

PSYC 395 & NSCI 395: Independent Research in Psychology and Neuroscience

These courses give undergraduates the opportunity to work side-by-side with graduate students and faculty members on cutting-edge psychological and neuroscience research. Conducting hands-on research helps students develop a deeper understanding of psychological and neuroscience research methods and to prepare for graduate school.

This is a step-by-step guide on how to apply for PSYC/NSCI 395. Please use this as a checklist and read the instructions carefully- if anything below is not included in your application, it will be sent back for edits, which can result in a delay for course registration!

Step 1: Are you Eligible?

• **PSYC 395**

- ◇ PSYC major (note- PSYC majors should apply for PSYC 395 regardless of the research topic)
- ◇ Complete PSYC 101
- ◇ Complete 2 additional PSYC/NSCI courses, one must be 200-level or above
- ◇ Minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher

• **NSCI 395**

- ◇ NSCI major (note- NSCI majors should apply for NSCI 395 regardless of the research topic)
- ◇ Complete NSCI 175
- ◇ Complete 2 additional STEM courses (BIOL, CHEM, PHYS, etc.), one must be 200-level or above
- ◇ Minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher

Don't meet the pre-reqs yet? You can still get involved as a volunteer! Getting involved sooner is better as most labs prefer students earlier in their academic career!

Step 2: Find a Willing Mentor (see "Tips for Finding a Mentor")

- **!!Important!!:** If you are planning to work in a lab in a different department other than Psychology & Neuroscience (i.e. School of Medicine, Biology, Psychiatry, Public Health, etc.) or with a Graduate Student or Post-doc you will need to find an in-department faculty member to co-mentor you. The PI of your lab may have collaborators in our department you could ask, or you can ask a professor you have had.

Step 3: Review & Ensure Your Schedule Allows for the Course Requirements

- Approximately 3 hours per week in the lab for each credit hours (i.e. 9.hrs. week for a 3 credit course)
- At least 10 pages of scholarly work (details worked out with your mentor)
- Weekly meetings with direct supervisor
- At least four meetings per semester with your faculty advisor (if this is someone different than in #3)
- The faculty mentor may have additional requirements that will be laid out in the syllabus.

Step 4: Download and Fill Out the Contract Form

- You can access the form here: <https://psychology2.sites.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/216/2019/04/PSYCNSCI-395-Contract.docx>
- Carefully fill out this form: This is the main document the coordinators need to check to be sure that all pre-reqs are met & you and your faculty advisor are committed to complete the requirements
- If anything is missing or not explicitly stated, we will need to send the application back for edits
- **!!**You will need to explicitly state (please do not say "see syllabus"):**!!**
 - ◇ You will meet with your faculty advisor 4x and direct supervisor weekly (including dates and times is a bonus)
 - ◇ You will be turning in 10 pages of scholarly work at the end of the semester (description of these 10 pages is needed)

Step 5: Work with Your Faculty Mentor to Create a Syllabus for the Course

- Most faculty mentors who have previously had 395 students will have a working draft already. If you and your faculty mentors need to see an example syllabus, please contact the Directors of Undergraduate Research of PSYC/NSCI
- **!!**Note the syllabus needs to explicitly state:**!!**
 - ◇ Course pre-requisites for 395
 - ◇ The student will be working a minimum of 9 hours/week or 3 hours a week/each credit hour
 - ◇ Meeting Requirements (faculty advisor 4x and direct supervisor weekly)
 - ◇ At least 10 pages of scholarly work will be turned in
 - ◇ An explicit statement and comprehensive descriptions on what lab responsibilities the student will do/the project the student will be engaged in (it will not suffice to describe what research the lab, in general, is involved with)
 - ◇ Any additional requirements the faculty advisor may have

Step 6: Create an Online Application

- You can access the online system here: <https://olcm.oasis.unc.edu/olcm/>.

***** Note: If you are an NSCI major, you should apply for NSCI 395, and if you are PSYC major, you should apply for PSYC 395, regardless of the lab you are working in. *****

Step 7: Upload the Contract & Syllabus to the Online Application and Submit

- **!!**Please double check that both documents have been uploaded successfully as the system sometimes has problems.**!!**

Step 8: Check Back to be Sure Your Faculty Mentor Has Approved the Submission

- If the OLCM online system has designated your application as:
 - ◇ Instructor Review: This means that your faculty mentor needs to log in to the online system and approve your application. Please contact your faculty mentor to check if they have done so.

Deadline for Spring 2023: The priority deadline to apply for **PSYC or NSCI 395 is Monday Dec 15th, 2022**. Applications must be submitted and approved by the instructor of record by this deadline. If applications are submitted by this date, you will be enrolled in PSYC or NSCI 395 before the start of the semester. Applications received between the priority deadline and **Jan 4th, 2023** will be processed in the order they are received. Please be aware that if you submit your application after Dec 15th, we may require a quick turnaround from you and your faculty mentor if there are changes to the syllabus needed to ensure that you are enrolled by the last day to add to classes. No applications will be accepted after **Jan 4th**.

What happens after my application is approved/ How do I enroll?

The scheduling coordinator will add PSYC/NSCI 395 to your schedule for you. This is done in large batches, so you may need to wait to see it on your schedule. **Rest assured, if your application says "Ready for Schedule" in the online system, you will be enrolled in 395 the first week of classes.** Many students enroll in a different class as place holder which can be problematic. **** Be sure your either have room in your schedule or official permission for an overload, as we cannot schedule you otherwise. ****

Tips for Finding a Mentor

NOTE: It is a common misconception that you should be looking for labs that are advertising that they want undergrad help. Most labs that take 395 and other undergrad students, don't advertise- you need to reach out! Read the tips below on how to do that!

Step 1: Make a list of labs to target. A great place to start is this [website](#) which lists all the Psych & Neuro faculty with a very brief description of each person's research interests. I often recommend making a few lists of (1) your top tier labs, (2) ones that sound kind of interesting, etc. If you are interested in Neuroscience research, there are several labs outside of our department that also conduct Neuroscience research. A good place to see a more comprehensive list of Neuro-related labs is [here](#). Other place to look for PSYC related research include: [Dept of Psychiatry](#), [these centers](#) in the left menu, and [Public Health](#) which has faculty sorted by research topic, many of which are psych/behavior related. The [Office of Undergraduate Research at UNC](#) is a great resource as they have additional information [on finding research opportunities](#), a [database for opportunities](#) available all over campus, and funding undergraduate research.

Step 2: Contact your top tier labs. Once you have some labs in mind, look at their websites further and learn more about their research. Often, lab websites will have a link of some sort that gives you information on how to get involved or how they prefer to be contacted. Sometimes it is tricky to find because it is named something different on each site, but look for links that say things like "Getting involved" or "Join the lab" etc. This should have info on how they prefer to be contacted. If there is no link you can feel free to email them- I usually recommend trying to find a Post-doc or Grad Student in the lab (usually under a link called "People") because they are likely to email back more quickly with information. If you can't find them though emailing the faculty member is fine. When emailing or filling out a form expressing your interest just let them know that you are interested in getting involved in research and include a brief statement of why you find their research interesting. Be sure to mention how much availability you expect to have and in what manner you're interested/willing to participate (e.g. as a volunteer, 395, etc).

Step 3: Keep trying! If you don't hear back right away, or the labs that you contact don't have any space, don't give up- just keep working your way through your list. Even if a lab is not your top choice, the experience gained doing research is priceless, and you will build your resume so that you are more marketable to your 1st choice lab in the future!