

PSY 540 Final Project Guidelines and Rubric

Overview

Within the professions of psychology, it can be typical for you to work on proposals for programs, studies, or new initiatives. For example, you may work for a university that regularly partners with foundations and corporations to identify grant opportunities for projects in local communities. The final project for this course is a project proposal that provides you an opportunity to draw upon your knowledge of cognitive psychology and demonstrate the key skills and abilities developed in this course to address a contemporary psychological problem, giving you critical exposure to how that problem impacts people's interactions in a professional setting. You will select an area of interest in cognitive psychology and one of the following applied settings: education, law, mental health, or technology. Your proposal may include brief references to an additional setting, but your focus must be on your primary applied setting choice. For example, you can select education as your primary applied setting as you research a contemporary problem related to memory processes and learning, but you may find that you want to also touch on memory disorders (i.e., mental health setting) within the scope of your project.

This project is supported by **four milestones**, which will provide you opportunities to work toward the final project throughout the course and improve the quality of your final submission. These milestones will be submitted in **Modules Two, Four, Six, and Seven**. **The final project will be submitted in Module Nine.**

Outcomes

These assessments will address the following course outcomes:

- Apply foundational theories of attention, learning, memory, language, and decision making to practical, contemporary problems
- Identify gaps in and propose improvements for practices in professional disciplines based on the strengths and limitations of human cognitive systems
- Assess foundational theories of cognitive psychology for their relevancy to real-world issues
- Interpret current research and statistical findings in cognitive psychology through the application of sound methodological principles
- Advocate for and defend the use of socially responsible strategies and techniques for improving upon human cognitive processes

Prompt

Approach your proposal by first identifying an area of cognitive psychology to address within your proposal: attention, learning, memory, language, or decision making. Then select an applied setting to connect with your selected area of cognitive psychology: education, law, mental health, or technology. You will focus on a contemporary problem that pertains to your selected area of cognitive psychology and your selected applied setting. For example, suppose that you selected “attention” as your area of cognitive psychology and “education” as your selected applied setting. Based on those selections, you will now have to identify a relevant contemporary problem. As an example, with the growth of online education, consider online students, the different factors competing for attention given the nature of the educational environment, and potential impact on success.

After you have identified your area of cognitive psychology, applied setting, and contemporary problem, you will select at least **two** relevant foundational theories within your selected area of cognitive psychology, keeping in mind your selected applied setting and contemporary problem. For example, in relation to attention, you may be interested in exploring Treisman’s attenuation theory, which posits that information not being attended to “consciously” is still being processed. However, the information being attended to is being processed at a deeper level than the unattended information. Based on your review of related research, you will be required to formulate a research question that addresses potential improvements to practices in your selected applied setting based on the strengths of human cognitive systems. Lastly, you will devise an appropriate solution that will offer socially responsible strategies and techniques to address the problem.

The examples below can help provide further direction for your proposal. Keep in mind that you must identify a key topic or area of cognitive psychology, as well as an applied setting (education, law, mental health, or technology) in your proposal. In your proposal, you may briefly address secondary applied settings, as well:

Topic and Proposal Examples

Example 1:

Area of cognitive psychology: Attention

Applied setting: Education (with potential secondary applications in technology)

Example: A study that investigates online students, the factors competing for attention, and the impacts on educational success, and draws conclusions about the resulting societal implications for improving upon these human cognitive processes

Example 2:

Area of cognitive psychology: Memory (processes and disorders)

Applied setting: Mental health (with potential secondary applications in education)

Example: A mental health program designed to help the elderly improve memory and prevent memory loss due to Alzheimer’s and/or dementia

Example 3:

Area of cognitive psychology: Decision making

Applied setting: Law

Example: A study that investigates decision-making processes of jurors in court cases

Topic Selection Resources

The following sites offer topics and news feeds on a variety of issues related to various areas of psychology.

