

**Ph.D. Program Description  
Behavioral and Brain Sciences  
March 2013**

**Objectives and Purposes**

The educational goal of the doctoral program in Behavioral and Brain Sciences (BBS) is to prepare students for a successful career as a scholar in an academic or other professional setting. Although all students are expected to master at least a portion of the core areas in their respective concentrations, and meet the Masters Core requirements of the Department of Psychology, students are encouraged to devise, with the advice and consent of their Advisory Committee, a program of studies best suited to their particular needs and aspirations. In addition to general knowledge and skills that are expected for all graduate students in Psychology, specific programs of study are expected to foster advanced expertise in a specialty area as noted more fully below.

**Major Professor**

Because much of graduate education, especially at the doctoral level, proceeds via the apprenticeship model, the choice of one's Major Professor is an important decision in one's graduate career. Entering students are assigned an initial advisor based upon what seems to be a best match of the student's expressed interests and the specialty area of individual faculty. Because most new students are not familiar with specific areas of faculty interests and their research, and because it is not uncommon for students' academic research interests to undergo significant change (especially in their first year or two), the assignment of the initial advisor should be regarded as provisional. Students should acquaint themselves with faculty members' scholarly expertise in order to secure a Major Professor who best matches their interests and ambitions. Under the current rules of the Graduate School, the Major Professor must be a member of the Graduate Faculty in order to supervise doctoral dissertations but may be a provisional member of Graduate Faculty to direct master theses.

**Advisory Committees**

Membership of the Advisory Committees is negotiated between the student and the Major Professor, and is subject to approval by both the Department's Graduate Coordinator and the Dean of The Graduate School. Membership on Advisory Committees may be changed with the approval of the Major Professor, Graduate Coordinator, and Dean of The Graduate School. The student's Advisory Committees play a large role in developing the educational plans and in the evaluation of the student.

Before the end of the first semester, students must form a three-person Graduate Advisory Committee (GAC). The Major Professor will serve as Chair of this committee, and at least one of the other members must be a member of the UGA Graduate Faculty. In collaboration with the student, the GAC will develop and approve an initial program of study (for the first year) and the first year research project (which will serve as the Master's thesis project for students not yet possessing the M.A. or M.S. degree).

Under the current rules of The Graduate School, **each student must form and officially**

**document a Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC) by the end of the first year of residence.**

A student's DAC will have at least three members of the UGA Graduate Faculty, including the student's Major Professor who will serve as the Committee Chair. These members may be the same as for the GAC, but this is not required. Additional voting members may be appointed to the committee and may include no more than one non-UGA faculty member (who must hold the terminal degree in their field of study; e.g., Ph.D. in Psychology). Whether the DAC consists of three or more members, the Psychology Department requires that at least 2/3 of the DAC are members of the UGA Graduate Faculty and Psychology Department.

### **Program of Study**

A Program of Study basically constitutes a minimal contract between the student and the University specifying the course requirements that will be met before a graduate degree may be awarded. Under current rules, **the M.S. Program of study must be filed with The Graduate School by the end of the second semester of residence, and a preliminary Ph.D. Program of Study by the end of the third year of residence.** The program of Study (and any subsequent changes) is developed in consultation with the Major Professor and must be approved by the appropriate Advisory Committee, the Graduate Coordinator, and the Dean of The Graduate School.

Students in their first and second years in the program must enroll in the Proseminar course for 1 unit each fall and spring semester. This course serves as an introduction to new students to the range of research programs present in the program.

**M.S. Degree:** Although the Psychology department does not offer the M.S. as a terminal degree, it does require that each student complete the M.S. program of study. Modifications to the BBS program of study may be recommended by the student's DAC, and must be approved by vote of the BBS Program Faculty<sup>1</sup>. Normally, such modifications will be approved if the student has elsewhere obtained a Master's degree or equivalent in Psychology or a related discipline based in part on a research project. Whether or not they will pursue the master's degree, all students will discuss with their advisory committee which of the masters' courses they will need to take to meet their own training goals. If a student is not pursuing the master's degree, courses listed below may be applicable to the doctoral program of study, in accord with graduate school requirements.

