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Ph.D. Program Description
Behavioral and Brain Sciences
March 2016

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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.

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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**

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

54 **Program of Study**

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

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

68
69 **M.S. Degree:** Although the Psychology department does not offer the M.S. as a terminal degree,
70 it recommends that each student complete the M.S. program of study. Modifications to the BBS
71 program of study for the M.S. degree may be recommended by the student's DAC, and must be
72 approved by vote of the BBS Program Faculty¹. Normally, such modifications will be approved
73 if the student has elsewhere obtained a Master's degree or equivalent in Psychology or a related
74 discipline based in part on a research project. Whether or not they will pursue the master's
75 degree, all students will discuss with their advisory committee which of the masters' courses
76 they will need to take to meet their own training goals. If a student is not pursuing the master's
77 degree, courses listed below may be applicable to the doctoral program of study, in accord with
78 graduate school requirements.

79
80 The M.S. Program of Study must contain at least 30 hours of course work. Six of those hours
81 must be research (PSYC 7000 or 7300) and a course in quantitative methods/ experimental
82 design (PSYC 6420, 6430, or 6440 or an approved equivalent) is required. At least 9 hours must
83 come from the following list¹:

¹Students 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.

- 84
- 85 PSYC 6100 - Cognitive Psychology
- 86 PSYC 6110 - Basic Learning Processes
- 87 PSYC 6130 - Biological Foundations of Behavior
- 88 PSYC 6160 - Sensory Psychology
- 89 PSYC 6180 - History of Psychology
- 90 PSYC 6200 - Advanced Social Psychology
- 91 PSYC 6210 - Individual Differences
- 92 PSYC 6220 - Developmental Psychology
- 93 PSYC 6240 - Advanced Adult Psychopathology
- 94 PSYC 6250 - Psychometrics
- 95 PSYC 6510 - Theories of Personality
- 96 PSYC 6930 - Systems of Psychology
- 97 PSYC 7780 - Animal Cognition
- 98

99 In addition, the student must complete a research project during the first year of study (PSYC
100 7000 or 8330 credit), present the results of this project to the BBS program faculty and students
101 during the Fall semester of the second year (PSYC 7000 or 9000 credit), and prepare a
102 manuscript or progress report (in a format and timeline acceptable to the Advisory Committee).
103 All students must complete this research requirement regardless of whether they are pursuing a
104 Master's degree. If not pursuing a Master's degree, the course numbers 8330 and 9000 allow the
105 student to use these courses on his/her doctoral program of study.
106

107 **Ph.D. Degree:** Award of the doctoral degree is contingent upon (a) a minimum of 30 credit
108 hours in a Ph.D. Program of Study, (b) satisfactory performance on both written and oral
109 Comprehensive Examinations, (c) submission and successful defense of a dissertation
110 prospectus, and (d) completion of a written doctoral dissertation and satisfactory defense thereof
111 in a final oral examination. The Ph.D. Program of Study and other Ph.D. requirements are
112 additional requisites to those needed for the M.S. degree.
113

114 The Ph.D. program of study must include:

- 115
- 116 1) PSYC 6420 - Advanced experimental psychology (unless present on the MS program
117 of study)
- 118
- 119 2) One additional statistical methods course (e.g., PSYC 6430 Applied regression
120 methods in Psychology) or PSYC 6440 (Experimental design in psychology) or an
121 analogous course taught in another department)
- 122
- 123 3) At least one additional course on research methods and/or instrumentation (such as
124 PSYC 8330) must be chosen with the advice and consent of the DAC. Additional
125 courses from outside of the Psychology Department can also be chosen with the advice
126 and consent of the DAC.
- 127
- 128

129 **Masters and Doctoral Examinations**

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

141
142 **2) Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations (Written and Oral):** Refer to the appropriate
143 sections of the document Comprehensive Examination Policy.

144
145 **3) Dissertation Prospectus Oral Examination:** Refer to the appropriate section of the
146 document Dissertation Prospectus Oral Examination.

147
148 **4) Final Defense of Dissertation.** Once the Ph.D. dissertation has been approved by the DAC,
149 the student must schedule his/her dissertation defense. This defense of dissertation is announced
150 publicly by The Graduate School and is open to any interested member of the university
151 community. Refer to the Graduate School and Departmental Policies for further details. At the
152 conclusion of this examination, the DAC must vote pass or fail and signify this vote by
153 completion of the appropriate Graduate School forms.

