS DEADLINE	October	
Next steps/Writing Up	October	A final debriefing session and discussion of any concerns.

Session 1. Introduction: Getting the Most Out of Honours

Aim: To introduce yourself as a Graduate Mentor and to discuss with Honours student mentees some tips for flourishing in the Honours year.

Time (rough guide only): Introduction (5 min) + Discussion time (15 minutes) + Fake News (5min) + Tips on time (5 min), tips on stress (10 min), tips on supervisors (10 min)

Activity

1. **Introduce your role and establish boundaries**

   The role of the Graduate Mentor is to help them transition out of their undergraduate career into employment or further study. Let them know that they can contact their Graduate Mentors at any time if they have trouble or a question. The sessions are planned to give some structure to the program, but the program has to be flexible to your students' needs.

   It is not a formal academic role and the advice and discussion is informal. Graduate Mentors can't help them write their essays or edit their thesis, but they can point them to resources that might help.

2. **Introduce the purpose of today's session**

   The purpose of today's session is about how to get the most out of Honours. Before we start talking about what to do after Honours, we want them to feel comfortable about doing Honours.

3. **Discussion of concerns**

   How are things going so far? Are you comfortable in your lab/research group? What are your main concerns about this year?

4. **Fake news**

   Honours students might raise some of the "Fake News". Even if they don't, maybe take a few minutes to reassure them that the only thing they need to worry about is producing good work. For example, every year there is a rumour that if you work on a rat project you will do better in Honours. The Honours Coordinators are happy to address any "Fake News" that may arise, so let your mentees know that they can contact them to clear things up.

5. **Tips on time**

   Elaborate, using stories from your own Honours year. Some tips or questions to discuss might be:
   Start writing your literature review or introduction as early as possible.

If they get it done early, can they just copy and paste it into their thesis?
Keep good records, especially with respect to methods sections. There are plenty of stories of students getting to writing up, but they don't remember if they put the rat in the black box or the white box. Having good notes can avoid unnecessary stress down the track.

6. **Tips on managing stress**

   Honours can be a stressful experience for many students, but often students make it more stressful on themselves than it needs to be. Remind them that while Honours can be a bit of a slog through the mud at times, you should still be making time to relax. Give advice based on your own experience on dealing with stress in Honours, or how you deal with stress now.

7. **Tips on supervisors**

   Many students come in with the attitude that there are "good" and "bad" supervisors. That is, supervisors that will get them good marks, and those that will let them flounder. Remind them that every supervisor is a qualified professional, and every one of them has had their students succeed in the past.

   That being said, every supervisor is *different*, and they have different ways of supervising. Focus on how students can foster their professional relationship with their supervisor. Some good questions might be:

   What is your first impression of your supervisor?
   How will you get the most out of your relationship with your supervisor? (e.g., establishing regular meetings, sharing coffee, interacting with your lab group, etc).
   How will you communicate effectively with your supervisor (e.g., is a meeting agenda necessary when you meet? "I need to talk about 1. HREC approval, 2. Access to the MRI scanner, 3. I need help with this function in Matlab")
   What can you do if something goes wrong? (Contact the Honours Coordinators)

8. **Useful skills to develop**

   Briefly talk about some useful skills they can start learning or developing early on in the year. It is always useful to begin picking up programming basics, learning to use referencing software like EndNote and Mendeley, or learning to use statistical programs before they become immediately necessary. Draw on your own experiences and point them in the direction of helpful resources if needed (e.g. MATLAB for Psychologists).

9. **Brief discussion about graduate employment:**

   Many graduate programs have already opened applications and may be closing very soon, even by the end of March or early April. This is the case for both private and public sector employers.

Give them a few tips on having a CV and an up-to-date LinkedIn profile (we're aware that many of you have come straight from undergrad and may have never had a proper industry full-time job before but try to be as helpful as possible). Use this opportunity to give out the optional employment handout on the next page to anyone who is interested in looking for graduate work (our experience has been that most Honours students are not interested in this option, but you should be prepared to discuss graduate employment anyway).

10. **Give a preview on next session**

    Next week we will be elaborating on the Honours Timeline and how to manage your time in Honours. Remind them that the Honours journey is different for everyone, and not to stress if you haven't done all of your experiments by the end of Week 5 in Semester 1.

Post-Session
Give a short writeup of the key points and send them any materials that were requested or relevant to this session.

Graduate Employment

There are many kinds of companies/roles that take Psychology graduates, such as government departments, human resources and recruitment consultants, banks, consulting firms, professional services, and advisory and market research. The APS website includes many such roles: https://www.psychology.org.au/careers

UNSW Virtual Careers Fair
The 2016 Virtual Careers Fair is over but you can still access the information through these direct links.
Undergraduate Virtual Careers Fair: http://www.psy.unsw.edu.au/node/417
Postgraduate Virtual Careers Fair: http://www.psy.unsw.edu.au/node/418

UNSW AUSTRALIA | Careers and Employment

UNSW Careers and Employment
One major asset at your disposal at UNSW is UNSW Careers and Employment. They provide free consultations to help you find work out of university, as well as help improve your resume, cover letters and LinkedIn profile.
There is also a Careers Expo that will run in March.

