Montana State University Department of Psychology

Graduate Student Handbook

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I. The Doctoral Program in Psychology at Montana State University

Overview

Montana State University's Doctoral Program in Psychology is a full-time program aimed at preparing students for research-oriented careers. The program will provide students with closely mentored independent research experiences, coursework, and training in the teaching of psychology. Students who successfully complete the Ph.D. program will possess the expertise to conduct ethical psychological research and effectively communicate psychological theory and research to diverse audiences.

Program Objectives

Objective #1: Develop Broad Knowledge and Expertise in Psychological Science: Students receive educational instruction from faculty in core areas of psychological science and receive training in both research methodology and statistical analysis.

Objective #2: Develop Knowledge and Expertise in Specific Research Areas: Students acquire most of their specialized research experience and knowledge working one-on-one with their faculty research chair and committee members. The Department of Psychology faculty believes that the research enterprise should be collaborative in the sense that research ideas are shared. Students are expected to share ownership of the research in which they are involved.

Objective #3: Develop Knowledge and Expertise in Ethical Conduct of Research and Diversity in Psychological Science: Students will complete an ethical training course as part of their core training and will learn the ethical principles and codes of conduct set forth by the Department, University, and national organizations, such as the American Psychological Association (APA). These practices will include the ethical treatment of research participants, the ethical handling of research data, and the support of diversity and inclusiveness.

Objective #4: Effectively Communicate Psychological Knowledge and Research: Students will work with the faculty to present research findings at regional, national, and international research conferences and submit written manuscripts for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals. Students are also required to orally present original research to the faculty and other graduate students annually during weekly Department seminars. Finally, students are required to complete a Teaching of Psychology course and will have the opportunity to independently instruct a course or lab within the Department of Psychology.

II. Financial Support

Stipend Support

Students in the doctoral program can expect to receive a stipend of approximately $13,499.00 per year with an additional $1,300 supplement for insurance. The exact stipend amount in any given academic year depends on funding for that year. We cannot typically guarantee stipend amounts for any particular year until the end of the fiscal year on June 30th.

Students receive stipends for the work they do in an assigned assistantship. A graduate teaching or research assistantship is at maximum a 19 hour per week assignment. Stipends can be prorated for assignments that are less than 19hr per week, resulting in a stipend below $13,499.00 per year. The specific requirements of a teaching assistantship depend a great deal on the particular course/faculty assignment and may include (but is not limited to) proctoring exams, grading exams and/or papers, teaching labs or recitations, holding office hours, and organizing class materials. The exact class assignment you receive is determined by the Graduate Coordinator in consultation with the faculty. The duties expected of students working in a research assistantship are set by the faculty member funding that assistantship (commonly the student's research chair).

Stipends are not guaranteed and are linked to performance. Students who receive unsatisfactory performance evaluations (see Evaluation Policy) can be denied stipend support.

Tuition Waivers

In addition to stipends, we have historically been able to provide students with tuition waivers (both in-state and out-of-state) for 6 credits in the fall semester and 6 credits in the spring semester for a total of 12 credits required for the first year of the program. For the following years, we expect to be able to offer tuition waivers for students with Montana residency. Please note that tuition waivers only cover the cost of tuition - you will be responsible for paying any applicable university fees. The tuition waivers for any academic year are not allocated to the department until the middle of July, so we are typically unable to commit tuition waivers for students until August of that particular academic year.

Residency

To be eligible for a tuition waiver after the first year in the program, students are required to gain state residency. We strongly encourage students to do this as soon as possible after arriving to the state. For residency policies and requirements, see: http://www.montana.edu/registrar/Residency.html

Independent Fellowships and Grants

Students are strongly encouraged to apply for internal and external fellowships and grants to support their research and graduate training. For example, the department considers applications for the Yates Award, which can be used to fund dissertation research. All of these awards range in amount, but can be used to support thesis and dissertation research costs, as well as living expenses (in some cases). Writing grant proposals is a critically important skill in psychological science. Even when unfunded, the grant writing process can sharpen one's thinking about a particular issue and facilitate the development of stronger research agendas. Students should consult their research chairs about relevant funding mechanisms and application processes.

