

**Psychology (PSY 461 & PSY 462)**  
**and**  
**Child Development (CD 461 & CD 462)**

# **Senior Project Manual**

Revised Spring 2013

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# Psychology and Child Development Senior Project Guide

## What is the Senior Project?

A Senior Project is a final requirement for completing a degree in both Psychology and Child Development. It is intended to be a culminating experience in which students draw from knowledge, ideas, skills and interests developed over the entire program of study. Students who choose their topic well often report that it is one of their most rewarding educational experiences as an undergraduate.

### A. Learning Objectives

1. The student will reduce an issue or topic to a specific question or task which is feasible to answer or accomplish within two quarters, with the help of the PSY/CD 461 professor and PSY/CD 462 Senior Project Faculty Advisor.
2. The student will demonstrate the ability to use skills and knowledge gained throughout their program of study. In particular, the student will demonstrate understanding and use of scientific research to address human concerns.
3. The student will demonstrate the ability to obtain information from relevant sources to address a question or complete a task (e.g., research literature, professional organizations, community agencies, formal or informal studies, correspondence or personal contact with key resource persons).
4. The student will demonstrate the ability to conduct the project in a professional and ethical manner, while completing the project on time and in a fashion agreed upon with the Senior Project Faculty Advisor.
5. The student will demonstrate the ability to organize and complete a clear, concise, and accurate final paper. An excellent paper will synthesize information to reveal important ideas, relationships, limitations, and implications. Appendices may include descriptions and/or pieces of: DVDs, collections of materials, or computer or web-based projects. All papers will be at least 20 pages in length and students should discuss both the number and type of references with their Senior Project Advisor.

### B. General Description

The Senior Project (461/462) is a formal paper on the results of a project, completed under faculty supervision. The senior project will be chosen by the student with the guidance of the PSY/CD 461 professor and a faculty member who will supervise the completion of the project in PSY/CD 462. The topic can be directly related to a student's proposed career plan or goals, or it might be of simple interest of the student. The final project will be presented in written form, and may also be presented in poster format at the Psychology and Child Development Senior Project Symposium. Students may work on projects individually or may propose a group endeavor.

### C. Kinds of Senior Projects

Senior Projects are at minimum 20 pages in length, and include a literature review to give the project a theoretical or empirical framework. There are many possible approaches to Psychology/Child Development senior projects, but most can be categorized as one of four basic types (these can be combined):

1. *The Empirical Research Project.* The student conducts a research study with the paper specifying the aim of the research, relevant prior research findings, hypotheses, participants, procedures, data gathered, methods of analysis, results and discussion. PSY 202 subject pool students or children in the Preschool Learning Lab may be available as participants, or students may be able to recruit their own participants under the guidance of their Senior Project Advisor. Psychology students should discuss these possibilities with their PSY/CD 462 advisor during the process of Senior project approval. All empirical projects involving primary data collection should be approved by the Cal Poly IRB (Institutional Review Board/Human Subjects Committee) prior to data collection; applications should be completed with advisors and submitted by the end of PSY/CD 461.

Sample Titles: The role of environmental attitudes on recycling behavior; Sex role preferences among four-year-olds'

2. *The Service Project.* The student develops and implements a community or university service project such as a workshop, pilot program or conference. The paper describes the theoretical and/or empirical rationale for the project, how the design of the project is informed by scientific findings, and the plan for the service or event. The paper also specifies the persons served, the kind of service or event provided, the resources used, how the service or event was evaluated, and the implications and impact of the service project. A videotape of the event or still pictures may be submitted with proper approval of participants.

Sample Titles: A family counseling program for migrant workers in San Luis Obispo; A multi-ethnic field day with activities for elementary school children.

3. *The Extended Literature Review.* The student conducts an extensive investigation of existing research and theory on a particular topic. The review includes analysis, synthesis and suggestions for future research. The reference list is typically more extensive than in other types of projects.

Sample Titles: Modern diagnosis and treatment of dyslexia; Recommendations on the ideal education for deaf children

4. *The Creative Project.* The student creates or designs a product based on research in the field of psychology. The project could involve a manual, guidebook, program plan, DVD, or website. The paper provides background information on the theoretical and empirical foundations for this work, describes what is produced, and includes an evaluation of the value and effectiveness of the product.