Personality Tests
Many (not all) companies use personality tests to examine an applicant's fit for the role that they are hiring for. Different companies might use different personality/psychometric tests, but here are a couple that you can try for free and work on your mobile phone:

Holland Code Career Test: http://www.truity.com/test/holland-code-career-test
Myers-Briggs style personality test: http://www.16personalities.com/
Big 5 Personality test: http://www.truity.com/test/big-five-personality-test

Note that these tests are usually only used for large scale screening to whittle down candidate pools. However, employers who use these tests can and do use your results to question you during interviews, so it can be important to identify your own strengths and weaknesses (according to these tests).

More Psychology and Science Careers
Need more inspiration? Here are a few links to get you started:
https://www.apa.org/careers/index.aspx
https://life.curtin.edu.au/local/docs/UL_CC_B_WhatDoWithDegreePsychology.pdf
https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/careers-in-psych
Adam Reuben (2011). OMG so many science careers. doi:10.1126/science.caredit.a1100120
http://blogs.sciencemag.org/sciencecareers/category/alternative-careers
https://blogs.biomedcentral.com/bmcblog/tag/science-careers/
https://thesiswhisperer.com/2017/12/06/i-want-to-leave-academia-what-next/

Session 2. Time Management

Aim: To provide Honours students with a sense of scale for the different major achievements in Honours.

Time (rough guide only): Introduction (5 min) + Planning your year (20 min) + using your time effectively (15 min) + Wrapping up (10 min)

Activities:

1. **Introduction**

   Check in with students and see how things are going. Are they working well with their supervisors? Is there anything they're unclear about?

   By the middle of April, students will vary dramatically on what they have managed to accomplish so far on their Honours Project. The biggest trap for students is that they will be constantly comparing their progress to that of their peers. This often creates a bit of a hysteria vortex of students feeding each other's anxiety.

   Make sure to emphasise that *everyone's journey through Honours is different and occurs at different rates.* Some students may have just done some reading on the topic, while others may be starting their first experiment. Remember, just because your friend may have already finished their introduction in Week 3, this doesn't indicate that they will get a better mark. Remind them that Honours is a ***marathon and not a sprint***. It is more important to be aware of what is due, when it's due, and what is a sensible timeframe for each component than to be able to do everything quickly.

2. **Planning Your Honours Year**
   While everyone's Honours journey is different, it is good to have some broad goals for different parts of the year. These will vary slightly depending on the lab group, but no one should be finishing their first draft of the introduction 2 weeks before the thesis is due. By planning accordingly and using your time effectively, you can avoid the last-minute rush of writing your discussion the night before.

   Spend some time discussing what you and your mentees think might be a reasonable way to split up the thesis and different course-work into manageable chunks, and then discuss when it might be good to focus on each of these things. For example, the first major thesis component is the introduction. Many people feel the need to write the introduction as quickly as possible, but in reality a timely first draft might be handed in around end of the mid-year break. Other major milestones may be: finishing your experiments, handing in the first method drafts, the discussion, etc (feel free to think of others depending on your own experience).

   ACTIVITY: It may be a good idea to get your mentees to spend some time drawing up a time schedule for the year. We have included a handout on the next page that you

can print off and give to your students to fill in. This would be an interactive way and activity-based way to get them to think about some of the things you have discussed.

Remind students that these milestones can be affected by external variables (supervisor availability, assignments, real life). Mention to students about managing their working hours. The Honours Coodinators recommend no more than 1 day of work a week (about 6-8 hours). Obviously different students have different circumstances but remind them that if they are planning on working, they should plan their work around their Honours, not the other way around.

3. Using your time effectively

It's a great idea to make plans about how you want to run the year, but other things can get in the way. What happens if your supervisor has a baby when they're meant to be marking the draft of your introduction? Or suddenly your 2nd cousin is getting married in Hawaii and your family forces you to come along for a week?

The first point here is always: ***Don't Stress***. A good plan is made to be flexible, and if you've taken time to think about when you want things done, you should be able to work things around to stay on track.

Spend some time discussing strategies for what happens if external variables affect your ability to work. For example, you may ask students to think of different problems they have dealt with so far/might imagine in the future. What worked for them/what didn't, or what can they see working well? Do people have other ideas of what they could do?

Some examples might be: Can you start on your method while you're waiting for your introduction (of course you can!) Waiting for your experiment to get coded? Don't be afraid to work on your coursework (it counts for your mark too!). Also, emphasise that if you really *can't* do anything at a given point, take that opportunity to relax! Don't stress about it, there's nothing you can do, it's important to have time to yourself. Honours is a long journey, and no one wants to burn out.

Finally, if you're really struggling or getting held back, don't be afraid to contact the Honours Coordinators.

4. Wrapping up

Talking about the Honours timescale can be daunting, so spend a bit of time talking about what students may want to do after Honours and what activities they might do during the year that are non-Honours related. Emphasise that *life goes on* both during Honours and after it (you're living proof!). While you should treat Honours seriously, it doesn't have to consume your every waking thought. Treat it like a job, spend the time required to meet your goals, but at the end of the day, go home and binge on some TV, *live life*. You could go around and ask people what hobbies they plan to keep up during Honours, or ask them what holidays they might plan when they finish.

The Valley of Shit

At different points in a student's Honours experience, students may start to feel despondent and disillusioned with the process of Honours and research.

Indeed, you as a student or researcher may have felt the same way many times during your career. Everyone has different techniques to work through this "Valley of Shit", but many Honours students will not have had the experience in dealing with high-stress research situations to navigate it well, and many languish.