Professional Travel Awards

We expect and encourage students to be active presenters at professional conferences. We also want students to take advantage of professional workshops that are offered through various national and international organizations. The Department of Psychology, the College of Letters & Science, and the Graduate School all provide monetary awards to offset the costs involved with such activities. Students should consult with their research chairs about these mechanisms and sources of support.

III. Department of Psychology Doctoral Program Requirements

Psychology Ph.D. Program Timeline

Although the graduate program in Psychological Science is somewhat individualized for each student, there is a general timeline that can be used as a guide to understand expectations for timely progress. In most cases, all coursework and research requirements can be completed in 4-5 years as a full-time student. The outline below describes an example timeline for students entering the program with no previous graduate coursework completed. Students entering the program with a Master's Degree may have some of these requirements waived (see Transfer Policy) and may take less time to complete the program, although they are not required to.

Year 1

    Semester 1
        Actively engage in research (including first-year project)
        Coursework (PSYX502, Elective)
    Semester 2
        Actively engage in research (including first-year project)
        Complete oral presentation of first-year research for department
        Identify plan for Master's research
        Identify Graduate Committee for Thesis/Comprehensive Exams/Dissertation
        Coursework (including PSYX501, Elective)
    Summer
        Actively engage in research
        Prepare thesis proposal

Year 2

> Semester 1
>> *Actively engage in research*
>> *Propose and conduct Master's Thesis Project*
>> *Coursework (2 Electives, 3cr of PSYX590)*
>
> Semester 2
>> *Actively engage in research*
>> *Complete and defend Master's Thesis Project[1]*
>> *File a program of study form with the graduate school*
>> *Complete Graduation Application for MS.*
>> *Coursework (Elective, 7cr of PSYX590)*
>
> Summer
>> *Actively engage in research*
>> **Defend Master's Thesis if necessary*

Year 3

> Semester 1
>> *Actively engage in research*
>> *Identify plan for comprehensive examinations with research chair*
>> *Identify committee for comprehensive examinations/dissertation (if changes are needed)*
>> *Propose comprehensive exam activity and receive committee approval*
>> *Coursework (Elective, additional methods/statistics course)*
>
> Semester 2
>> *Actively engage in research*
>> *Complete comprehensive examination[2]*
>> *Coursework (Electives)*
>
> Summer
>> *Actively engage in research*
>> *Write dissertation proposal*

Years 4-5

>> *Actively engage in research*
>> *Coursework (Teaching of Psychology, PSYX690)*
>> *Propose dissertation and receive committee approval*
>> *Complete Graduation Application for Ph.D.*
>> *Complete and Defend dissertation (Report form)*

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[1] Each student's deadline for completing the Master's Thesis Project is the last day of the Fall semester during the student's third year in the program. Failure to complete the project by this deadline is grounds for dismissal from the program.

[2] Each student's deadline for completing the Comprehensive Examination is the start of that student's fourth year in the program. Thus, while we generally expect most students to complete the exam prior to the end of the 3rd year, we recognize that some student's may take longer. In these cases, a summer defense date must be scheduled prior to the end of the second year.

Program Course Requirements

Required Courses.   **Credits**

PSYX 501 (Advanced Research Design and Analysis)   3 credits
PSYX 502 (Advanced Statistical Analysis)   3 credits
PSYX 505 (Teaching of Psychology, 2 credits required)   2 credits

1 additional graduate-level research methods/statistics course*   3 credits

> *This course can be taken inside or outside the Psych Department. Students should consult with their research chair about the selection of an appropriate course.

Elective Courses.

7 elective courses (21 credits) are required.   21 credits

- Up to 6 elective credits can be taken from outside the Psych. Department
- 9 elective credits must be taken from the Psych. Department after the Thesis Defense.
- Students must take at least 3 elective credits from each Core Area (see below).

