Course Outline

PSYC7426

Research Thesis (Forensic) 1

School of Psychology

Faculty of Science

T1, 2023

Last updated: 25/01/2023

1. Staff

Position	Name	Email	Consultation times and locations	Contact Details
Course Convenor	Prof Richard Kemp	Richard.Kemp@unsw.edu.au	By appointment	Email

2. Course information

Units of credit: 6

Pre-requisite(s): Enrolment in 8257 MPsych (forensic) program

Teaching times and locations: Individual supervision with research supervisor and attendance at lab meetings/lab activities as agreed with supervisor.

Thesis proposal presentation workshop in Week 5 and/or 6. Number and duration of workshops will depend on the number of students enrolled in the course.

2.1 Course summary

This course involves undertaking a research project under the supervision of a member of academic staff in the School of Psychology. Research projects may be carried out on any topic that is relevant to forensic psychology. Students are required to prepare a thesis in the form of a journal article. Refer to *PART 3: Research Thesis* of the Master of Psychology (Forensic) Program Guide available on the School website.

2.2 Course aims

The overall aim of this course is for students to further develop advanced-level skills in designing, undertaking and reporting empirical research relating to forensic psychology. This is a capstone activity. The research project, thesis, associated supervision, and presentation of research findings will provide “hands on” experience conducting and communicating research with relevance to forensic psychology.

Course learning outcomes (CLO)

At the successful completion of this course the student should be able to:

1. Plan and execute a research-based project that is applicable to the field of forensic psychology.
2. Critically review literature associated with a research-based project.
3. Independently undertake research activities in an ethical manner.
4. Apply a high level of critical thinking and technical skill in research design and communication.
5. Present a clear and coherent synthesis of forensically relevant, ethical research, and its significance to a variety of audiences.

2.3 Relationship between course and program learning outcomes and assessments

	Program Learning Outcomes						
CLO	1. Knowledge	2. Ethical, legal and professional	3. Assessment & Measurement	4. Intervention	5. Research and evaluation	6.Communication and interpersonal	**Assessment**
1.	Supervision, thesis activities	Supervision, thesis activities					Brief research proposal, Panel presentation, Progress report.
2.	Supervision, thesis activities						Brief research proposal, Panel presentation
3.	Supervision, thesis activities						Brief research proposal, Panel presentation, Progress report.
4.	Supervision, thesis activities						Brief research proposal, Panel presentation
5.						Supervision, thesis activities	Brief research proposal, Panel presentation

3. Strategies and approaches to learning

3.1 Learning and teaching activities

In this course, students are encouraged to consult, evaluate and be guided by findings in the empirical literature. The development of a research question and the processes of conducting a research project and preparing a journal article for publication develop students' capacity to conduct theoretically-driven and forensically-relevant research. Teaching in this course is delivered via oneon-one supervision from thesis supervisors, and through verbal and written feedback on research proposals and drafts of the thesis.

3.2 Expectations of students

It is expected that students are aware of UNSW Assessment Policy and understand how to apply for special consideration if they are unable to complete an assignment/exam due to illness and/or misadventure.

It is expected that students have read through the School of Psychology Student Guide, the statement on Inherent Requirements of the program, and the Master of Psychology (Forensic) Program Guide available on the School website.

Students registered with Equitable Learning Services must contact the Course Convenor immediately if they intend to request any special arrangements for later in the course, or if any special arrangements need to be made regarding access to the course material. Equitable Learning Plans must be emailed to the Course Convenor as soon as they are made available.

Information on any course changes will be made available either on Teams and/or by email. It is the student's responsibility to check for changes.

4. Course schedule and structure

This course consists of individual supervision sessions with academic members of staff and external supervisors (on a case-by-case basis). The statistical needs for each project will be determined by the student in consultation with their supervisor. The supervisor will provide the statistical support necessary for successful completion of the agreed thesis project. Additional statistical resources are also available via various subscription based websites (e.g., Laerd Statistics).

Week	Topic	Activity
Week 0	Thesis	Begin if you haven't already started working with your supervisor to develop and finalise your thesis research proposal. Attend supervision and lab meetings as agreed with your supervisor (until final thesis submission).
Week 1 - 3	Thesis	Continue working with your supervisor to develop and finalise your thesis research proposal.