To help you get this point across, we've included this article that we think may be worth reading in your group, which I'm sure you find many students (including yourself) might sympathise with.

https://thesiswhisperer.com/2012/05/08/the-valley-of-shit/

> The Valley of Shit is that period of your PhD, however brief, when you **lose perspective and therefore confidence and belief in yourself**. There are a few signs you are entering into the Valley of Shit. You can start to think your whole project is misconceived or that you do not have the ability to do it justice. Or you might seriously question if what you have done is good enough and start feeling like everything you have discovered is obvious, boring and unimportant. As you walk deeper into the Valley of Shit it becomes more and more difficult to work and you start seriously entertaining thoughts of quitting.
>
> I call this state of mind the Valley of Shit because you need to remember you are merely passing through it, not stuck there forever. **Valleys lead to somewhere else – if you can but walk for long enough.** Unfortunately the Valley of Shit can feel endless because you are surrounded by towering walls of brown stuff which block your view of the beautiful landscape beyond.
>
> The Valley of Shit is a terrible place to be because, well, not to put too fine a point on it – it smells. No one else can (or really wants to) be down there, walking with you. You have the Valley of Shit all to yourself. This is why, no matter how many reassuring things people say, it can be hard to believe that the Valley of Shit actually does have an end. In fact, sometimes those reassuring words can only make the Valley of Shit more oppressive.

Milestone	Date Due	Date Achieved
Submit ethics application (if applicable)		
Write up first draft of Introduction		
Write up first draft of Method		
Start running (first) experiment		
Finish running (first) experiment		
Run analyses on (first) experiment		
Write up first draft of Results		
Write up first draft of Discussion		
Write Abstract		
Format figures/tables		
References		
Extra components (Acknowledgements, Table of Contents, Table of Figures, Appendices)		
Print thesis for submission		

At different points in the year, you may want to add in additional milestones/goals. These may include running and analysing subsequent experiments, and sending second drafts to supervisors. It may also be worthwhile to include some coursework-related goals.

Session 3. Writing Skills

Aim: To get mentees to start thinking about the writing process and what is required in an Honours thesis. Discuss approaches to writing up and what worked well for you. Review or discuss students' experiences with writing their proposals and how they can improve.

Time: Unstructured.

Activity/Discussion Points

1. **Mentor Experience**

   Consider your own Honours experience with writing up. What were some things that worked well for you? What were some things that did not work so well? How can you use your previous work (e.g. your proposal)?

2. **The Audience**

   Their thesis will be marked by academics who may not necessarily be in their discipline. So they should be careful to be able to discuss their work in a way that an intelligent but non-expert person can understand it. They should be mindful to explain all discipline-specific terms and not assume that the marker will understand.

3. **What Makes Up a Thesis**

   There are many sections that are required in a thesis, as well as things that are optional. Have a discussion about what should go into a thesis and give some advice on how long each section should be. The Honours thesis at UNSW has word limit of 15,000 words or 60 pages (not including figures and tables). A good break down of this word limit might be 5,000 words for the Introduction, 5,000 for the Discussion(s), and 5,000 for the Method and Results sections combined.

4. **Writing Sample and Discussion**

   You can ask your students to bring in a copy of their proposal (by this point they should have already written their proposals and had their panel meetings). Have them share it with others in the group so they can give each other feedback on clarity and structure. Then go around and have a discussion about how your mentees feel they can improve on that piece of writing and adapt it for their theses.

Post-Session
Give a short writeup of the key points.

Session 4. Research Careers

Aim: To introduce Honours students to the full career pathway for (academic) scientific research.

Time (rough guide only): Introduction (5 min) + Describing a PhD and personal experience (15 min) + Post-PhD Career phases (10 min) + How to pick a lab (20 min)

Activity

1. **Introduction: "You are here"**

   Contextualise Honours in terms of the research pathway as step 1 (or step 0).
   Discuss why you might want a research career. Consider these excerpts:
   "This is a general theme in research. Those who enjoy research don't see doing research as work. Instead, it's a lifestyle. You may not work the typical 9 to 5 job that others do, but that's because research shouldn't be seen as a job… I did research because I enjoyed the creativity and the problem solving. I've never felt that I have had a "real" job, since all I've done, at the core of it, is explore the biological world with complex techniques and incredible technologies." – Marvin Gee, PLOS Blogs, CC-BY 4.0
   http://blogs.plos.org/thestudentblog/2013/10/21/research-not-a-job-but-a-lifestyle/

   "Scientists must have a strong track record in funding to survive in academic science; this means that the overriding task of many scientists today is, to put it bluntly, asking for money… It is almost as if the purpose of science is to support grant writing and not the reverse." – Steven Eastlack, PLOS Blogs, CC-BY 4.0
   http://blogs.plos.org/thestudentblog/2017/03/20/how-scarce-funding-shapes-young-scientists/

   "The web of scientific careers is bigger than most people realize, and definitely bigger than most graduate students see on a regular basis or are even made aware of. Although career training in graduate school is getting better, there's still an entrenched feeling of two opposing monolithic choices for students: 'lab research' or 'other'." – Dana Berry, BMC Blogs, CC-BY 4.0
   https://blogs.biomedcentral.com/bmcblog/2016/02/09/science-careers-are-careers-that-involve-science/

2. **Step 1. PhD**

   Discuss what a PhD is and your reasons for enrolling in a PhD program.
   "A PhD degree requires completion of a piece of research that demonstrates a significant and original contribution to knowledge in the field of study."
   https://research.unsw.edu.au/doctor-philosophy-phd

Around the world:
In Australia, a PhD is available to those with an Honours degree or equivalent. It is nominally a 3 year program and the Australian Postgraduate Awards (now called Research Training Program) is designed as such (with a 6 month extension). However, the use of the extension is so common that UNSW now applies the extension automatically. Average time to completion is around 4 years.