Research Credits.

PSYX 590 (Master's thesis)   10 credits
PSYX 690 (Doctoral dissertation)   18 credits

Total   60 credits

Currently Offered Psychology Courses.

*Course number for these courses may change in future offerings.

Statistics and Methods Courses
PSYX 501 (Advanced Design and Analysis)
PSYX 502 (Advanced Statistical Analysis)
PSYX 594* (Structural Equation Modeling)

Cognitive Psychology Core Courses
PSYX 541 (Cognitive Processes)
PSYX 542 (Leaning)
PSYX 543 (Memory)

Developmental Psychology Core Courses
PSYX 594* (Developmental Psychology)

Health Psychology Core Courses
PSYX 510 (Health Psychology)
PSYX 539 (Physiological Processes)

Social Psychology Core Courses
PSYX 544 (Social Psychology)
PSYX 546 (Social Cognition)

The M.S. (en route to the Ph.D.) in Psychology and Thesis Project

The Thesis Project. All students[3] accepted into the Ph.D. program will complete a Master's thesis project. The thesis project should be guided by theory and relevant past research, and test theoretical predictions or theoretically viable applications. Although new data collection is not required, the thesis project must be *empirical*, typically involving data collected from one or more studies.

The official Department of Psychology deadline for completing the thesis project is the last day of the Fall Semester in the student's third year in the program. Failure to meet this deadline can result in the faculty recommending the student for dismissal from the program.

Thesis Proposal Meeting. In conjunction with the research chair, students will form a Graduate committee of at least four (4) faculty members to review the research proposal. One (1) member of the committee may be from outside the Department of Psychology, but all members must be tenured or tenure-track assistant, associate, or full professors. Students will present a brief presentation summarizing the thesis proposal for the committee, including the problem to be investigated, relevant background literature, and plans for addressing potential issues or problems with the proposed work. If new data collection is proposed, data collection cannot begin prior to committee approval. In all cases, data analyses cannot begin prior to committee approval. The majority of the meeting should be reserved for the committee members to react to the proposal, ask questions about the project and/or its inception, and offer suggestions for the proposed work. Students are responsible for organizing this meeting and securing a meeting place (for approximately 2 hours), and providing the written thesis proposal to all committee members, at least two weeks prior to the actual meeting date. The written thesis proposal must include a formal literature review, methods section, and analysis plan section.

Thesis Defense Meeting. The final oral examination for the M.S. in Psychological Science will be conducted by the Graduate Committee and comprises both public and private formats. The candidate will present an oral public summary of the thesis research that may be attended by any member of the MSU community. Students are responsible for organizing this meeting and securing a meeting place (for approximately 2-3 hours), and providing the written thesis to all committee members, at least two weeks prior to the actual meeting date. A round of questions directly concerning the research will follow the oral presentation. Then, the candidate will meet in a closed forum with the committee. The candidate will be excused at the conclusion of questioning and the committee will vote on the acceptability of the Master's thesis project on the basis of the written thesis and oral examination. The results of the committee meeting will be reported to the Graduate School. If the thesis is approved, it is the student's responsibility to work with the Graduate School to ensure that all requirements for the degree have been met.

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[3] Students entering the program with a Master's degree in Psychology can have the thesis project requirement waived. See our Transfer Policy for details.

The Thesis Project: Recommended Timeline.

Year 1:
- Graduate students should hone interests and gain expertise in a given research area through involvement in research with their Research Chair.
- With input from the Graduate Committee, the student should identify a narrow topic of interest for the thesis project by the end of the spring semester of their first year.

Summer:
- Over the summer, faculty recommend the student should further refine this topic of interest into specific research questions, read deeply on relevant theory and findings, and synthesize a sound way to empirically test specific research hypotheses.
- With guidance and feedback from the Research Chair, the faculty encourage the student to complete a draft of the Introduction, Hypotheses, Method, and Analysis Plan prior to beginning of the 2nd year.