		Attend supervision and lab meetings as agreed with your supervisor.
Week 4	Thesis	Submit Brief Research Proposal either Week 4 or 5. You will be advised of your submission week by the Masters Thesis Committee (MTC)
Week 5	Thesis	Submit Brief Research Proposal either Week 4 or 5. You will be advised of your submission week by the Masters Thesis Committee. Present your Research Proposal at workshops in either Week 5 or 6. Your presentation will be one week after you submit your Brief Research Proposal. You will be advised of the presentation time and location by the Masters Thesis Committee.
Week 6	Thesis	Present your Research Proposal at workshops in either Week 5 or 6. Your presentation will be one week after you submit your Brief Research Proposal. You will be advised of the presentation time and location by the Masters Thesis Committee.
Week 7-10	Thesis	Continue working on your MTC approved thesis project and write-up with your supervisor (until final thesis submission).
Week 11	Thesis	Submit your signed Thesis Progress Report to the MTC for review and approval.

5. Assessment

5.1 Assessment tasks

All assessments in this course have been designed and implemented in accordance with UNSW Assessment Policy. All assessments for this course are hurdle tasks (compulsory activities), and failure to complete them will lead to failure of the course

Assessment task	Length	Weight	Mark	Due date	CLOs
Compulsory Activities					

Brief Research Proposal (BRP): submit your Brief Research Proposal to the Masters Thesis Committee (MTC) for review.	20,000 characters (including spaces)	P/F	P/F	Week 4 or 5 – you will be advised by the MTC	CLO 1-5.
Thesis Proposal Presentation: presents thesis proposal to supervisor and MTC for approval. All students will attend all thesis proposal presentations to give/receive feedback to/from their peers.	Up to 30 minutes. You will be advised by the MTC of the duration.	P/F	P/F	The week following the submission of your BRP	CLO 1-5
Thesis Progress Report: submit signed Thesis Progress Report form to MTC for review and approval.	5 brief answers to the questions on the Progress Report template.	P/F	P/F	5pm Friday Week 11	CLO 1, 3.

Assignment 1 Brief Research Proposal: This assessment is a hurdle task, and failure to complete it will lead to failure of the course.

During Week 2 T1 you will be allocated to a BRP submission week by the Masters Thesis Committee (MTC). During Week 4 or 5 you will submit your BRP to the MTC for review.

Details for preparing your Brief Research Proposal are as follows:

Following the example given in PSYC7402 – Applications in Forensic Psychology – you will write a Brief Research Proposal (BRP) describing your proposed research project. As with the BRPs completed in PSYC7402, the purpose of this document is to convince your reader (ultimately the MTC) that you have formulated an interesting and achievable research plan, which will address explicit and refined research questions.

Your proposal should be clear, concise, fully referenced, and easy to read. You should be making a compelling case for the MTC to approve your proposal. As before, your BRP should include the following sections:

- **Aims** – these should be clear, appropriate and match with method.
- **Background** – this should demonstrate your knowledge of the field of research, critically analyse previous research and clearly identify gaps in literature, and have a good smooth and logical progression towards the identification of your specific research questions. It should have a narrowing or funnelling structure that leaves the reader in no doubt that what you propose is the best and most obvious next step in your field of research.
- **Proposed Research (method)** – detail an appropriate, clear method matching with your aims, describe the population of interest, the recruitment procedure, identify appropriate ethics bodies, operationalise key variables, and convince the reader that you know what you are doing and that it can be achieved.

- **Significance & Innovation** – brief statement of the applications and benefits of the research contextualised appropriately.
- **Effort/Independence** – in order for a thesis project to be approved, the MTC must be convinced that the work you will be doing will be sufficient to meet program requirements. This is particularly important where a student is joining an existing project or accessing existing data. In all instances, you must demonstrate sufficient intellectual and "hands on" contributions in the design and execution of the project such that your efforts are commensurate with those constituting an 8-month research project. These contributions should be described in this section of the proposal. Please consider and include in your submission a version of the table below describing the effort/independence dimensions of your project to assist the MTC to understand your project and your role in it.