[American Psychological Association](#) – Topics area

[Psychological Science in the News](#) – News feed

Specifically, the following critical elements must be addressed in your proposal, in the following order:

I. Problem Statement

- a) Describe the **contemporary problem** that is the focus of your proposal with full details with respect to your selected applied setting.
- b) Identify your **selected area of cognitive psychology** (attention, learning, memory, language, or decision making) and **appropriate foundational theories** that apply to your selected problem.
- c) Describe **performance issues** in your selected applied setting based on **limitations** of human cognitive systems.
- d) Create a research question that addresses **potential improvements** to practices in the applied setting based on the strengths of human cognitive systems. Remember that your research question should address your contemporary problem.

II. Contemporary Relevance

- a) Evaluate the **utility of the theories** you identified when describing your problem with respect to their strengths and limitations.
- b) Which particular theory offers the greatest utility for practitioners to **apply in addressing real-world issues** specific to the contemporary problem you selected? Defend your selection.

III. Interpretation of Research Findings: Explain how each primary or secondary resource you selected supports your research question. This is where you will apply sound methodological principles (by following the prompts below, a–b) to qualify the research results and statistical findings.

- a) How do the **research results** and **statistical findings** apply to your research question?*
- b) Explain the strengths and limitations of the research results and findings in supporting the research question. This is where you will explain how the research results and findings you have reviewed **support your research question** and specific gaps. In other words, in reviewing your sources, is there sufficient support for this research question? This is also where you would identify what research does not yet exist that is necessary in supporting the application of your research question.*

- IV. Methodological Principles: This is where you will look at your research question (critical element I, part d) and determine what types of strategies or techniques you would use if you were to hypothesize improving upon the problem in your selected applied setting. Remember, this is not limited to a controlled experiment.
- a) What socially **responsible strategies and techniques** could be used for improving upon human cognitive processes specific to your applied setting?
 - b) What are the **implications** for using these strategies and techniques?
- V. Conclusion
- a) What potential future direction do you see from implementation of your research specific to addressing the contemporary problem you cited in critical element I, part a?

*Click [here](#) to access a list of approved publications, which has been provided to illustrate the standards of quality expected in the types of resources necessary in supporting this proposal.

Project Milestones

Milestone One: Topic and Setting Submission

In **Module Two**, you will draft a topic suggestion by identifying your particular area of interest in cognitive psychology (attention, learning, memory, language, or decision making), select an applied setting (education, law, mental health, or technology), and describe the contemporary problem as it relates to your topic and setting. Last, draft three potential research questions that explore potential improvements related to your topic and the applied setting. **This milestone will be graded using the Milestone One Rubric.**

Milestone Two: Annotated Bibliography

In **Module Four**, you will work from the topic, applied setting, and research questions you identified in Milestone One and start identifying relevant research to support your final proposal. You will complete an annotated bibliography featuring a minimum of four research articles. In your bibliography, you will reflect on how the research applies to your topic, explore strengths and limitations of the research, and propose ways to expand on the research. **This milestone will be graded using the Milestone Two Rubric.**

Milestone Three: Rough Draft of Final Proposal

In **Module Six**, you will submit a rough draft of your proposal and post the draft to the Module Seven discussion topic to be reviewed by one of your peers. The draft will include all the required elements of your final proposal and incorporate any relevant instructor feedback you received on Milestones One and Two. This draft submission represents an opportunity to receive targeted instructor feedback that you can use to improve your final proposal. **This milestone will be graded using the Milestone Three Rubric.**

Milestone Four: Peer Review of Rough Draft

In **Module Seven**, you will review a rough draft completed by one of your peers and provide feedback related to current strengths of the proposal, potential areas of clarification, and remaining questions. You will also respond to feedback that one of your peers provided on your own rough draft. **This milestone will be graded using the Milestone Four Rubric.**