Year 2

Fall:
- The student should complete a *final* version of the written thesis proposal, which includes the Introduction, Hypotheses, Method, and Analysis Plan for the thesis project. The proposal should also include all study materials (questionnaires, instruments) in an Appendix if they can be presented in paper form. The student's Research Chair determines when the written thesis proposal is in its final form. The student may not disseminate the written thesis proposal without approval from the Research Chair.
- The student must provide a copy of the final version of the written thesis proposal to the Graduate Committee at least two weeks prior to the proposal meeting. The student is responsible for scheduling this meeting with the committee and reserving a meeting room for two hours.
- As a standard, the research proposed by the student should have the *potential*—as determined by the student's Graduate Committee—for publication, either alone or in combination with the results of other empirical investigations.

Spring:
- If applicable, the student should strive to finish data collection for the thesis project early in this semester.
- The student will complete a *final* version of the written thesis, which includes all sections of the thesis paper, including the Abstract, Introduction, Hypotheses, Method, (actual) Results, Discussion, References, and Tables and Figures if needed. The student's Research Chair determines when the written thesis is in its final form. The student may not disseminate the final written thesis without approval from the Research Chair.
- The student must provide a copy of the final version of the written thesis to the Graduate Committee at least two weeks prior to the thesis-defense meeting. The student is responsible for scheduling this meeting with the committee, communicating the meeting details to the graduate coordinator, reserving a meeting room for approximately 2-3 hours. The first 45 minutes of this meeting is open to the public, and all faculty and graduate students in the department of psychology will be invited to attend.
- For an official spring graduation, the Graduate Committee approved thesis is due to the Graduate School at the date specified by the Graduate School (typically 2-3 weeks prior to the end of the semester), and the last day students can defend the thesis for a spring graduation is 1 week before that date.
- The thesis <u>must</u> be defended by the last day of the Fall Semester in a student's third year. In most cases, the thesis will be defended well before this deadline. A failure to meet this deadline is grounds for dismissal from the program (see Evaluation Policy).

The Comprehensive Examination

Objectives of the Comprehensive Examination. The comprehensive examination will be used to determine a student's eligibility to be considered a candidate for a doctoral degree. Rather than being purely evaluative, the objective is to provide students with an educational opportunity to review, integrate, and apply the range of knowledge expected of a doctoral candidate in Psychological Science. These include:

- A broad understanding of theory and research in their broad area of study
- A deep understanding of theory and research regarding a specialized topic in Psychology
- Proficiency with designing, implementing, and evaluating research in their area of study
- Proficiency with analyzing and interpreting data and communicating research findings
- Practical knowledge of the Ethical Principles of the American Psychological Association

***Eligibility for the Comprehensive Examination**.* To be eligible to take the comprehensive examination, students must meet the following criteria.

- Completion of 31 semester hours of coursework
- Completion of the Thesis requirements
- An approved statement of specialization
- An approved plan of study
- A minimum grade point average of 3.0 in graduate coursework
- Satisfactory annual progress reports
- Appointment of a comprehensive examination committee (if change is needed)
- Approval of the research chair

***Nature of the Comprehensive Examination**.* The precise nature of each student's comprehensive examination requirement will be determined jointly by the student and their research chair. The selection of a comprehensive examination format will result from careful consideration of a student's goals, abilities, and needs. The student and their research chair will collaboratively identify a comprehensive examination format (from the options below) that best meets these goals, abilities, and needs.

Once a format is selected, the student will prepare the information necessary for a proposal meeting with their Graduate Committee (see below). The student will send this information to the committee at least 2 weeks prior to a proposal meeting that all will attend. The nature of the proposal meeting will depend on the exam format, but its purpose is to ensure that the committee finds the proposed activity acceptable for the comprehensive examination requirement. Please consult with your research chair for details about preparing for the comprehensive exam proposal meeting and the formal defense meeting.