The M.S. Program of Study must contain at least 30 hours of course work. Six of those hours must be research (PSYC 7000 or 7300) and Quantitative Psychology I (PSYC 6410 or an approved equivalent) is required. At least 9 hours must come from the following list<sup>1</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup>Students who have taken graduate course work elsewhere, or who have had an especially good undergraduate preparation, may be able to exempt some of the specific course requirements for the Master's degree. See your Major Professor for procedures to petition for such exemptions. Some of the requirements (e.g., PSYC6420, Advanced experimental psychology, currently configured as a course in multiple regression, may also be satisfied by analogous courses in other departments.

PSYC 6100 - Cognitive Psychology  
PSYC 6110 - Basic Learning Processes  
PSYC 6130 - Biological Foundations of Behavior  
PSYC 6160 - Sensory Psychology  
PSYC 6180 - History of Psychology  
PSYC 6200 - Advanced Social Psychology  
PSYC 6210 - Individual Differences  
PSYC 6220 - Developmental Psychology  
PSYC 6240 - Advanced Adult Psychopathology  
PSYC 6250 - Psychometrics  
PSYC 6510 - Theories of Personality  
PSYC 6930 - Systems of Psychology  
PSYC 7780 - Animal Cognition

In addition, the student must complete a research project during the first year of study (PSYC 7000 or 8330 credit), present the results of this project to the BBS program faculty and students during the Fall semester of the second year (PSYC 7000 or 9000 credit), and prepare a manuscript or progress report (in a format and timeline acceptable to the Advisory Committee). All students must complete this research requirement regardless of whether they are pursuing a Master's degree. If not pursuing a Master's degree, the course numbers 8330 and 9000 allow the student to use these courses on his/her doctoral program of study.

**Ph.D. Degree:** Award of the doctoral degree is contingent upon (a) a minimum of 30 credit hours in a Ph.D. Program of Study, (b) satisfactory performance on both written and oral Comprehensive Examinations, (c) submission and successful defense of a dissertation prospectus, and (d) completion of a written doctoral dissertation and satisfactory defense thereof in a final oral examination. The Ph.D. Program of Study and other Ph.D. requirements are additional requisites to those needed for the M.S. degree.

The Ph.D. program of study must include:

- 1) PSYC 6420 - Advanced experimental psychology (unless present on the MS program of study)
- 2) One additional statistical methods course (e.g., PSYC 6430 Applied regression methods in Psychology) or PSYC 6440 (Experimental design in psychology) or an analogous course taught in another department)
- 3) At least one additional course on research methods and/or instrumentation (such as PSYC 8330) must be chosen with the advice and consent of the DAC. Additional courses from outside of the Psychology Department can also be chosen with the advice and consent of the DAC.

## **Masters and Doctoral Examinations**

**1) Defense of M.S. Thesis:** After the M.S. thesis has been written and approved by the student's major professor and Advisory Committee, the student must be examined by the Advisory Committee over the contents of the thesis and matters pertinent to the student's master's program of study. The examination will be oral and normally lasts between one and several hours. Following the examination, the Advisory Committee will vote to pass or fail, which will form the basis for whether the student shall be allowed to continue toward the Ph.D. degree. The decision of the Advisory Committee is considered a recommendation and is subject to mandatory review in all cases by the graduate coordinator and department head. This defense can be exempted for students who already have a completed Master's thesis from another institution, and that thesis has been accepted by the student's advisory committee and approved by the graduate coordinator.

**2) Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations (Written and Oral):** Refer to the appropriate sections of the document Comprehensive Examination Policy.

**3) Dissertation Prospectus Oral Examination:** Refer to the appropriate section of the document Dissertation Prospectus Oral Examination.

**4) Final Defense of Dissertation.** Once the Ph.D. dissertation has been approved by the DAC, the student must schedule his/her dissertation defense. This defense of dissertation is announced publicly by The Graduate School and is open to any interested member of the university community. Refer to the Graduate School and Departmental Policies for further details. At the conclusion of this examination, the DAC must vote pass or fail and signify this vote by completion of the appropriate Graduate School forms.

### **Other Requirements**

Beyond the requirements summarized above, there are additional requirements imposed by The Graduate School and the Department of Psychology. These are listed in The Graduate Bulletin (2001-2002 edition), and in the departmental Graduate Studies Policy Manual you received at the time of your initial registration. It is the responsibility of each student to see that these additional requirements are met.

### **Timeline for Completion of Graduate Requirements**

The following is a recommended time-line for completion of graduate requirements. These guidelines will be used during annual evaluations in evaluating a student's progress towards the terminal degree.