Sample Titles: CD ROM teaching basic mathematical and language concepts using games; Development of a classroom environment for an employer sponsored child care center.

## D. Topics

Choosing a topic or question to study is frequently the most difficult aspect of this project for students. Students finalize a topic shortly after the beginning of PSY/CD 461. The following questions may help in choosing among the many possible topics for a Senior Project:

1. Is the topic important?
2. Am I really interested in this topic? What do I want to find out?
3. How does it the topic relate to existing psychological knowledge?
4. Is there a faculty member with expertise in this area who can advise me?
5. How will it help foster my educational, professional and/or personal goals?

## Differences between Psychology and Child Development Programs

Psychology students begin by enrolling in PSY 461: Senior Project Seminar, a one-unit course where students are guided in choosing a topic, and finding an appropriate advisor to mentor them in PSY 462: Senior Project, a three- unit course where the project is completed (details below).

Child Development students begin by enrolling in CD 461: Senior Project Seminar, a two-unit course where they both choose a topic, and write a complete draft of their literature review; the project is brought to completion in the two-unit CD 462 Senior Project course.

## Senior Project Courses, Advisors, and Enrollment: PSYCHOLOGY MAJORS

### A. PSY 461 Senior Project Seminar

Senior Project Seminar is a class designed to help students choose topics, select advisors, conduct searches, and write drafts of the literature review (the second chapter of the senior project). Students might also prepare proposals for submission to the Institutional Review Board/Human Subjects Committee, and discuss options for collecting data. Although students submit their work and are evaluated by their PSY 461 professor, there should be communication with their chosen PSY 462 Senior Project Advisor. As part of completion of PSY 461, individuals must procure a signed contract with their PSY 462 advisor that confirms their advisors willingness to supervise, and details their expectations for successful completion of the project. Many advisors will also require additional contractual information, such as a timeline, grading standards, etc., at the discretion of the individual advisor. In addition, individuals must complete a beginning section of their Senior Project to complete the seminar.

In many cases, students should plan to enroll in PSY 462 the quarter immediately following PSY 461 (PSY 461 is generally taught each quarter).

### B. Senior Project Advisors (for PSY 462)

The PSY 461 professor guides students toward selecting an appropriate topic and assists with the selection of 462 Senior Project Advisors. A list of Psychology faculty who have indicated interests in supervising

senior projects will be provided in the 461 class. Any full-time department faculty member is eligible if willing and available to serve. A Senior Project Advisor is generally chosen on the basis of having some background knowledge, expertise and/or enthusiasm pertinent to the chosen topic for the Senior Project.

### C. PSY 462 Senior Project Enrollment

Students are responsible for contacting their selected PSY 462 Senior Project Advisors during the quarter enrolled in 461. Each student arranges times to discuss and gain approval for her/his Senior Project Proposal, and then obtains an individual permission number to enroll in PSY 462 with his/her Senior Project Advisor the subsequent quarter. While enrolled in PSY 462, students complete the Senior Project according to the terms agreed on in the contract.

## **Senior Project Courses, Advisors, and Enrollment: CHILD DEVELOPMENT MAJORS**

### A. CD 461 Senior Project Seminar

Senior Project Seminar is a seminar class of about 15-25 students designed to help students choose topics, select advisors, conduct searches, and prepare drafts of the literature review (the second chapter of the senior project). Students might also prepare proposals for submission to the Human Subjects Committee. Although students submit their work and are evaluated by their CD 461 professor, there is often much communication with their chosen CD 462 Senior Project advisor.

Students should plan to enroll in CD 462 the quarter immediately following CD 461. CD 461 is generally taught Fall and Winter quarters.

### B. Senior Project Advisors (for CD 462)

The CD 461 professor is the initial advisor for senior project, and assists with the selection of 462 Senior Project Advisors based on students' chosen topics. A list of CD and Psychology faculty who have indicated interests in supervising senior projects will be provided in the 461 class. Any full-time department faculty member is eligible if willing and available to serve. A Senior Project Advisor is generally chosen on the basis of having some background knowledge, expertise and/or enthusiasm pertinent to the chosen topic for the Senior Project.

