

Updated September 2009

The Psychology Senior Capstone Experience (SCE) Guide:

Part 1

Included in this part of the Psychology SCE Guide are some tips from past psychology majors that may help you in thinking about your SCE project. Also included is the general format for the SCE project. APA Manual page numbers are provided within the formatting template. You may borrow the APA Manual from the psychology lobby or refer to it in Miller Library. Seniors will want to regularly refer to their SCE syllabus or the psychology bulletin board adjacent to the atrium area of the Toll Science Center for upcoming SCE deadlines/goals. Any questions can be directed to your SCE advisor.

We encourage students to begin conceptualizing their SCE during the Research Design & Advanced Statistics course (PSY 309). Students are then matched with SCE advisors during the 2nd semester of their junior year during the Junior Seminar course. If you are a Psychology major who has questions about the SCE process and have not yet been matched with an advisor, then please come talk to any faculty member in the department. We are here to help you!

SCE Tips from Past Psychology Majors

1. You'll be working with your topic for the whole year; make sure it's something that really interests you!
2. Make sure that your thesis topic applies to your concentration, if you have one.
3. Your senior year flies by, so start reading applicable literature in research journals.
4. Communicate regularly with your thesis advisor to make sure that the two of you are always on the same page.
5. Be open to new ideas and ways of studying what you are interested in.
6. Design an experiment you know how to analyze. Before creating a data file, play with some sample data to make sure that you understand how to analyze it.
7. Be prepared to make adjustments if something goes wrong or circumstances interfere (i.e. snow days).
8. Begin your data collection and analysis as soon as possible. Try to get the largest subject pool possible.
9. The more revisions, the better the thesis.
10. Try to meet, **or beat**, all deadlines.
11. If you want honors on your thesis try to finish early enough in order to present your thesis at a conference – this will set you apart from the rest.
12. Always keep the most updated electronic copy of your thesis in more than one place – mistakes/accidents happen!
13. If you are a double major and you have to do two theses, do yourself a favor and try to finish one in the fall and one in the spring. You will thank yourself later!
14. Practice running experiments on, and giving your final presentation to, your friends. This way you will have experience performing both tasks before the real thing, and your friends can give you suggestions for improvement.
15. Everything will get done. Try not to get discouraged! Remember, this is all a learning experience!

Running head: SHORTENED TITLE IN CAPS

Full Title of Your Senior Capstone Experience Thesis

Your full name

Washington College

KEY WORDS: TYPE IN ALL KEY WORDS PERTAINING TO YOUR SCE THESIS
THAT WOULD BE USEFUL IF SOMEONE WERE SEARCHING YOUR TOPIC

A Senior Capstone Experience thesis submitted to the Washington College Department
of Psychology in partial fulfillment of the Bachelor of Arts/Science degree requirements.

This thesis, *Full Title of your SCE Thesis*, is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts/Science.

Date

type in your full name here

Psychology Student

Student (signature)

type your SCE advisor's name

Faculty Advisor

Faculty Advisor (signature)

Acknowledgements

This page is optional. You can opt to put a personal touch here by thanking those who supported you or provided you with resources during the SCE process.

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Abstract

Add a succinct summary of your study here. There is no indentation of the first line of this paragraph. See p. 14 of your APA Manual (5th ed.) for abstract writing guidelines. Students completing the traditional data-driven thesis will use the guidelines for “a report of an empirical study.” Students completing a nondata-driven thesis will use the guidelines for “a review or theoretical article.”

Your Full SCE Thesis Title

Add your text here. Subheadings are typically helpful in the writing process, and they also can make it easier to read the finished product. It is a good idea to add to the reference list as soon as you mention contents of the reference in the body of the paper. In other words, work on your reference pages as you write.

Data-Driven Option

A good introduction in its final form is **at least** 10 double-spaced pages long. You will begin with a statement of the problem under investigation. You will be sure to define all important terminology. You will review the literature that is closely related to your topic, usually giving more emphasis to work that is most similar to your project. At the close of the introduction, you will clearly state your hypotheses. In addition to the introduction, this SCE thesis option **must** include Method, Results, and Discussion sections.

NonData-Driven Option

This SCE thesis option does not have Method, Results, or Discussion sections. A good paper in its final form is **at least** 30 double-spaced pages of text, not including tables, figures, references, and appendices. You can write either a review article or a theoretical article (APA Manual, pp. 7-8), depending upon your topic of choice and the direction you decide to go with your paper. While your SCE advisor may direct you toward papers to use as samples, there are a number of professional journals that publish review articles. You can model your review after articles in the following journals: Psychological Review; Psychological Bulletin; Advances in Experimental Social

Psychology; and Annual Review of Psychology. Additional journals which may be particularly helpful to Behavioral Neuroscience concentrators are Annual Review of Neuroscience, Nature Reviews Neuroscience, and Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews.

Method

Participants

Thoroughly describe participants/animals. A summary table is often helpful in describing participants/subjects.

Materials

Thoroughly describe apparatus and measures used. Whenever possible, comment on the reliability and validity of the instrumentation.

Procedure

Describe the procedure in enough detail that if someone had your materials and necessary expertise, they could easily replicate your study.

Results

In this section, you will characterize the numerical findings for each of your hypotheses. Do not forget to include descriptive statistics for your variables. Tables are labeled in numerical order, based upon the order they occur in the paper (e.g., Table 1, Table 2, Table 3 . . .). The same is true of Figures. Both Tables and Figures should be placed within this section of the paper and not separated out in the Appendices.

Discussion

Most discussions begin with a comment about whether or not the original hypotheses were supported. Don't forget to explain each hypothesis, the related findings, and the meaning/implications of the findings.

References

Use reverse indenting and double-spacing throughout. Refer to your APA Manual for the appropriate referencing format for different types of sources. The number of resources you need to thoroughly cover your topic ultimately depends on the topic chosen and what is considered acceptable by your SCE advisor.

Choosing your topic is arguably the most important step in the SCE process. Students choosing topics that are more general or methods examining many variables will likely need more resources than someone who chooses a somewhat novel, less researched, and more specific topic.