In Europe, a PhD requires a Masters (under the Bologna process 3+2 system). Average time to completion is around 5 years. Candidates usually have to defend their thesis by presenting in front of their department and examiners. Often, European countries will offer PhD positions as paid jobs with a salary.

In the United States, entry to a PhD is available subject to the completion of the standard 4-year undergraduate degree and a satisfactory GRE score. While coursework is minimal or non-existent in Australian PhDs, US PhDs require the completion of coursework and qualifying exams ("Quals"). Completion follows a thesis defense, typically after 7.5 years.

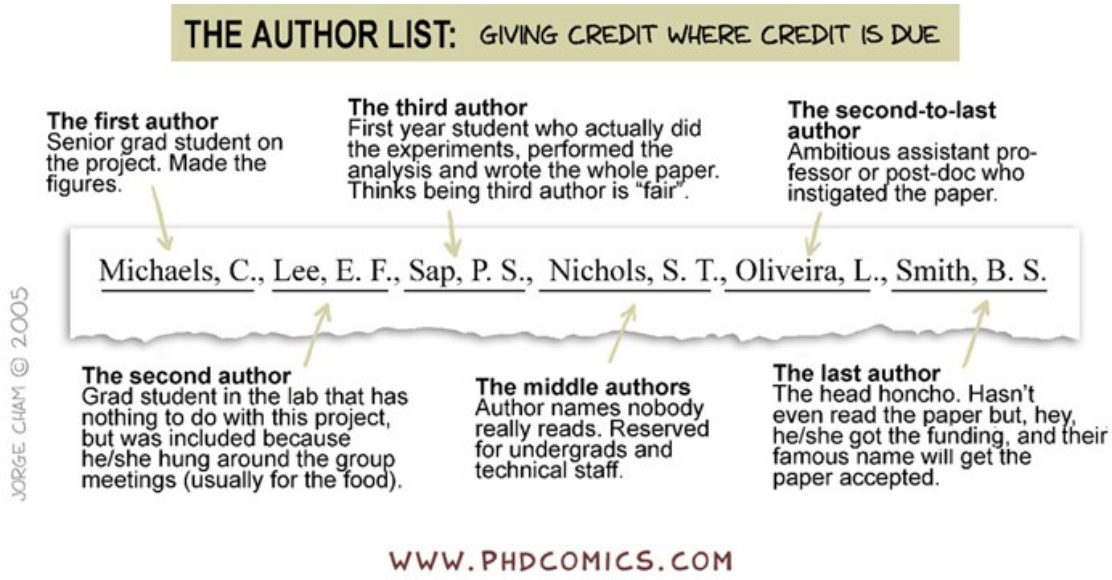
Pay and Prospects: In 2018, the Research Training Program stipend rate is $27,082.
https://education.gov.au/research-training-program
Top-up scholarships may be available depending on the University and discipline. According to Universities Australia, this has fallen in real terms by about 30% since 2002.
https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/australias-universities/key-facts-and-data

Job Prospects: Reasonable, but not necessarily on the academic track. See:
John Crossley, "Are PhD Graduates Expecting Too Much", *The Conversation*, 19 March 2013. https://theconversation.com/are-phd-graduates-expecting-too-much-11854

3. **Step 2. Postdoc**

The next step is to seek out a postdoctoral position. Early career researchers are often encouraged to move institutes. In Australia it is common to travel overseas to the US or Europe.

Responsibilities at this stage begin expanding. Postdocs, depending on the lab, may take more of a role supervising students. In the author list, they will often start moving from the first author position to the second-last author position, reflecting their shift from active experimentation to more supervisory responsibilities.



Reproduced with permission. "Piled Higher and Deeper" by Jorge Cham www.phdcomics.com

Level of pay varies significantly between countries.
For example, those winning a DECRA in 2016 would be paid $75,160.
https://www.arc.gov.au/sites/default/files/filedepot/Public/NCGP/IN17/Discovery_Programme_16-17_funding_agreement.pdf (Section D2)

Those winning an NHMRC Early Career Fellowship in 2018 would be paid a $75,738 salary.
https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/book/nhmrc-funding-rules/section-g-early-career-fellowships/g11-fellowship-specifications-and-fundin
At the US National Institutes of Health, postdocs can expect between USD40,000-70,000, depending on experience.
https://www.training.nih.gov/programs/postdoc_irp

4. **Step 3. Transition to Independence**

A postdoc will often start to take up supervisory responsibilities. Over time, these will grow in line with their success in grants and publications. They may start with Honours students, and then progressively supervise Honours and PhD students. They can then seek promotion within their University or Research Institute to become a full lab head.

5. **How to Pick a Lab**

If students decide that they want to pursue a research career, picking a lab for their PhD is one of the most important aspects that can contribute to happiness and success. It is important that they consider all the pros and cons of each potential lab and

actually make a lab visit if they haven't had previous experience with the supervisor. This includes labs that are in a different state or country (Skype is always an option)!

- **Stay or Go?**
  Discuss the pros and cons of each. Staying in a lab may mean continuity, but could also produce stagnation. It may be a safe option. Leaving a lab means risk, but new opportunities. It may pay off with an expanded network and additional skills.