The 462 Advisor helps individual students plan projects (while in 461), and supervises the conduct and completion of their projects the following quarter (in CD 462).

### C. CD 462 Senior Project Enrollment

Students are responsible for contacting their selected CD 462 Senior Project Advisors during the quarter enrolled in 461. Each student arranges times to discuss and gain approval for her/his Senior Project Proposal, and then obtains an individual permission number to enroll in CD 462 with his/her Senior Project Advisor the subsequent quarter. Each student should also clarify her/his Advisor's expectations and grading standards for the project.

## Planning Senior Projects

### General Questions

- Is the size of the proposed project larger than a term paper but smaller than a Master's thesis? Has the student read previously-completed related Senior Projects and does s/he seem to understand faculty expectations for Senior Projects in this department?
- Is the timeline feasible for both student(s) and advisor? Have penalties for failure to meet timelines been discussed?
- Has the proposed project been briefly described in relation to previous research on the topic (literature review)?
- Does the purpose or problem statement convince the advisor of the importance of the project?
- Have the objectives, hypotheses and questions which the project will address been clearly agreed by the student and their advisor? Are the hypothesis(es) and/or questions related to the problem statement?
- Have the procedural steps to be followed in accomplishing the project been specified? Is the sequence of steps in the work plan clear and feasible?
- Can the end-product (final draft) be clearly visualized by the student? Have any costs of production been considered (e.g., photocopying of questionnaires, survey monkey costs for online data collection)? Has the number and size of exhibits (text, tables, figures, appendices, etc.) been foreseen?

#### *For empirical studies:*

- Are there clear-cut, specific achievable objectives which lend themselves to operational definitions of key variables?
- Is the general procedure properly adapted to the kind of study proposed (e.g., experiment, survey, interview)?
- Is the population from which the sample will be drawn or the rationale for the sampling method clearly specified?
- What data will be gathered? What collections method will be used?
- Have instruments (questionnaires, interview items, etc.) to be used been identified?
- Are analyses to be used consistent with objectives and methods proposed?

#### *For literature reviews:*

- What is the overall plan for obtaining references? Is there a clear plan for retrieving peer-reviewed articles? What key topics and terms will be used?

#### *For creative or service projects:*

- What will be the sequence of steps in carrying out the project? Are there any organizations or individuals aside from the student and faculty advisor who will be involved? Is there a way to determine whether the intervention was effective?

## General Considerations

### A. Ethical Considerations

When a Senior Project involves the use of human subjects, students must be careful to carry out investigations with regard for the dignity and welfare of those who participate. The Senior Project will typically not be intrusive for participants. All procedures, questions, forms, letters and other correspondence used by a student must first be approved by the Senior Project Advisor. Research projects must be approved by the University Human Subjects Research Committee <http://www.rgp.calpoly.edu/indexHS.html>. Faculty advisors will help students navigate this process.

Researchers must be particularly sensitive when involving children in studies, and refer to the SRCD Ethical Standards for Research with Children.

#### B. Off-Campus Correspondence

Letters to agencies or individuals as part of a Senior Project should be printed on University stationery (available from advisors) and the faculty advisor must co-sign the letters. Some correspondence will need approval by the Cal Poly Public Affairs office.

Students should maintain professional community relationships when people outside the University are involved in the project.

#### C. Feedback to Senior Project Participants

Some Senior Projects involve community members as sources or participants. In such cases, it is courteous to provide feedback, a brief summary of findings, or final outcome of the project (approved by the Senior Project Advisor). Volunteers should be thanked for their contribution.

#### D. Plagiarism

Plagiarism means “To steal and pass off as one's own the words or ideas of someone else without crediting the source” (Webster's International Dictionary). A basic requirement of the Senior Project is that the student provide accurate and complete references for all sources of information and ideas contained. When a particular idea is associated with another person(s), a citation is necessary.

Using direct quotes is acceptable when proper citation is provided. However this manner of citing sources should be kept to a minimum. Instead, paraphrasing particular ideas expressed by others is appropriate, with correct citations. Note that paraphrasing means conveying a sense of the original authors' meaning in one's own words, not just substituting some words from the original with different vocabulary.