Year 1

*Fall* - Form GAC

*Spring* - Form DAC

*Summer* - Complete 1<sup>st</sup> year research project

Year 2

*Fall* - Oral presentation of 1<sup>st</sup> year research project

*Spring* - Submit written paper based on 1<sup>st</sup> year research project before Spring Break

*Spring* - Defend Master's thesis and complete MS degree requirements

Year 3

*Fall* - Obtain approval of written comps topic

*Spring* - Complete written and oral comps

Year 4

*Fall* - Defend Dissertation prospectus

Year 5

Candidates will normatively complete all Ph.D. requirements by the end of the fifth year in residence.

Note concerning priority for departmental assistantships: Students who have completed 4 years or less of graduate study at UGA will be considered in a first pool for ranking for TA's for the following year, and students who have completed 5 or more years will be considered in a second pool for ranking TA's. For purpose of this calculation, "year" = Fall + Spring semesters.

## **Doctoral Examination Policy**

**(Effective Fall Semester 2010)**

Successful completion of Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations (written and oral) and the Dissertation Prospectus Oral Examination are prerequisites to admission to candidacy for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree. Other prerequisites (including application) are listed on page 61 of the Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002. Policy governing each of the three predoctoral examinations is as follows:

### **I. Written Comprehensive Examination**

The doctoral written comprehensive examination will consist of a scholarly, review-type manuscript on a subject and in a format to be approved in advance by a student's doctoral advisory committee (as approved by the Graduate School; hereafter, DAC) OR a "closed-book" written examination, with questions to be determined by the advisory committee. Students will consult with their advisory committee to choose which option to pursue.

#### **A. Manuscript option**

The comprehensive manuscript (CMS) will be a scholarly review of the history and theoretical-methodological significance of a subject that is considered by the student's doctoral advisory committee to be:

- (a) of substantial importance,
- (b) generally reflective of the student's doctoral program of study, and

The CMS will manifest the student's ability to review and to evaluate critically a body of literature, and to formulate the resulting ideas, findings, and conclusions into an appropriately written document consistent with the breadth, depth, and format that would be expected in a journal review article.

Advance approval of the specific CMS subject, objectives, and format must be granted in writing over the signatures of all three members of the DAC before a student may begin work on the CMS. The specific mechanism by which a student's DAC may seek definition and provide approval of a student's proposed CMS subject, objectives, and format will be decided by the members of the DAC. Both the student's CMS proposal and a record of the DAC's final approval will be provided to the student and to each member of the DAC. A student should not begin work on the CMS without prior written approval of all members of the DAC. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the CMS must be submitted for evaluation within six months of the date the proposal is approved and distributed to the student and DAC. Since the CMS represents an examination, it is assumed that all work presented to the committee was conducted independently by the examinee.

The procedure for written comprehensive examination is structured after the peer-review process for journal publications. Evaluation of the CMS will be carried out independently by each member of the DAC as a scholarly peer review, where each committee member's review will be written and submitted to the DAC chairperson. The DAC chair should not comment on the CMS prior to review of the CMS by the entire committee. The DAC chair will then distribute, as a

package, copies of the DAC evaluations to each of the other DAC members and schedule a meeting of the DAC. At this meeting, the DAC will collectively decide on one of the following overall evaluations:

- (1) PASS (“accept as is”);
- (2) CONDITIONAL PASS (“accept pending minor revisions”);
- (3) MARGINAL (“revise and resubmit”);
- (4) FAIL (“reject with no revision acceptable”).

Results of the DAC’s overall evaluation will be recorded by the DAC chairperson and presented to the student in sufficient detail (together with the individual reviews) to provide the student with reasonable, constructive feedback within a reasonable time period. If the outcome of the evaluation is either 2 or 3, the DAC’s written evaluation will also stipulate a reasonable time period within which the revision of the CMS is to be completed. Any revisions of the CMS will be evaluated in the same manner. A cover letter including a point by point response to reviewers’ comments should be included with the revision.

If an overall evaluation of the first CMS is judged by the DAC to be a 4 (FAIL), in accordance with policy, a student may request a second opportunity to take the written comprehensive examination. If the DAC decides to grant this request, a new proposal will then be submitted by the student to the DAC and the process begins a new cycle. However, if a DAC declines to grant a request for a second opportunity (which is its right) the DAC thereby dissolves itself by written announcement to the student and to the Graduate Coordinator of the Department of Psychology. If the DAC dissolves itself, the student must form a new DAC before filing an appeal. It should be noted that if a student is failed due to a violation of University policy regarding academic honesty (e.g., plagiarism), the DAC may refer the matter to the appropriate University judicial body for further action.