- **Supervisors**
  Discuss what students want from a PhD Supervisor. Criteria that may be important include – success in funding, place in a supportive and respected institution (University or Research Institute). Their personality is also important – the speed at which they return written work to students for example can facilitate timely completion.

- **Colleagues**
  Discuss what to look for or what questions to ask the current students and post-docs in a lab. Are PhD students supported and likely to complete on time? Are the post-docs good at training PhD students? How is the lab managed? Do people seem to get along with each other?

- **Watch Out**
  Discuss the warning signs that a lab may not be a good place to be. Poor publication records, overly extended candidatures with burnt out PhD students, unhappy post-docs, rumours of sexual harassment or impropriety and inadequate equipment or funding may all negatively impact on your future.

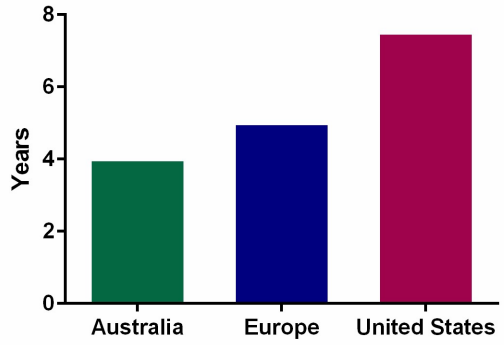
Post-Session
Give a short writeup of the key points.

Should you do a PhD?

What is it?

"A PhD degree requires completion of a piece of research that demonstrates a significant and original contribution to knowledge in the field of study." [1] PhD students work under the supervision of a faculty member and, depending on the institution, may have only minimal, optional or no coursework requirements.

How long does it last?



Times to completion may differ significantly from the university's claims. Australian PhDs are nominally 3 year programs, but average time to completion is actually 4 years. [2-3]

How will I survive?

Australian PhDs are typically funded through a Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship or equivalent. The 2018 rate is

$27,082 [4]

which is indexed annually and will support 3.5 years of your candidature. Universities Australia claims that per student funding via the research training scheme fell 29% in real terms between 2002 and 2014. [5]

What are my prospects?

Researchers are frequently concerned for their employment prospects due to uncertain funding and a reliance on short term contracts. [6] Graduate Careers Australia estimates 85% employment for Masters by Research/PhD graduates in Psychology. [7] The vast majority of PhD graduates (>95%) do not become permanent research staff at Universities. [8]

What is it like?

A PhD is a challenging and stressful period of time, but it may suit individuals who are driven by curiosity and are passionate about learning. It helps to be willing to take risks or naïve about the prospect of failure. [9] Some of the most important influences on the success of your PhD are your supervisor and luck – your data may lead you to new and exciting places or to a series of dead ends. Talent and hard work are merely prerequisites for success, not guarantees.

Where to next?

PhD

- 4-8 years, original research in a lab of your choice.

PostDoc

- Short term contract, scientific workhorse
- Paid approx. A$60-90,000 depending on location/institution/funding source

Transition to Independence

- Writing your own grants/fellowships.
- More supervision responsibility in the lab

Chief Investigator

- More grant writing, less lab work
- Supervision of postdocs and students
- Fairly well paid (>$100,000 per year)

References

[1] https://research.unsw.edu.au/doctor-philosophy-phd
[2] Bourke et al. (2004). Attrition, completion and completion times of PhD candidates, *Paper Presented at the AARE Annual Conference,* Melbourne: Australia. http://www.aare.edu.au/data/publications/2004/bou04849.pdf
[3] https://theconversation.com/doing-a-phd-can-be-a-lonely-business-but-it-doesnt-have-to-be-19192
[4] https://www.education.gov.au/research-training-program
[5] https://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/australias-universities/key-facts-and-data
[6] https://theconversation.com/australian-researchers-held-back-in-struggle-for-jobs-funding-11595
[7]http://www.graduatecareers.com.au/Research/GradJobsDollars/MasterResearchPhd/Psychology/index.htm
[8] https://go8.edu.au/sites/default/files/docs/the-changing-phd_final.pdf
[9] http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2015/03/staffing-labs-optimal-productivity

How to Pick a Lab

You have decided to do a PhD, but how do you improve your chances of it being a good experience for you? What are some of the red flags to watch out for?

Stay or go?

If you are happy in the lab you're in there is nothing wrong with staying there. It's an environment you know, with techniques that you are familiar with. It's the perfect base for a happy and productive PhD. On the other hand, a new lab means new challenges, new techniques and a wider network. But that doesn't mean it's going to be better.

Look

Regardless of what you choose you should look around. Is there another lab whose research excites you? Do you want to work with a leader in the field? Do you want to change fields? Do you want to move to another city or even another country? As a prospective PhD student (a.k.a. cheap labour) you are in demand. Use that to your advantage.

Read

Read recent papers from their lab. You can gain insight into their working environment by looking at their author lists. How do they design experiments? Do they publish in good journals?

You also need to do background work on the lab head (principal investigator). Are they well-funded? Are they in a good institution that supports their work? Are they editors on journals you want to publish in?

Visit

You need to visit the lab and see the facilities where you will be working. The more time you can spend there before joining the lab the better. Is the supervisor the kind of person you can work with? *Talk to the current students and postdocs*: Are they happy? Do they feel supported? Are they the kind of people you think you could spend 70 hours a week with?