	Effort/Independence	
	Lower	**Higher**
Research idea	Supervisor's	Own
Ethics approval	Already existing	To be sought
	School	University
	School/University	External agency
Measures	Already determined	To be determined
	Already developed	To be developed
	Brief	Lengthy
	Easy to administer (no specific training required)	Technical/complex to administer (training required)
Data set	Pre-existing	To be collected
	Entered into database	Not entered into database
	Cleaned/transformed/coded	Un-cleaned/transformed/coded
	Few variables	Many variables
	Few cases	Many cases
	Independent/whole	To be linked
	Linked data available	Linked data to be requested
	Remote/online testing	Face-to-face testing
	General/undergrad sample	Limited/forensic sample
	Community testing site	Corrective/closed testing site
Analysis	t-test, chi-square, ANOVA, ANCOVA	Structural equation modelling, interrupted time series, factor analysis, multinomial regression, survival analysis

- **Timelines and goals** – you will be held accountable for your progress as compared to the goals and timelines you describe here in your BRP. In this section you need to document what you intend to achieve by the time T2 begins (i.e., by the start of June). Progress with regard to goals is particularly important during T1 and your progress will be assessed at the end of PSYC7426 to determine whether you may continue your enrolment (EC) and can progress to PSYC7427 in T2 and PSYC7428 in T3. The stated goals may relate to: submitting ethics applications; obtaining ethical approvals; developing measures; survey distribution; data access; data collection; data entry; data analysis; completion of a literature review; producing drafts of thesis sections etc. It is important for you to propose realistic/achievable (rather than aspirational/ambitious) goals and timelines. It may be valuable to include some proposals for what steps you may take at certain times if the project appears to be going off-track. When the MTC reviews your progress at the end of T1 you will be aiming to convince them that you: a) have a viable project, b) of sufficient scope, c) that is progressing well.

- **References** – must be included in the document but are not included in character count.

Your BRP should be no more than 20,000 characters (roughly five pages single-spaced), *excluding* references. You should consider readability when formatting your document. References may be endnoted in this document but the full reference included at the end should comply with APA referencing standards. The amount of content presented under each heading should be distributed as is appropriate for your project. For example, if you are using a complex experimental design or sampling procedure be sure to take the space to convince your reader that you know what you are doing, have thought through the details, and have proposed something achievable. If your study is relatively straightforward, your characters may be better used in the background and significance sections. Irrespective of the nature of your project, you must present sufficient background information to explain why your project is necessary and appropriate. You will be given feedback on your Brief Research Proposal and, ultimately project approval, once you present your BRP to the MTC and your Supervisor. The feedback you receive on your BRP will be verbal and via email at, and after your presentation.

Assignment 2 Thesis Proposal Presentation. This assessment is a hurdle task, and failure to complete it will lead to failure of the course.

Your Thesis Proposal Presentation is due 7 days after you submit your BRP to the MTC for review. Ideally, you will arrange for both your internal (and if you have one - external supervisors) to attend this presentation. Where that is possible, this presentation will serve as the formal review of the thesis proposal. All going well, after your presentation the MTC will provide formal (written) approval for you to proceed with your project. Based on the feedback received in the Presentation, you might be asked to revise and re-submit your BRP or to amend your goals/timelines before your project is approved by the MTC. **Data collection should not begin until the MTC has given formal approval.**

In the event that your supervisor is unable to attend the Thesis Panel Presentation, a formal panel meeting including all supervisors must be scheduled before MTC will approve your proposal. If you feel you are ready to begin collecting data **before** your scheduled Thesis Panel Presentation, please consult with the MTC and you may be able to submit your BRP for early approval. Having done so does not free you from the obligation to make a Thesis Panel Presentation during Weeks 5 or 6, but it does mean that you can start your data collection as soon as your project is approved. We are very happy to support requests to start data collection early, so please get in touch as soon as you feel you are ready to commence so we can get your project approved and underway.

Details for preparing your Thesis Proposal Presentation are as follows:

Your Thesis Panel Presentation is a brief presentation outlining the rationale and method of your proposed research. This presentation (for the MTC, your supervisors and colleagues) is an excellent opportunity to receive feedback on your project and answer any questions the MTC might have about your proposal. You will also provide feedback to your peers on their presentations. These presentations often raise issues that have been missed during the planning stages, or helps to troubleshoot methodological challenges. You must speak to *both* your project timelines and to the effort/independence dimensions suggested above in your presentation so that the MTC has a thorough understanding of the project being proposed and your role in it.

It is intended that this presentation – together with the review of your written BRP – constitute the formal review process, which results in the final approval of your research idea as something achievable and appropriate. If, however, all your supervisors are unable to attend this presentation you will need to arrange an additional panel meeting with the MTC and supervisor(s) present to facilitate the final approval of your project.

Assignment 3 Thesis Progress Report. This assessment is a hurdle task, and failure to complete it will lead to failure of the course.

The template for the Thesis Progress Report can be found at the end of this document along with completion instructions.