#### B. Written examination option

If the student chooses a closed-book examination, the DAC will likewise evaluate the performance using the same 4-point scale, where evaluations 2 or 3 require the student to re-take the examination.

A student has the right to appeal a DAC evaluation. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the graduate coordinator within a time period not later than Friday of the sixth week following the date of the DAC’s announcement of its evaluation. Except in extraordinary circumstances, the graduate coordinator is under no obligation to consider appeals submitted after six weeks.

The appeal, with pertinent documentation justifying a review will be submitted by the student to the graduate coordinator who will then appoint a review committee consisting of three faculty, including the former chair of the DAC, and two subject matter experts (not previous members of the student’s DAC). The graduate coordinator’s role will be mainly administrative, as the situation may warrant.

The purpose of the review committee will be to provide additional expert opinion of the substantive merits of the student's CMS, which the review committee will submit in writing via the Program chair to the new DAC chairperson . The appeal committee is purely advisory to the DAC.

After due consideration of the appeal committee's opinions, the DAC may affirm or rescind the Fail.

## **II. Oral Comprehensive Examination**

After a student has passed the written comprehensive examination, the DAC will schedule and administer an oral examination at the earliest possible date (usually within one semester following the written examination). The DAC will administer the oral examination in a manner consistent with applicable policies of the Graduate School and the Department of Psychology. Policies currently in effect are:

Graduate School (from the *Graduate Bulletin*, 2000-2001, p.61):

“The oral comprehensive examination will be an inclusive examination within the student's field of study. An examination of the student's dissertation prospectus may precede or follow the oral comprehensive examination, but may not take the place of the oral comprehensive examination. All members of the student's advisory committee must be present for the entire period of both oral examinations.”

“The oral comprehensive examination is open to all members of the faculty and shall be announced by the Graduate School. The graduate coordinator must notify the Graduate School of the time and place of examination at least two weeks before the date of the examination. This notice must be in writing.”

“Following each examination, written and oral, each member of the advisory committee will cast a written vote of pass or fail on the examination. An abstention is not an appropriate vote for the comprehensive exam. Approval of each exam can have no more than one dissenting vote. The results of both examinations will be reported to the Graduate School.”

Departmental policy:

The oral comprehensive examination shall begin with one question from each committee member, such questions having been submitted in writing to the major professor no later than one week before the oral examination. The order of presentation of the questions shall be determined by the major professor. When these initial questions have been addressed by the candidate, the floor is then opened for additional questions from the committee members, as they see fit. At the conclusion of the oral examination, an immediate, written, secret ballot will be taken and its results announced by the major professor. General discussion of the examination and completion of the required form with the signatures of the committee members will follow. The Committee Chair can, if he/she so chooses, provide the student with a copy of the initial questions thirty (30) minutes prior to the beginning of the oral examination.

### **III. Dissertation Prospectus Oral Examination**

The dissertation prospectus shall be submitted to the DAC in the traditional format of a dissertation proposal (e.g., introduction, literature review, rationale, proposed research/analysis methodology, etc.) developed under the direction of the student's major professor and in consultation with the other members of the student's DAC. After the DAC has reviewed and approved the student's prospectus, the oral examination will be scheduled and announced to the Department of Psychology.

According to Departmental Policy (2 Oct. 1985), "the dissertation prospectus oral must be publicized throughout the department." "Draft proposals, approved by the major professor, must reach ... committee members 30 days before a proposed oral date. The committee is expected to reach a majority decision of 'Approved to Proceed with the Oral Examination' or 'Disapproved' not later than two weeks after receiving the written proposal." The oral examination will be conducted by the members of the student's DAC and shall be focused on assessing both the proposed research and the student's preparation to carry it out successfully.

### **IV. Dissertation defense**

The DAC will have *three* weeks to review the dissertation, in accord with the Graduate School Policy Manual. Once the DAC approves the dissertation as ready for oral defense, the student must notify the graduate school at least two weeks before the scheduled date of the oral defense of the dissertation. For additional details, see the Graduate School Policy Manual.