Comprehensive Examination Format Options.

1. Written Examination, with Oral Defense. This comprehensive exam format will require students to complete (and pass) a take-home written examination, followed by an oral defense. In preparation, the student will prepare a reading list aimed at integrating their proposed area of expertise with broader psychological theory/theories. The reading list will be sent to their committee for approval. The committee may suggest additional readings or the omission of readings proposed by the student before approving the final list. Once the list has been approved, the student and the committee set a date for the take-home examination which will be no later than 6 months after the reading list has been approved.

   On the date of the exam, the student will be sent their questions and will have 2 week(s) to comprehensively answer each question and submit the final version to their committee. The student must answer questions without assistance from other scholars, including their primary advisory, peers, and other faculty. Two weeks after completed answers are submitted, a formal oral defense meeting will be held with the committee, which will evaluate the students performance in pass/fail terms.

2. Theoretical Review Paper, with Oral Defense. This comprehensive exam format will require students to write a review paper that integrates research and theory on some topic germane to the student's interests. Students who select this option must prepare a detailed outline of the review paper and submit that outline to their committee prior to a proposal meeting. During the meeting, the committee will work with the student to refine the outline and ensure that the proposed paper will be acceptable as a comprehensive exam. The committee may require revisions before they approve the planned activity. Once the committee approves the project, the student will have 6 months to successfully write the paper and submit the final version to their committee. The student must write the paper without assistance from other scholars, including their research chair, peers, and other faculty. The student will submit a final draft of the paper to their committee at least 2 weeks prior to a formal oral defense meeting. The committee will evaluate the student's paper and performance at the defense meeting in pass/fail terms.

3. External Grant/Fellowship Application, with Oral Defense. This comprehensive exam format will require students to write and submit a proposal for an external grant and/or fellowship. NIH and NSF awards will be the most common award type to fulfill this requirement, but other agencies may offer awards that are acceptable. The student must provide their committee with the RFP announcement for the award and a detailed outline of the proposal that they intends to submit. The committee must approve the award mechanism and the proposed outline as acceptable before the student can utilize it to fulfill the comprehensive exam requirement. Approval should be received during an informal proposal meeting where the committee and student discuss the nature of the proposed activities. The committee may require revisions before they approve the planned activity. The student should keep all award deadlines in mind when planning for this comps format and consult with their advisor about the feasibility of completing it well before any committee meetings are scheduled.

   Once the committee approves the proposed activity, the student must complete the full award application and submit it to their committee at least 2 weeks prior to a formal defense meeting. The defense meeting must be scheduled at least 3 weeks prior to the application deadline. These

deadlines will ensure that the defense meeting will be constructive in that the student will have an opportunity to make changes to their application based on feedback delivered at the meeting. The committee will evaluate the application and performance at the defense meeting in pass/fail terms.

4. <u>First-Author Empirical Paper, with Oral Defense.</u> This comprehensive exam format will require students to write and submit a first-authored paper for publication. This option requires that the student already has publishable findings from a study (or studies) that they played a significant role in developing. The determination of whether a set of findings is publishable will made by the Faculty member (likely the student's research chair) who oversaw the study. If the findings are deemed suitable, the student must submit a formal outline of the proposed paper to the Graduate Committee at least 2 weeks prior to a proposal meeting. The proposal must include either new data or new hypotheses regarding prior data if based of the students M.S. thesis. During the proposal meeting, the committee will work with the student to refine the outline and ensure that the proposed paper will be acceptable as a comprehensive exam. The committee may require revisions before they approve the planned activity.

Once the committee approves the project, the student must write the paper and submit the final version to their committee. The student will submit a final draft of the paper to their committee at least 2 weeks prior to a formal oral defense meeting. The committee will evaluate the student's paper and performance at the defense meeting in pass/fail terms.

The comprehensive exam, while certainly entailing a depth component, is also meant to assess a student's breadth of knowledge. Thus, during the oral defense, committee members may ask questions about topics/issues that all students in the program are expected to be familiar with.

