

MSci Projects - Key Information

On this page you can find the key information about your final year project, such as the purpose and scope of the project, how to apply for ethics, etc. Please take some time to look through this key information before you start your project.

In addition Key Dates (e.g., ethics submission, draft, final project submission) can be seen on the [Key Dates Page](#).

1. Purpose

Learning to design and run experiments is a key learning objective of your undergraduate psychology degree. During your final year project you will have the opportunity to put many of the skills you have developed over the first years of your course to the test. During the empirical project you will:

- Develop a research question that is relevant to the field of psychology and can be addressed empirically.
- Design and carry out the study in a scientifically rigorous manner.
- Apply statistical and analytic techniques and, where necessary, develop appropriate knowledge and use of computer packages.
- Write a concise scientific report of the study.
- Design a poster to show your results.

Projects can be run in small groups (usually up to 4 students) or as individual projects: your supervisor will help you to determine whether your research project is better suited to group or individual work. Your contribution to the work in both individual and group projects will be assessed by your primary supervisor.

Please note that the project you choose to join may be related to your pathway (i.e., Neuroscience, Developmental Disorders, Forensic), but it does not have to be. In other words, you may join a project on memory in typically developed adults even if you are enrolled on the Developmental Disorders MSci pathway. However, in order to do either a neuroimaging project (i.e., using fMRI or MEG) or to sign up for a developmental project you must have completed the relevant pathway-specific modules in Year 3.

2. Scope

Your project will run over the Autumn and the Spring Term of your fourth year.

The Project is worth 80 credits: this means you should expect to spend ca. 20 weeks working on this project full-time. You should bear in mind that the project counts for a substantial proportion of your overall degree mark.

Summaries of previous projects are available for inspection in the Departmental Office, and these should give you an indication of the scope and range of topics others have considered.

3. Supervision

You will develop your research question with your project supervisor. Project supervisors are faculty members and postdoctoral researchers working in the department. Please note that if your primary supervisor is a postdoctoral researcher, supervision must be overseen by a faculty member. In such cases the postdoctoral researcher will typically be first marker of the project report. A list of available supervisors, as well as their research interests and methodological expertise, can be seen by clicking on the link below:

[MSci Projects - Potential Supervisors 2022-23](#)

The role of the project supervisor is to help you develop your research question and to provide methodological support related to data acquisition and analysis.

The frequency of project supervision meetings will vary across the course of your project: in the initial phases you might expect to meet once per week to once every two weeks; during data acquisition you might meet less frequently; during data analysis you may find the frequency of meetings increasing again; once you begin to write-up your results you may find regular meeting unnecessary. Make a clear plan with your supervisor and attend the supervisory meetings that are scheduled.

Please note that you should not carry out a project and a literature survey in the same specific area of research or with the same supervisor; however, taking both components in the same general area is acceptable. Our criterion for whether the areas are sufficiently different is that it should not be possible to use a shortened version of your literature survey as the Introduction to your project.

4. Ethical Approval

You must not start testing participants until you have received appropriate ethical approval, and any project undertaken without ethical approval may receive a mark of zero.

In preparing your project proposal you must ensure that your plans are consistent with the department's [ethical guidelines](#). Make sure you are also aware of the [Code of Practice](#) set out by the university.

Please visit this page for further information and the requisite forms - [here](#)

Please note that if you working on a group project, you must submit one ethics application.

Ethics applications are due **at the end of the Summer Term** before your project begins in your 4th year. Project proposals are considered by the departmental ethics committee during the Summer Holidays, and the committee's decision will be communicated to you by letter. If the ethics committee writes to you to indicate that it is not satisfied your project plans are consistent with ethical guidelines, or if further details are required, you must discuss the committee's concerns with your supervisor, and submit a revised proposal as soon as possible.

Some of the components of the ethics application are determined by the type of project you are running: for example, ethics forms for fMRI studies differ from those needed for applying to do research with children/vulnerable participants. Please see the guidance below on the different types of ethics applications, and discuss with your supervisor which ethics application you need to submit.

4.1 Research in the psychology department

If you are running a project within the psychology department you will need to follow the instructions that can be found [Projects - Obtaining Ethical Approval](#). When recruiting participants you cannot use SONA or the cohort e-mail lists. Students should also refrain from paying participants, offering incentives and cannot provide course credit in return for participation.

4.2 Research at the York Neuroimaging Centre (YNiC)

If you are running a project at YNiC you will need to follow the instructions that can be found [here](#).

4.3 Research with children

If you are planning to carry out a project in a school or in any other context where there will be contact with children you will require the relevant disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service as well as the ethics forms for the psychology department (see 4.1 above). You should discuss this with your project supervisor at an early stage in planning your project. Because York schools are already heavily involved in University research you should not attempt to recruit participants from these schools unless your supervisor has an agreement in place.

4.4 Research with non-human animals

If you are interested in a project that involves experiments with non-human animals, ethical approval will be considered by the biology department. Please contact Prof. Katie Slocombe for more information. You will need to be aware of the legislation that governs the use of non-human animals in experiments, and you must ensure that your project work is at all times consistent with the relevant conditions imposed by the Home Office.