Final Submission: Project Proposal

In **Module Nine**, you will submit your final project, a proposal exploring how you would address a contemporary problem of cognitive psychology within a specific setting. Throughout the course, you have had multiple opportunities to work on elements of this proposal and to fine-tune your thinking on your chosen topic. Your finalized proposal should incorporate feedback you have received from your instructor as well as your peers. **This submission will be graded with the Final Project Rubric.**

Deliverables

Milestone	Deliverables	Module Due	Grading
1	Topic and Setting Submission	Two	Graded using the Milestone One Rubric
2	Annotated Bibliography	Four	Graded using the Milestone Two Rubric
3	Rough Draft of Final Proposal	Six	Graded using the Milestone Three Rubric
4	Peer Review of Rough Draft	Seven	Graded using the Milestone Four Rubric
	Project Proposal	Nine	Graded using the Final Project Rubric (on following page)

Final Project Rubric

Guidelines for Submission: Written components of the proposal must follow these formatting guidelines when applicable: double spacing, 12-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, and APA citations. Your proposal should be approximately 8–10 pages, not including cover page and references, and use preapproved resources. (The submission should include a variety of research and findings from at least three of the provided publications. Click [here](#) to access the list of approved publications.)

Critical Elements	Exemplary (100%)	Proficient (90%)	Needs Improvement (70%)	Not Evident (0%)	Value
Problem Statement: Contemporary Problem	Meets “Proficient” criteria, and the details are well qualified with examples specific to the applied setting	Describes a contemporary problem in full detail with respect to the applied setting	Describes the contemporary problem, but with gaps in detail with respect to the applied setting	Does not describe a contemporary problem in any detail with respect to the applied setting	9
Problem Statement: Selected Area	Meets “Proficient” criteria with examples from real-world situations	Explains aspects of foundational theories, fully connecting them to selected problem	Explains aspects of foundational theories, but with gaps in connecting them to selected problem	Does not explain aspects of foundational theories	9
Problem Statement: Performance Issues and Limitations	Meets “Proficient” criteria and is well qualified with examples from selected applied setting	Identifies performance issues in the selected fields (education, law, mental health, or technology), demonstrating clear connection to the limitations of human cognitive systems	Identifies performance issues in the selected applied setting (education, law, mental health, or technology), but connections to the limitations of human cognitive systems are unclear	Does not identify performance issues in the selected applied setting (education, law, mental health, or technology)	9
Problem Statement: Potential Improvements	Meets “Proficient” criteria and is well qualified with examples from selected applied setting	Creates research question that addresses potential improvements to practices in the applied setting based on the strengths of human cognitive systems	Research question addresses potential improvements to practices in the applied setting, but connections to the strengths of human cognitive systems are unclear	Does not create research question that addresses potential improvements to practices in the applied setting	9
Contemporary Relevance: Utility of Theories	Meets “Proficient” criteria, and contrast of theories is well qualified with real-world examples	Evaluate the utility of the foundational theories for practitioners with respect to their strengths and limitations	Evaluates the utility of the foundational theories for practitioners, but with gaps in addressing their strengths or limitations	Does not evaluate the utility of the foundational theories	9
Contemporary Relevance: Apply	Meets “Proficient” criteria and is well qualified with examples in which the theory would not	Selects theory and defends with explanation on how particular theory offers the greatest utility for practitioners to apply	Selects theory but is unclear on how selection offers the greatest utility for practitioners to apply in addressing real-	Does not select particular theory for practitioners to apply in addressing real-world issues	9