Evaluation. The written and oral comprehensive exams will be evaluated independently by each member of the student's Graduate Committee. Ratings will be on a pass/fail basis. To pass the written exam, the majority of the committee will assign "pass" ratings. If the majority does not agree that the student has passed the written exam, the student has the option to retake the exam one time, in either the same or a different format. If the second written-exam attempt does not receive a majority "pass" rating, the Faculty will recommend dismissal from the program. After passing the written exam, the student will have an oral exam. To pass the oral exam, the majority of the committee will assign "pass" ratings. If the majority does not agree that the student has passed the oral exam, the student may retake the exam one time if they passed the written exam in the first attempt. The comprehensive exams must be passed before a student can advance to candidacy.

The Ph.D. in Psychology and Dissertation Project

Advancement to Ph.D. Candidacy. A student will be formally considered a candidate for the Ph.D. in Psychological Science when they has successfully passed the Comprehensive Examination requirement of the program. Formal work on the Dissertation Project cannot begin until the Comprehensive Examination is passed.

The Dissertation Project. The doctoral dissertation is a major project that demonstrates the student's ability to carry out independent research and scholarship. The finished project should be commensurate with the expected quality of published works in one's area of research.

     Dissertation Committee. After advancing to candidacy, students may change the faculty members on the Graduate Committee by completing a change in committee form. By default, the Graduate committee will remain the same. At any time, a student, or any faculty member on the Graduate Committee, may ask the Graduate School to assign a "graduate representative" to ensure that all procedures are carried out fairly and according to the policies set by the Graduate School. However, a graduate representative is not required to serve on the committee.

     Dissertation Proposal, Proposal Meeting, and Plan. All students must complete a dissertation proposal requirement that consists of a written proposal and a subsequent meeting with the Graduate Committee. The specific format of the proposal draft (e.g., short memo or longer document) and the format of the committee meeting (e.g., formal defense or open discussion) can be negotiated between the student, their research chair, and the Graduate Committee. However, all proposals must include a detailed methods section that describes the proposed dissertation project.

The Proposal meeting must result in a summary document (dissertation plan) that is a minimum of two pages that defines the plan formulated by the student and the committee regarding (at least) the topic and scope of the dissertation, method and scope of data collection, and analysis strategies. Students will work with their advisor regarding the specific format of this summary document, but work on the dissertation cannot begin until all committee members have approved the dissertation plan. This formal dissertation plan serves important functions.

- It documents agreed upon and shared expectations regarding the dissertation's scope, design, data collection, and analysis.
- It provides a written report of an agreed upon plan to assist committee members who have been added to the project after the proposal phase (if necessary).

     Written Dissertation. The dissertation research should be carried out as described in the dissertation plan. When the research has been completed, students will write a formal dissertation report. This report should be written in accordance with the dissertation formatting guidelines set forth by the Graduate School. The student should complete a final version of the written dissertation, which includes all sections of the dissertation paper, including the Abstract, Introduction, Hypotheses, Methods, (actual) Results, Discussion, References, and Tables and Figures if needed. The student's primary advisor determines when the dissertation is in its final form. The student may not disseminate the written dissertation without approval from the student's primary advisor.

     Oral Dissertation Defense. The student must provide a copy of the final version of the written dissertation to the full Graduate Committee at least two weeks prior to the oral defense meeting.* The

student is responsible for scheduling this meeting with the committee, communicating the meeting details to the graduate coordinator and MSU Today, and reserving a meeting room for approximately 2-3 hours. The first 45 minutes of this meeting is open to the public, and all faculty and graduate students in the department of psychology will be invited to attend.

During the oral defense, the candidate will present an oral public summary of the dissertation research that may be attended by any member of the MSU community. A round of questions directly concerning the research will follow this presentation. Then, candidates will meet in a closed forum with the committee during which questions about the research or broader topics in Psychology may be covered. The candidate will be excused at the conclusion of questioning and the committee will vote on the acceptability of the dissertation project on the basis of the written thesis and oral examination. The committee may require revisions to the written document and/or a second oral defense if it feels that the student's performance was not satisfactory.