Watch Out

Are PhD students slumming it in the middle of the author list? Are there rumours of sexual harassment or impropriety from the PI? Do lab members gossip and gripe about each other? Is the equipment so old it's breaking down or so new that no one knows how to make it work? Do people you trust (inside or outside the lab) think it's a bad idea?

Session 5. Practitioner (Masters) Options

Note to mentors: This should be the last session before Semester 1 ends (if not the one after it). In Semester 2, student class times will likely change. Take some time to discuss with your group, planning a new time for the next Semester if necessary so everyone can still attend. If you do change times, please let the coordinators know. If students can't make the new session time, it is possible for the coordinators to reassign them to other groups if they like.

Aim: To introduce Honours students to some of their options for further study which will lead them to registration as a Psychologist.

Time (rough guide only): Introduction (5 min) + Discussion (45 min)

Activity

1. **Introduction**

   This session is mainly for you to discuss strategies for applying for and getting into a Masters program. You may wish to invite a friend who is doing a Masters program to this session and then invite someone else who is doing a different Masters program to the following session (e.g. Clinical one month, Forensic the next).

2. **Masters/PhD or Masters?**

   Discuss the pros and cons of doing a Masters/PhD or a straight Masters. For example, combined programs may have preference in terms of selection (like at UNSW) or they could attract extra prestige and maybe a higher salary after completion. Combined students also have their Masters fees waived. However, they are a lot of work and a straight Masters program will get you into the workforce sooner.

3. **Specialties**

   Discuss what students want to specialise in. Clinical is frequently the most popular, but organisational and forensic programs are no less valuable. Keep in mind, though, that UNSW no longer offers an Organisational Masters program.

4. **Admission**

   Discuss some of the differences in admission requirements between universities. Some universities place emphases on different things – Macquarie values experience more while UNSW places the most emphasis on academic performance. Students can apply strategically to a university based on their strengths. Further, because accreditation is national, they can apply anywhere in Australia.

5. **Strategise**

   Start thinking now about applications – who to ask references from (your Honours supervisor should be the obvious start). If you are lacking in references, think about

how you could get to be in a position to get an additional reference – do you do volunteer work or perhaps you could try and do something in the lab that will give another lecturer a chance to get to know you.

Post-Session
Give a short writeup of the key points.

University	Programs	Hons	Refs	Experience	Interview	Papers	Other
UNSW	Clinical Forensic Combined PhD	1st	2	Supply CV	Yes	X	Priority given to combined program.
University of Sydney	Clinical Clinical/PhD Coaching Psychology	1st >2A	2	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Macquarie University	Organisational Clinical Clinical Neuropsychology	>2nd	2	"Distinct advantage"	Yes	Yes	
Western Sydney University	Clinical Clinical/PhD	≥2A	>2?	Yes	Yes	X	
University of Technology Sydney	Clinical	≥2A	2	X	Yes	X	Requires personal statement
University of Melbourne	Clinical Clinical Neuropsychology Educational Combined PhD	≥2A	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Requires personal statement
Monash	DPsych (Clinical) DPsych (Clinical Neuropsychology)	?	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Training to be a research-practitioner
Australian National University	Clinical PhD (Clinical Psychology)	>70%	2	Yes	Yes	X	
University of Queensland	Clinical Organisational Applied	≥2A	3	Yes	Yes	Yes	Also offers a Professional Doctorate (Clinical, Clinical Neuropsychology or Clinical Geropsychology)
University of Western Australia	Combined PhD (Clinical Clinical Neuropsychology Industrial/Organisational) Industrial/Organisational	≥2A	2	Supply CV	X	X	Requires personal statement

2018 Guide to Postgraduate Programs at NSW and Major Australian Universities

This table summarises some of the key information from Universities in NSW that offer postgraduate coursework programs and at selected major Universities from around Australia, including the Honours grade required (Hons), number of referees (refs) required, whether experience is considered, whether an interview required and whether papers are considered. An X indicates that this aspect was not mentioned on the website and a question mark indicates that there is a requirement, but it is not explicitly stated on the website. For full information, see the websites of the Universities below. To find additional courses, or to confirm the APAC accreditation of courses listed here, visit the APS or APAC websites listed below:

APS
https://www.psychology.org.au/
APAC
https://www.psychologycouncil.org.au/

UNSW
http://www.psy.unsw.edu.au/future-students/postgraduate-coursework/how-apply
University of Sydney
https://sydney.edu.au/science/psychology/clinical_psychology/future_stud/index.shtml
Macquarie University
http://www.psy.mq.edu.au/courses/courses.htm
Western Sydney University
http://www.uws.edu.au/future-students/postgraduate/postgraduate/postgraduate_courses/psychology_courses/psychology_course_list/clinical_psychology
University of Technology Sydney
https://www.uts.edu.au/about/graduate-school-health/clinical-psychology/what-we-do/courses
University of Melbourne
https://mdhs-study.unimelb.edu.au/degrees?section=Psychological Sciences
Monash University
https://www.monash.edu/medicine/psych/teaching/graduate-programs
Australian National University
https://psychology.anu.edu.au/study/programs/master-clinical-psychology
University of Queensland
https://www.psy.uq.edu.au/future-students/postgraduate/
University of Western Australia
https://www.psychology.uwa.edu.au/courses/postgraduate

Session 6. Registration, Regulation, Internships & Volunteering

Aim: For mentees to have an awareness of some of the key regulators involved in the registration process, the "4+2" and "5+1" internship pathways and some volunteering opportunities.