When in doubt about the need to cite sources, check with advisors. Please see current definitions and policies regarding plagiarism at Cal Poly, <http://www.osrr.calpoly.edu/plagiarism/>

#### E. Liability

In addition to the ethical considerations, Senior Project students and their advisors should exercise prudent judgment in their work. Anyone is subject to a liability suit. The University will defend the faculty advisors to the fullest extent possible, if their behavior was within normal, accepted range. Students, however, are not state employees and do not have the legal defense protection of the University.

## **Overview of Sections for Senior Project Papers (Specific details may vary by project and advisor).**

### Introduction

This chapter incorporates a brief rationale for and synthesis of the entire project (an expanded Abstract). The point is to explain why this project is important to the field, and what the reader may hope to gain from reading it. Think about the audience (i.e. future Cal Poly students).

### Review of Literature (Research Review)

The review of the literature identifies the major contributors, theories, and studies connected to the topic area. It indicates that students have done their “homework” and justified their project.

The review often begins at a general level and moves toward the specific focus of the project. A good review includes the most recent research and writing on the topic. Earlier sources should also be included, especially if they continue to have an impact in the area of study. When several authors refer to an early work, it may be a seminal or “classic” piece signified by its endurance. A literature review may need to include a historical perspective.

### Method (Process)

The purpose of this chapter is to explain *how* the project was accomplished. A research project will include sections on participants, procedures, and measures. A service project includes steps taken to plan, carry out, and evaluate an event. A creative project outlines criteria used in producing and evaluating the work. Explain the method in enough detail so that someone else could duplicate the project.

### Findings (Product, Event, Service)

This chapter presents the results of the project. Because there are several different types of projects done at Cal Poly, this chapter has no set form or length. Empirical studies might take 2 to 5 pages to describe results. Chapters for creative or service projects describe the product or event (and might refer to details provided in the Appendix or attachments, such as photographs or DVDs). An extensive literature review project may omit Chapters 3 and 4.

### Conclusion

The conclusion explains the general significance of the project in summary form, often referring back to major points in the literature review. This chapter may also include recommendations for future research, or for improvements of the product created or service delivered (based on feedback or evaluations provided).

## Submitting Projects

### A Title Page

The first page of the senior project is to be set up as follows:

<p style="text-align: center;">(Title)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A Senior Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Science Degree in (choose: Psychology or Child Development) by</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Your Name)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Psychology and Child Development Department College of Liberal Arts California Polytechnic State University San Luis Obispo</p> <p style="text-align: center;">_____ Quarter, 20 ____</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Faculty Advisor: _____</p>
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### B. Organization

All Senior Projects will be organized as follows:

1. Title Page
2. Acknowledgements and/or Personal/Professional Interests Page (if desired)
3. Table of Contents Page
4. Topically Organized Sections
5. References (listed alphabetically, APA style)
6. Appendices (if any)

## C. Length

Each Senior Project should consist of a minimum of 20 pages of typed, double spaced copy with one inch margins on both sides, and top and bottom. These pages must be written by the student in the student's own words. Long quotations from another author's work, material duplicated from other sources, including figures, tables, charts, references, appendices, etc. will **not** count as part of the minimum 20 pages.

## D. Format Requirements

### 1. Spacing and Indentations

The text of the Senior Project should be double-spaced with the exception of direct quotes of more than four typed lines and reference entries of more than one line. Material in tables and appendices may be single-spaced. Long quotes are indented one (1) inch from the left margin. The margins should be set at one inch.

### 2. Style and Grammar

Students will use the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*, and follow its guidelines. Also see <http://www.apastyle.org/> and <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

A copy of the APA Publication Manual is kept on reserve in the Kennedy Library for 461/462 students. In addition, further assistance is available at [http://libguides.calpoly.edu/psychology\\_childdevelop](http://libguides.calpoly.edu/psychology_childdevelop)

## E. Submission of the Senior Project

Students must submit a paper copy of the Senior Project manuscript to advisors by the date specified by their Senior Project Advisor. At the discretion of the faculty advisor, an electronic copy may be submitted to the Cal Poly Library, see <http://lib.calpoly.edu/seniorprojects/guidelines.html>. Students are encouraged to present their projects in poster form at the Department's Senior Project Symposium.