The final results of the committee meeting will be reported to the Graduate School. If the dissertation is approved, it is the student's responsibility to work with the Graduate School to ensure that all requirements for the degree have been met.

*For an official spring graduation, the dissertation project must be successfully defended and turned in to the Graduate School by the deadlines set by the Graduate School (typically 2-3 weeks prior to the end of the spring semester). Please note that the Graduate School will require the student to enroll (and pay) for credit hours if the dissertation is defended after the spring semester deadline for official spring graduations.

IV. Department of Psychology Policies and Procedures

Evaluation Policy

Although most students will earn a Master's of Science (M.S.) degree in Psychology while completing the requirements for the Ph.D., earning the M.S. degree does not guarantee continuation in the Ph.D. program. Students may be required to leave the program after or before earning their M.S. degree, if the Department of Psychology faculty decides that the student will not likely be successful as a doctoral-level student. Such decisions will be guided and supported by annual performance evaluations, the student's ability to pass the comprehensive examination, and/or evidence that the student has failed to meet one of the department's specific criteria required to remain in the program.

Performance will be evaluated by the Psychology Department Faculty in the following 2 areas: (a) assistantship performance (evaluated each semester that a student is assigned an assistantship), (b) progress toward the PhD degree & research (evaluated each spring, unless circumstances warrant otherwise; see below). Evaluation in these areas will be used as the criteria for decisions about subsequent graduate assistantships and continuation in the program. It is important for students to understand that continued financial support is contingent upon satisfactory performance in the program and GTA/GRA performance. Failure to make satisfactory progress, as rated by a 2/3 majority of the tenure-track Faculty and/or the Dean of the Graduate School, may result in the loss of financial assistance or suspension from the program.

Evaluation Areas. Students can receive evaluation ratings of "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" progress or performance. Unsatisfactory ratings result in departmental probation, or probationary status with the graduate school.

- Assistantship Performance Evaluation.

    o Graduate teaching assistant (GTA) duties include grading for an instructor, holding regular office hours, providing laboratory instruction, performing teaching duties associated with PSYX 100, 110, or 223, and coordinating the subject pool. Students must complete their assigned tasks and assignments efficiently, and work with students and the faculty instructor in a respectful and professional manner. At the end of each semester, course instructors will evaluate all GTAs and this information will be used in the formal evaluation of GTA performance.

    o Graduate research assistant (GRA) duties will be determined by the faculty member funding the position. Students are expected to complete GRA tasks, identified through communication with their primary advisor, in an efficient, respectful, and professional manner. At the end of each semester, the GRA supervisor will provide feedback for the student's formal evaluation. These GTA and/or GRA evaluations will be provided to Human Resources, per the Graduate Student collective bargaining agreement. Notification of unsatisfactory performance will automatically be sent to the Graduate School. Assistantships can be terminated for unsatisfactory performance, and will automatically end after two consecutive unsatisfactory evaluations.

- Progress Toward the Ph.D. and Research Evaluation.

    o In courses, students *must* maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA each semester while completing the required credit requirements for the given semester. The faculty expects all students to, among other things, actively participate in class, demonstrate strong critical thinking skills, and fulfill all course requirements as instructed. Dropping classes to avoid recording a low grade will contribute negatively to evaluations in this area. Expectations for the thesis and dissertation projects will be developed in collaboration with the Research Chair and committee members. All students are expected to make sufficient progress on these projects and to meet the agreed upon deadlines. Failing to a meet a deadline will automatically trigger an unsatisfactory evaluation. This includes completing all paperwork required by the Graduate School and the department.

    o The faculty also expects all students to be actively engaged in research beyond the thesis and dissertation requirements. Most research activities will likely be carried out with the Research Chair, but students are encouraged to engage in these activities with other faculty members and students as well. Expectations for research should be identified through dialogue between each student and their Research Chair.