Time: Introduction (5 mins) + Registration and Regulators (15-20min) + Internship Pathways (15 min) + Volunteering opportunities (10 min)

1. **Registration**

Introduce students to the process of registration and some of the key regulatory bodies. They may not necessarily have to interact with all of them, but it is good to know a bit of who they are.

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)

- AHPRA is the government agency which works with the National Boards in Australia, maintains registers of health practitioners like Psychologists and handles complaints.
- Psychologists register with AHPRA under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law
- https://www.ahpra.gov.au/

Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA)

- The Psychology Board of Australia is the National Board supported by AHPRA to set standards for psychologists and to assess applications for registration.
- Students apply for provisional registration which allows them to undertake the period of supervised practice necessary to register as a psychologist
- Provisional registration is available for students in the accredited Masters/Doctorate programs or in the "4+2" and "5+1" internship pathways
- http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Provisional.aspx

Australian Psychological Society (APS)

- The Australian Psychological Society is the professional society for psychologists.
- APS advocates on behalf of the profession, runs professional events and assesses international qualifications.
- APS provides member benefits like discounted professional indemnity insurance from Aon.
- https://www.psychology.org.au/

Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC)

- The professional standards organisation under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law to accredit programs of study.
- We're APAC-accredited! If doing higher study, your next course needs to be APAC accredited too! Search the APAC website for accredited courses:
- https://www.psychologycouncil.org.au/APAC_accredited_psychology_programs_australasia

NSW Health

- The State Government department which runs healthcare in NSW.
- If your placement might involve a NSW Public Health Facility (like a hospital) you may have to complete a student clearance.
- The key parts of this are a police check (the original is required) and ensuring you are up to date with key immunisations.
- http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/careers/student_clearance/Pages/default.aspx

2. Internship Pathways

Accredited Masters and Doctorates are the recommended way to go about getting registered as a Psychologist, but there are (still) internship pathways that don't require the further study. However, these pathways appear to be out of favour and are perennially obsolete and facing abolition. In fact, it has been criticised by the Australian Psychological Society as unrealistically ambitious and so onerous that many practicing psychologists are refusing to employ interns. https://www.psychology.org.au/studentHQ/studying/study-pathways/4_2submission/

BE AWARE THAT THERE ARE SOME CHANGES AS THE PsyBA IMPLEMENTS A GENERAL REGISTRATION STANDARD

4+2 Internships

The 4+2 internship requires students to find employment with a practicing psychologist and obtain provisional registration.

The 4+2 internship requires: 2784 hours of supervised psychological practice, 176 hours of supervision (e.g. meetings with supervisor) and 120 hours of professional development. The internship must go for at least 2 years and no more than 5 years.

Organising a 4+2 internship is largely driven by the student. It involves 5 steps:

- Find psychological work with direct client contact. This may be paid or unpaid.
- Find a principal supervisor. The PsyBA website allows students to search for supervisors. Ideally they should be someone you work with.
- Find a secondary supervisor.
- Develop a supervised practice program
- Submit an application for provisional registration, supervised practice program and other documentation to PsyBA.

5+1 Internships

The 5+1 internship requires students to complete a 5th year program of study which is APAC-accredited.

In NSW there are 3 APAC-accredited 5th year programs:

- Australian College of Applied Psychology's Graduate Diploma of Professional Psychology
- Macquarie University's Master of Professional Psychology
- University of Wollongong's Master of Professional Psychology

These courses have similar entry requirements to the 2-year Masters programs but tend to require a lower level of academic achievement (e.g. UoW requires an average of at least 70%).
The 5+1 internship requires: 1400 hours of supervised psychological practice, 80 hours of supervision and 60 hours of professional development. The internship must be a minimum of 44 weeks (~1 year) and the 5+1 internship must be completed within 5 years of provisional registration.
Organising a 5+1 internship has the same requirements as organising a 4+2 internship, except some parts can be lodged up to 6 weeks before the completion of the 5th year program to facilitate a smooth transition:

- Find psychological work with direct client contact. This may be paid or unpaid.
- Find a principal supervisor. The PsyBA website allows students to search for supervisors. Ideally they should be someone you work with.
- Find a secondary supervisor.
- Develop a supervised practice program
- Submit an application for provisional registration (if unregistered), internship plan and other documentation to PsyBA.

Once you have completed your internships, you'll need to pass the National Psychology Exam (see the PsyBA website) before applying for general registration.

From the APS: https://www.psychology.org.au/studentHQ/studying/study-pathways/
From the PsyBA: http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Provisional/4-2-Internship-Program.aspx

3. **Volunteering**

Volunteering may have been alluded to in the past but if time permits, it might be good to suggest some ways to improve on the experience aspect of higher degree applications by seeking out volunteering positions that are aligned with your objectives.
Some places to start:
Lifeline (in Sydney, run by Wesley Mission)
There is a lot of competition for these positions. You'll need to pay for training (a formal short course) and commit a certain amount of time on a regular basis.
https://www.lifeline.org.au/Support-Lifeline/Volunteer/Volunteer-for-Lifeline
ARC Here to Hear
Run by students at UNSW. Will be recruiting at the end of semester.
https://www.arc.unsw.edu.au/help/here-to-hear

Beyond Blue
Not currently recruiting but keep an eye out.
https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-involved/volunteer-with-us
Search Engines:
https://probonoaustralia.com.au/volunteer/
https://govolunteer.com.au/volunteering/in-sydney
https://www.ethicaljobs.com.au/mental-health-counselling-jobs

Session 7. Writing Up

Aim: A final pre-submission catch-up. Discuss approaches to writing up and what worked well for you. Provide some extra reassurance or discuss any problems. Some of this is related to Session 3, so it's a good opportunity to revisit some of the ideas you discussed earlier in the semester.