You will submit your signed Progress Report to the MTC by 5pm Friday of Week 11, T1. The form needs to be signed by your supervisor and is to include a copy of the Timelines & Goals that were approved by the MTC during your Thesis panel Presentation. The form will ask you to describe whether there have been any significant changes to the objectives, methodology or timeline of the project. Your Supervisor will review the completed form and sign-off on your progress.

Once submitted, the MTC will review your Research Thesis Progress Report and advise you of the PSYC7426 course outcome. Students whose progress is considered satisfactory at Week 11 will continue enrolment (EC) and progress to PSYC7427 in T2 and, ultimately, PSYC7428 in T3. The MTC will liaise with you (and your supervisor(s)) if your project or progress is not satisfactory as described at Week 11. In this situation you will have until Friday Week 3 of Term 2 to demonstrate satisfactory progress as negotiated between you, your Supervisor and the MTC.

5.2 Assessment criteria and standards

Further details and marking criteria for each assessment will be provided to students closer to the assessment release date (see 4.1: UNSW Assessment Design Procedure).

5.3 Submission of assessment tasks

Brief Research Proposal: Submit via Turnitin on Moodle **and** via email to Kristy Martire k.martire@unsw.edu.au & Richard Kemp Richard.kemp@unsw.edu.au

Thesis Proposal Presentation: In-person presentation.

Thesis Progress Report: Submit to the MTC (cc your supervisor) via email.

Late penalties: In accordance with the UNSW Assessment Implementation Procedure, failure to meet the submission deadline ("the initial deadline") will attract a penalty. Unless an extended deadline has been granted, if an assignment is submitted late, but within five days (120 hours) of the initial deadline, 5% of the maximum possible mark for that assignment will be deducted for each day (including weekend days) it is overdue. For example, if an assignment is worth 100 marks, you will automatically lose five marks (100 × 0.05 = 5) for each day it is late. If you submit the assignment three days after the initial deadline, a penalty of 15 marks will be deducted. Students can submit an assessment late, incurring the late penalty, until the "overdue submission deadline". The overdue submission deadline is five days (120 hours) after the initial deadline. Any assessment submitted after the overdue submission deadline will not be marked and will result in a mark of zero for the assessment. In determining whether an assignment is overdue, the date it was submitted online via Moodle will be used. Assignments submitted late may not receive detailed feedback from markers. Students are expected to manage their time to meet deadlines and to request extensions as early as possible before the deadline.

Special Consideration: Students who are unable to complete an assessment task by the assigned due date can apply for special consideration. Students should also note that UNSW has a Fit to Sit/Submit rule for all assessments. If a student wishes to submit an application for special consideration for an exam or assessment, the application must be submitted prior to the start of the exam or before an assessment is submitted. If a student sits the exam/submits an assignment, they are declaring themselves well enough to do so and are unable to subsequently apply for special consideration. If a student becomes ill on the day of the exam, they must provide evidence dated within 24 hours of the exam, with their application.

Special consideration applications must be submitted to the online portal along with Third Party supporting documentation. Students who have experienced significant illness or misadventure during the assessment period may be eligible. Only circumstances deemed to be outside of the student's control are eligible for special consideration. Except in unusual circumstances, the duration of circumstances impacting academic work must be more than 3 consecutive days, or a total of 5 days within the teaching period. If the special consideration application is approved, students may be given an extended due date, or an alternative assessment/supplementary examination may be set. For more information see https://student.unsw.edu.au/special-consideration.

5.4 Feedback on assessment

Feedback on all pieces of assessment in this course will be provided in accordance with UNSW Assessment Policy.

Assessment	When	Who	Where	How
Brief Research Proposal (BRP)	At or following your Thesis Proposal Presentation in Week 5 or 6	MTC & supervisor	At presentation and in email	Verbal and Written
Thesis Proposal Presentation	At or following your Thesis Proposal Presentation in Week 5 or 6	MTC & supervisor	At presentation and in email	Verbal and Written
Thesis Progress Report	Week 12 or 13 T1, and Week 3 of T2 if necessary.	MTC	Email	Written

6. Academic integrity, referencing and plagiarism

The APA (7th edition) referencing style is to be adopted in this course. Students should consult the publication manual itself (rather than third party interpretations of it) in order to properly adhere to APA style conventions. Students do not need to purchase a copy of the manual; it is available in the library or online. This resource is used by assessment markers and should be the only resource used by students to ensure they adopt this style appropriately: **APA 7th edition**.

Referencing is a way of acknowledging the sources of information that you use to research your assignments. You need to provide a reference whenever you draw on someone else's words, ideas or research. Not referencing other people's work can constitute plagiarism.