5. Special equipment and materials

Before reaching a final decision about your project design, discuss with your supervisor the facilities and equipment you will require. ALL use of departmental resources, whether psychometric, secretarial or technical, must be approved by your supervisor; please do not ask secretaries or technicians for help without your supervisor's prior approval. The department is prepared to fund photocopying associated with your project on the Departmental Office copier. Administrators will provide access for approved use of the photocopier, though at least one week's notice may be required for large numbers of copies. Several weeks' notice will be necessary if you require access to special equipment.

If your project requires use of a computer you should discuss this with your project supervisor at an early stage, particularly if you may need specialised software to run your experiment.

The department is not normally able to provide additional financial help with project work or to provide funds for travel or payment of participants.

Test Library

The Department houses a test library containing psychometric tests.

Unfortunately, owing to the cost of Tests, the Department has a limited stock and multiple copies are only available of a few tests. It is therefore important for you to plan well ahead if you wish to use a psychometric test, particularly if you think we may need to order test forms. It is not possible for us to loan tests to individuals external to the Psychology Department.

Library catalogue and ordering tests

You can browse the contents of the test library here: <https://psychbookings.york.ac.uk/booked/schedule.php>

Once you have logged in you can use the on-line system to check availability and request a test and/or record forms. Emily Greener (main reception) will receive any requests and then contact you to arrange for you to pick up the test/s. Your signature will be required on receipt of the test/s. It is sometimes necessary to recall a test; we hope you will respect such requests when they are made.

If you wish for technical advice on a particular test, or would like to submit a request for a new test to be purchased, then you can consult Amanda Hickey (amanda.hickey@york.ac.uk) who will try to assist you.

Published tests

Tests published in journals will normally be copyright. If you intend to use questionnaires or other response forms which will be seen by the general public you should ensure that they are used in their instructed format and clearly and neatly reproduced. If you plan to adapt materials then permission must be sought, and can be a lengthy process.

Terms and Conditions

The tests in the test library are very expensive (i.e., often costing hundreds of pounds) and must be treated with extreme care. We expect you to return the test as it was issued to you. It is also very important that you do not lend the test to anyone else throughout the duration of your loan. You must sign the test in and out yourself.

6. Assessment

Your overall project mark is based on assessment of:

- The project report (90%)
- The poster pdf (5%)
- Your supervisor's assessment of your contribution to the running of the project (5%)

For the third component, your primary supervisor is asked to take into account your:

- Attendance at supervisor meetings and other project sessions (e.g., testing, analysis, group meetings)
- Contribution to planning, testing, analysis and management of project (e.g., time management and organisational abilities, innovation and problem-solving, adaptability, attention to detail).
- Responsiveness to feedback
- Cooperative behaviour and (where relevant) ability to guide others

Detailed marking guidelines for each of these components are given on the [Assessment](#) page of the Handbook

6.1 Project Write Up

As part of our attempt to standardise the help given by supervisors it has been agreed that supervisors should read and comment on only one draft of your project report (Introduction, Method and Results only - no feedback will be provided on the Discussion section). Before submitting a draft to your supervisor, aim to take advantage of improvements in clarity and accuracy that can derive from redrafting your report in the light of your own careful re-reading, and of comments made by other readers. The deadline for handing a draft to your supervisor for comments is **Week 1 of the Summer Term**. You need to meet this deadline because your supervisor may recommend further data analysis and other modifications to the report which may be time-consuming to complete.

Preparation of the final version should take into account the following:

- The word count should be clearly indicated at the end of the project report, and should be a maximum of 8000 words. For further details on what is included or excluded in word counts, please consult the Word Limits section of the [UG Handbook - Penalties](#) page.
- Appendices should contain information of a supplementary nature only and not be required reading for a good understanding of the main body of the project.
- Projects should be submitted electronically via the VLE in pdf format. For further details on submitting work electronically, please consult the Guide to Online Submission of Work section of the [UG Handbook - Guide to Online Submission of Work](#) page.

- Retain an archived copy of all the raw data and other relevant materials, which the Department may ask to see.

Remember!

- Give yourself time to check your project report carefully for errors before you submit
- Applications for extensions should be made via the appropriate procedures - see the [UG Handbook - Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment](#) page for further details.
- If you send anyone a copy before you graduate you should make it clear that the project report is still under consideration by the examiners
- Keep below the word count maximum (see above)

6.2. Poster

You are also required to present the main results of your project in the format of a poster. The poster should be prepared to a standard expected for presentation at a scientific conference (see [here](#) for tips on how to make an effective poster from the APA). There is no one single format that will work for all projects, but in general, your poster should include a title, introduction, results, methods, discussion and references. You should prepare your poster individually, without collaborating with other students, even if you are undertaking a group project. An electronic copy of your A4 poster in pdf format must be submitted via the VLE before the deadline for poster submission.

7. Archiving of Project Data

Students must maintain an archived copy of all the raw data from their final year project until after the degree results are released. Raw data includes computer data files, completed questionnaires, completed consent forms, etc. Students are responsible for keeping the archived data in a secure place. In addition, it may be a good idea to pass on copies of the raw data to the project supervisor, in the event that the project yields publishable results. The Department may request copies of the raw data when evaluating a project's authenticity.