Honors Thesis Proposal

Background
The Honors thesis in Child Psychology provides an opportunity for undergraduate students to prepare an academic research paper on a topic in Child Psychology in conjunction with a faculty member. The thesis represents an introduction to working in academia and can be used to help prepare for graduate work. As such, the Honors thesis should represent significant work on the student’s behalf in developing a structured research project and presenting on the resulting data.

Additional background information:

Guidelines
Propose a project (an experiment, a set of experiments, or a plan to analyze data that have already been collected) that potentially resolves a theoretical issue in child psychology. In general, the proposal should follow the form of an empirical article: Title, Introduction, Method, Predicted Results and Plan for Data Analysis, Interpretation, References.

Your proposal should help to develop a conversation with your faculty mentor by providing enough information for your mentor to understand the central theme of your thesis. Your proposal should be no longer than a few pages double-spaced. Your final thesis will likely evolve based on your results.

Students will work in conjunction with a faculty member to determine a topic that is appropriate in scope and focus for an Honors thesis. It is important to choose a faculty member with whom you have a good relationship, and students typically have prior experience working in a thesis supervisor’s research lab (e.g., volunteering, taking CPsy 4994). Keep in mind that faculty may have other obligations that would prevent them from serving as a faculty mentor for the Honors thesis.

Additional resources for preparing for research participation:
Choosing a Research Lab
http://www.cehd.umn.edu/icd/research/

Expectations of research participation
http://home.psych.utoronto.ca/Assets/Psych+Digital+Assets/Psychology/Psych+Digital+Assets/Resources+for+Researchers/expectations.pdf

Additional resources for starting an Honors thesis
Getting Started
http://writingcenter.uconn.edu/writing-in-psychology-4/

Selecting a Topic

Title
The Title should summarize the central idea of the proposal and refer to the variables manipulated and/or assessed.

Introduction
The Introduction should summarize the relevant literature, identify a specific question to be answered, and provide a clear explanation of how your proposal can help resolve the problem you identify. Be sure to provide references for previous assertions and findings. The end of the Introduction should consist in a clear transition to the Method section. That is, you should state explicitly and concisely what you propose to do, what you might find, and how your findings can inform our understanding of the issue.
Method
In this section, you should state what you propose to do in more detail. This section is typically divided into: Design, Participants, Materials, Procedure. The Design should briefly describe any randomization or counterbalancing (and justification for these steps). The Procedure should also describe specific manipulations.

Additional resources selecting research methods:
Avoiding Bias
http://www.asha.org/Publications/leader/2006/060613/f060613c.htm

Predicted Results and Plan for Data Analysis
State what you expect to find, the form of your data (e.g., number of cards sorted correctly out of 10), how you might analyze this data (e.g., an ANOVA), and what significant effects you would predict.

Interpretation
Discuss your predicted findings (and alternative patterns of results) in terms of the problem you are studying. What are the implications of your predicted findings?

References
List references cited in the paper in APA style.

Additional Resources:
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Writing Strategy
Pick a topic of interest. Familiarize yourself with previous work. Ask yourself what remains unclear (e.g., Are there questions still to be answered? Are there methodological flaws in previous work?). Consider alternative interpretations of earlier findings and think of a way to test which of the alternatives is more likely. Then, evaluate your own proposal as critically as you can, as you would a published article.
Honors Thesis

Guidelines
Based on the feedback you receive from your faculty mentor, collect data from your experiment or analyse data that have already been collected to help address the issue you raised in your proposal. In general, your thesis should follow the form of an empirical article: Title, Introduction, Literature Review, Method, Data Analysis, Results, Areas for Future Research and References.

You will work in close concert with your faculty member to identify previous research and scholarly articles written about your topic. Once you have completed your literature review, you will want to collect data or analyse the data already collected.

As the Honors Thesis qualifies as a writing intensive class, your thesis should consist of at least 15 pages. While there are no set requirements for the length of your thesis based on the level of Latin Honors you wish to pursue, we provide a general guideline for the following levels:

- Cum Laude: 15-20 pages
- Magna Cum Laude: 20-25 pages
- Summa Cum Laude: 25-30 pages

For summa cum laude, students complete a thesis which must be approved unanimously by a committee of three faculty members, two from the major department and one from a department outside of the major. Students may work with the Departmental Honors Adviser to select appropriate committee members; however, the ultimate responsibility in coordinating the committee’s review is the student’s.

These are intended as guidelines and not requirements as the length of your final thesis should emphasize quality writing over quantity. Ultimately, you will work with your faculty mentor to establish an appropriate length based on the topic of your thesis.

Title
The Title should summarize the central idea of your thesis and refer to the variables manipulated and/or assessed.

Introduction
The Introduction should summarize the relevant literature, identify a specific question to be answered, and provide a clear explanation of how your research helps to resolve the problem you identify. Be sure to provide references for previous assertions and findings. The end of the Introduction should consist in a clear transition to the Method section. That is, you should state explicitly and concisely what you did, what you found, and how your findings can inform our understanding of the issue.

Literature Review
In this section you will summarize and integrate previous research that provides a background for the research you have conducted. This should include a clear statement about how your research helps to provide research that is missing from previous studies.

Method
In this section, you should state what you did in detail—enough detail that the study could be conducted or replicated by another scientist. This section is typically divided into: Design, Participants, Materials, Procedure. The Design should describe any randomization or counterbalancing (and justification for these steps). The Procedure should summarize any instructions given to participants and describe specific manipulations.

Data Analysis
Describe how you analyzed the data you collected (e.g., an ANOVA).
Results
Discuss your findings (and alternative patterns of results) in terms of the problem you are studying. What are the implications of your findings?

Areas for Future Research
Describe any limitations of the research you conducted. This may include the sample size, research method, data analysis method etc. Additionally, you should provide an indication of areas for future research that would help to address any gaps in the literature and your research.

References
List references cited in the paper.