Further information about referencing styles can be located at https://student.unsw.edu.au/referencing

Academic integrity is fundamental to success at university. Academic integrity can be defined as a commitment to six fundamental values in academic pursuits**:** honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage.[1] At UNSW, this means that your work must be your own, and others'

[1] International Center for Academic Integrity, 'The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity', T. Fishman (ed), Clemson University, 2013.

ideas should be appropriately acknowledged. If you don't follow these rules, plagiarism may be detected in your work.

Further information about academic integrity and **plagiarism** can be located at:

The *Current Students* site https://student.unsw.edu.au/plagiarism**,** and

The *ELISE* training site http://subjectguides.library.unsw.edu.au/elise

The *Conduct and Integrity Unit* provides further resources to assist you to understand your conduct obligations as a student: https://www.edi.unsw.edu.au/conduct-integrity/conduct-unsw/studentconduct-integrity/student-code-conduct.

7. Readings and resources

Textbook	No set text; suggested readings provided by supervisor and additional readings obtained as a result of students' literature review
Statistical support	Laerd Statistics (https://statistics.laerd.com/pricing.php)
Course information	Available on Moodle
Required readings	APS Code of Ethics and Ethical guidelines School of Psychology Student Guide Master of Psychology (Forensic) Program Guide
Recommended internet sites	UNSW Library UNSW Academic Skills ELISE Turnitin Student Code of Conduct Academic Integrity Email policy UNSW Anti-racism policy UNSW Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

8. Administrative matters

The School of Psychology Student Guide contains School policies and procedures relevant for all students enrolled in undergraduate or Masters psychology courses, such as:

- Attendance requirements
- Assignment submissions and returns
- Assessments
- Special consideration
- Student code of conduct

- Student complaints and grievances
- Equitable Learning Services
- Health and safety

It is expected that students familiarise themselves with the information contained in this guide.

9. Additional support for students

- The Current Students Gateway: https://student.unsw.edu.au/
- Academic Skills and Support: https://student.unsw.edu.au/skills
- Student Wellbeing, Health and Safety: https://student.unsw.edu.au/wellbeing
- Equitable Learning Services: https://student.unsw.edu.au/els
- UNSW IT Service Centre: https://www.myit.unsw.edu.au/

10. Thesis Progress Report Template

PSYC7426 Research Thesis (Forensic) 1 Progress Report

Completion of this form is a course requirement for PSYC7426 Research Thesis (Forensic) 1. Please submit this completed form to the Masters Thesis Committee.

The form must be submitted by COB Friday of Week 11. See below for completion and submission instructions.

Student Name and ID:

Thesis Working Title:

Supervisor name(s):

1. **Objectives / aims**
    a. What were the aims or objectives of the study as outlined in the approved thesis proposal?
    b. Describe any changes to these objectives / aims (or enter “No change”).

2. **Methodology**
    a. Have there been any significant changes to the methodology described in your approved proposal? If so describe these changes below. If not state “No change”

3. **Timeline**
    a. What was the approved timeline for your project? (copy & paste this below – it should be the one the MTC reviewed and approved - probably via email)
    b. Describe your progress relative to the agreed timeline. Please note where you are ahead or behind this timeline. Give reasons if any targets have not been met and describe the remedial actions you are taking to ensure that you will be able to meet your timelines by the start of T2.

4. **Other**
    a. Have there been any other changes to your thesis research relative to your approved proposal?
    b. Any other relevant information (for example, describe problems you anticipate next session and how you might tackle these).

5. **Signatures**
(Note electronic signatures are acceptable or supervisors can type their names into the form using tracked changes to indicate approval)

Signed and dated (student):

Signed and dated (supervisor(s)):

Submitted by student (date):

Completing and submitting this form

1. Student: Copy and paste this template text into a new document.

2. Student: Name the document “Thesis 1 Progress Report Form {YOUR SURNAME}” (e.g., Thesis 1 Progress Report Form KEMP).

3. Student: Answer the questions in the template, sign it and send it to your supervisor(s) for checking.

4. Supervisor: Check the form and, if you agree with the student’s assessment of their progress, sign the form by inserting your signature or using track changes. Alternatively ask the student to make changes before signing.

5. Student: Email the completed form to the Masters Thesis Committee Members (**Richard Kemp and Kristy Martire, cc'ing your supervisor(s)**. The form must be submitted by COB Friday of Week 11 in T1.