154
155
156 **Other Requirements**

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

162
163
164 **Timeline for Completion of Graduate Requirements**

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

168
169 Year 1
170 *Fall* - Form GAC
171 *Spring* - Form DAC
172 *Summer* - Complete 1st year research project

173

174 Year 2
175 *Fall* - Oral presentation of 1st year research project
176 *Spring* - Submit written paper based on 1st year research project before Spring Break
177 *Spring* - Defend Master's thesis and complete MS degree requirements
178
179 Year 3
180 *Fall* - Obtain approval of written comps topic or schedule examination
181 *Spring* - Complete written and oral comps
182
183 Year 4
184 *Fall* - Defend Dissertation prospectus
185
186 Year 5
187 Candidates will normatively complete all Ph.D. requirements by the end of the fifth year
188 in residence.
189
190 Note concerning priority for departmental assistantships: Students who have completed 4 years
191 or less of graduate study at UGA will be considered in a first pool for ranking for TA's for the
192 following year, and students who have completed 5 or more years will be considered in a second
193 pool for ranking TA's. For purpose of this calculation, "year" = Fall + Spring semesters.

194 **Doctoral Examination Policy**
195 **(Effective Fall Semester 2010)**
196

197 Successful completion of Doctoral Comprehensive Examinations (written and oral) and the
198 Dissertation Prospectus Oral Examination are prerequisites to admission to candidacy for the
199 Doctor of Philosophy Degree. Other prerequisites (including application) are listed on page 61
200 of the Graduate Bulletin, 2001-2002. Policy governing each of the three predoctoral
201 examinations is as follows:
202

203 **I. Written Comprehensive Examination**

204 The doctoral written comprehensive examination will consist of a scholarly, review-type
205 manuscript on a subject and in a format to be approved in advance by a student's doctoral
206 advisory committee (as approved by the Graduate School; hereafter, DAC) OR a "closed-book"
207 written examination, with questions to be determined by the advisory committee. Students will
208 consult with their advisory committee to choose which option to pursue.
209

210 **A. Manuscript option**
211

212 The comprehensive manuscript (CMS) will be a scholarly review of the history and
213 theoretical-methodological significance of a subject that is considered by the student's doctoral
214 advisory committee to be:
215

216 (a) of substantial importance,

217 (b) generally reflective of the student's doctoral program of study, and

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

222 Advance approval of the specific CMS subject, objectives, and format must be granted in writing
223 over the signatures of all three members of the DAC before a student may begin work on the
224 CMS. The specific mechanism by which a student's DAC may seek definition and provide
225 approval of a student's proposed CMS subject, objectives, and format will be decided by the
226 members of the DAC. Both the student's CMS proposal and a record of the DAC's final
227 approval will be provided to the student and to each member of the DAC. A student should not
228 begin work on the CMS without prior written approval of all members of the DAC. Unless there
229 are extenuating circumstances, the CMS must be submitted for evaluation within six months of
230 the date the proposal is approved and distributed to the student and DAC. Since the CMS
231 represents an examination, it is assumed that all work presented to the committee was conducted
232 independently by the examinee.
233

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

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

- 242
- 243 (1) PASS (“accept as is”);
 - 244 (2) CONDITIONAL PASS (“accept pending minor revisions”);
 - 245 (3) MARGINAL (“revise and resubmit”);
 - 246 (4) FAIL (“reject with no revision acceptable”).

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

254

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

265

266 B. Written examination option

267

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

271

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

276

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

282

283 The purpose of the review committee will be to provide additional expert opinion of the

284 substantive merits of the student’s CMS, which the review committee will submit in writing via
285 the Program chair to the new DAC chairperson. The appeal committee is purely advisory to the
286 DAC.

287
288 After due consideration of the appeal committee’s opinions, the DAC may affirm or rescind the
289 Fail.

290
291

292 **II. Oral Comprehensive Examination**

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

298

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

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

305

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

310

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

315

316 Departmental policy:

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

327

328 **III. Dissertation Prospectus Oral Examination**

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

335
336 According to Departmental Policy (2 Oct. 1985), "the dissertation prospectus oral must be
337 publicized throughout the department." "Draft proposals, approved by the major professor, must
338 reach ... committee members 30 days before a proposed oral date. The committee is expected to
339 reach a majority decision of 'Approved to Proceed with the Oral Examination' or 'Disapproved'
340 not later than two weeks after receiving the written proposal." The oral examination will be
341 conducted by the members of the student's DAC and shall be focused on assessing both the
342 proposed research and the student's preparation to carry it out successfully.

343

344 IV. Dissertation defense

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