	be applicable in real-world situations	specific to contemporary problem selected	world issues specific to contemporary problem selected		
Interpretation of Research: Question	Meets “Proficient” criteria and is well qualified with examples in which aspects of the research and research findings would not be applicable to proposed improvements	Explains the research and research findings with regard to how they apply to proposed improvements	Explains the research and research findings, but does not connect to proposed improvements	Does not explain how the research and research findings apply to proposed improvements	9
Interpretation of Research: Support	Meets “Proficient” criteria and substantiates with specific examples of scholarly research	Explains the strengths and limitations of the research results and findings in supporting the research question	Explains the research results and findings, but does not address strengths or limitations	Does not explain the strengths and limitations of the research results and findings in supporting the research question	9
Methodological Principles: Strategies and Techniques	Meets “Proficient” criteria and substantiates strategies and techniques with scholarly research	Recommends appropriate, socially responsible strategies and techniques for improving human cognitive processes that are applicable to applied setting	Recommends appropriate strategies and techniques for improving human cognitive processes, but with gaps in applicability to proposal	Does not make appropriate, socially responsible recommendations for strategies and techniques for improving human cognitive processes	9
Methodological Principles: Implications	Meets “Proficient” criteria, and the implications of the strategies and techniques are well qualified with examples specific to the applied setting	Explains implications of the strategies and techniques in full detail with respect to the applied setting	Explains implications of the strategies and techniques, but with gaps in detail with respect to the applied setting	Does not explain implications of the strategies and techniques with respect to the applied setting	9
Conclusion	Meets “Proficient” criteria and substantiates with scholarly research	Explains potential future direction from implementation of research specific to addressing the contemporary problem(s)	Explains potential future direction from implementation of research, but with gaps in how it is specific to addressing the contemporary problem(s)	Does not explain potential future direction from implementation of research study	5

Articulation of Response	Submission is free of errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, and organization and is presented in a professional and easy-to-read format	Submission has no major errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization	Submission has major errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization that negatively impact readability and articulation of main ideas	Submission has critical errors related to citations, grammar, spelling, syntax, or organization that prevent understanding of ideas	5
Earned Total					100%

Project Resources

In this course, you will synthesize quality research so that you can use your findings to develop your own solutions to contemporary issues. *Psychology Today* and other such publications developed for the mass consumer market are NOT appropriate resources upon which to base the research that informs your solutions in these projects. Below is a list of quality resources that are critical to your ability to map cognitive psychology concepts and theories onto real-world situations. Your work should be informed by a variety of resources from at least three of these publications. Use these resources to identify current research (less than five years old) and statistical findings that will inform your interpretation of the foundational theories in this course.

[Shapiro Library Resource Guide for Undergraduate and Graduate Psychology Students](#)

You are not limited to the publications listed below for informing your work. For additional research, you may wish to use this guide provided as a main jumping-off point to source quality research. This guide organizes and provides psychology students and faculty links to the Shapiro Library resources available in this field of study.

[Association for Psychological Science](#)

The Association for Psychological Science (previously the American Psychological Society) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of scientific psychology and its representation at the national and international level.

[Cognitive Psychology](#)

This journal offers articles that focus on new theoretical advances in the study of attention, memory, language processing, perception, problem solving, and thinking.

[Cognitive Science](#)

This multidisciplinary journal brings together researchers from a variety of fields including but not limited to psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, and education, which will be valuable as you seek to apply your solutions in the fields of education and mental health.

[Cognition, Technology & Work](#)

This journal focuses on human interaction with technology in the context of work and working conditions, which will be valuable as you seek to apply your solutions in terms of interaction with technology in the workplace.



[Law & Psychology Review](#)

This journal combines the disciplines of law and psychology, which will be valuable as you seek apply your solutions specific to issues of law.

[Memory & Cognition](#)

This journal covers topics including but not limited to human memory and learning, conceptual processes, and problem solving.

[Psychological Science](#)

This journal offers the latest findings in cognitive, social, developmental, and health psychology, as well as behavioral neuroscience and biopsychology.

[Trends in Cognitive Sciences](#)

This journal provides a topic for research in cognitive science, which brings together the fields of psychology, artificial intelligence, linguistics, philosophy, and neuroscience, among others.

[Topics in Cognitive Science](#)

This journal offers topics specific to cognitive science.