Time: Unstructured.

Activity/Discussion Points

1. **Mentor Experience**

   Consider your own Honours write-up experience at this point in the year. What were some things that worked well for you? What were some things that did not work so well? What kinds of feedback did you get and might any of it be relevant for your mentees?

2. **Your Audience**

   Their thesis will be marked by academics who may not necessarily be in their discipline. So they should be careful to be able to discuss their work in a way that an intelligent but non-expert person can understand it.

3. **APA Style and Formatting**

   Some examiners check the formatting of every single reference! It shows attention to detail. Make sure that all graphs are in the correct spot. There have been horror stories of students putting the wrong graphs in the wrong place!

4. **Acknowledgements**

   Thank all the important people in your lab and a few of the important people in your life. Try to limit your acknowledgements to just two or three short paragraphs. There is no need to thank every single person in your life.

   Start with your supervisor, and then include people in your lab and any support staff that you have worked with (e.g. "Thanks also to Craig Smith for helping me with the Brain-O-Scope"). There are instances of Honours students not acknowledging their supervisor in their theses at all – it's a story told by the people in their lab with disbelief.

5. **Focus on the Discussion**

   This is the one section that supervisors are not allowed to read so it is extra important to focus on writing the discussion well!

   How do you structure a scientific discussion? E.g. Statement/Summary of findings,

Strengths and weaknesses, fitting it in with previous studies, implications, limitations/future directions, conclusion.

6. **Writing Sample**

   You can also ask your students to bring in a writing sample (3-4 pages) and have them share it with others so they can give each other feedback on clarity and structure. As a PhD or graduate student, you are not allowed to read their theses, but there is nothing wrong with them reading each other's! Getting the students to read each other's work has worked particularly well in the past and has been one of the most helpful sessions, according to feedback surveys.

Post-Session
Give a short writeup of the key points.

Session 8. Next Steps (Optional)

Aim: This session is a social call and final post-submission debrief.
Time: Unstructured.

Activity/Discussion Points

1. **Reflections**

   How did the year go? What did they enjoy? What did they not enjoy?

2. **Supervisors**

   How did they find working with their supervisors? Discuss what they thought they did well and what they thought they could have improved on.

3. **Working in a Lab**

   How did they find working in a lab? Did they learn a lot? Do they feel like they can look at a scientific paper now and really appreciate how much work has gone into those findings?

4. **The Future**

   Do they feel ready for the next steps? Are their Masters/PhD/job/holiday-plans settled and are they feeling ready for exams?

5. **End of Program**

   This is the end of the program. Hopefully the mentees got something useful out of it – at the very least some time once a month to reflect on where they are going and knowing that they have someone to talk to if they need it.

FAQs

What do we do if our group size dwindles?
Don't give up! It's natural that group sizes will dwindle as the year progresses. It is not uncommon to be left with 3, 2, or even 1 person turning up. If this happens to you, send us an email at psychologypeermentoring@unsw.edu.au and we can try to combine your group with another so that both groups have a higher attendance rate. Please do not stop running sessions when only one or two people turn up, as there may still be students who are interested in the program (or interested in certain topics). If your students are not turning up because of a schedule clash, they can email us to arrange to attend a different group.

What are some things we can do to increase attendance levels?
Try to organize your meetings for the same time each month (e.g. first Monday of each month) so that your mentees have a rough idea of when meetings will be on and can put them into their calendars ahead of time. At the end of each session, make sure to tell your mentees what the topic for the next session is. Remind them of the topic when you send out emails and reminders. This might entice them into coming. Send out recap emails after each session. While some students might not attend because you are sending out these session summaries, it might also attract others to actually attend sessions if your recaps are helpful.

Our mentees are not replying to our emails/letting us know that they won't be attending! Help?
Instead of asking mentees to let you know if they will be attending, work under the assumption that they will all be attending. Ask them to let you know if they **will not** be showing up. This might boost the number of replies that you get.

What should we do if our mentees ask us to proofread assignments and theses?
The mentoring program does not provide tutorial assistance. If they are struggling with their coursework or the demands of Honours, the best people to talk to are the Honours Coordinators. They take good care of the Honours students and will be able to help. If they require help with writing skills, you can give them some tips but refer them to the Learning Centre if they need more help. Mentors and PhD students in general are not allowed to read or edit Honours theses.

Are we allowed to distribute the materials in this manual to our mentees?
Yes, absolutely! There are some helpful handouts that are already included in the manual that you can print out and distribute during the relevant sessions (e.g. Honours Milestones, Should I do a PhD? and Practitioner Options table). You can either photocopy them or we can send you an electronic copy for you to print out or email to your mentees.

How will you know that we're actually doing our job as mentors?
We expect you to be honest and to be someone who is there to support your mentees. We may ask you to provide documentation demonstrating that you've been contacting your mentees, such as emails you have sent or room booking confirmations. Mentees may inform us you are not meeting with them at any time or on program evaluation surveys. You will only receive recognition for your service on your Australian Higher Education Graduate Statement if you actually meet with and are supportive of your mentees.