Evaluation Procedure.

- Assistantship Performance. At the end of each academic semester, course instructors and faculty paying GRAs will formally evaluate the students who served as their assistants (GRA or GTA). The evaluations will be made on the official evaluation forms required by the Graduate School.

- Progress Toward the Ph.D. and Research.

    o Prior to end of each academic year, students will submit a curriculum vitae, a copy of their MSU transcript, and a written self-evaluation statement by a deadline set by the Graduate Coordinator. The self-evaluation statement must address progress towards the Ph.D. (e.g., courses completed, milestones achieved) and a summary of their research activity. The statement should offer evidence of how expectations were met during the review period. The student will deliver these materials to their Research Chair and the Graduate Coordinator.
    o Near the end of each academic year, the faculty will hold an evaluation meeting to discuss and evaluate each student in the program. Research Chairs will receive information from other faculty about their students' performance courses and any other relevant area. Research Chairs will consider this information when making their formal evaluations.
    o Following the evaluation meeting, each student will receive a formal written evaluation from their Research Chair no later than the last day of finals week. This letter will provide substantive feedback regarding the performance evaluations. The letter may also contain information about upcoming tasks and expectations that the student should plan to address in the future. Students will sign the evaluation letter to indicate receipt, make a copy for their own records, and return the original letter to their Research Chair within five days of its receipt. Each student and Research Chair will also meet to orally discuss the contents of the letter.

Evaluation Outcomes. The scenarios below describe the outcomes that are possible for one evaluation period and the subsequent procedures that those outcomes will trigger. Critical policies regarding aggregated evaluations (across years) are described in the Dismissal Policy below.

- Students receiving an "unsatisfactory" in any evaluation area(s) must meet with their Research Chair to formulate an improvement plan in the deficient area(s). This should happen as soon as possible after the formal evaluation letter has been given to the student. The student will be evaluated in the area of concern by the Research Chair and the Graduate Coordinator at the end of the next immediate semester (e.g., fall semester after the original spring semester evaluation).
    o If the student receives a "satisfactory" rating in this subsequent evaluation, no further action will be required.
    o If the student receives an "unsatisfactory" rating, they will receive a letter of probation from the Graduate Coordinator and a copy of this letter and evaluation will be sent to the Graduate School. The student will be placed on formal probation and may be disqualified for an assistantship and tuition waiver. Failing to receive a "satisfactory" in the deficient area for the next evaluation period (next immediate semester) can result in a recommendation for dismissal from the program.

Evaluation Disputes. Students have the right, at any time, to dispute an evaluation by following the Student Grievance Procedure. However, the Faculty of the Psychology Department recommend that students engage in an informal dispute procedure first. After reviewing their evaluation letters and discussing it with their research chair, students can write a formal "letter of reply" to address any issues in their evaluations that they see fit. This letter must be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator within

14 days of receiving the written evaluation. The Graduate Coordinator will then hold a meeting with the student and/or Research Chair to discuss the dispute and work towards a resolution. If a resolution that the student is satisfied with is not achieved, the student can continue on with the formal grievance procedure detailed in the Student Code of Conduct.

Dismissal Policy

Graduate School Policy. Graduate students are to abide by the graduate code of conduct. This code specifies expectations for professional behavior within and outside of academic settings. Sanctions, including the possibility of dismissal, for any violation of the student conduct code will follow established Graduate School and MSU procedures. All students should be familiar with this code.

APA Ethical and Professional Guidelines. All students must be familiar with and abide by the APA ethical and professional guidelines. Violations of these guidelines will be met with sanctions, including the possibility of dismissal from the University.

Specific Department of Psychology Dismissal Criteria. The Department of Psychology has set additional criteria for dismissal. A student may be dismissed from the Ph.D. Program in Psychology for any of the following reasons.

- Two consecutive "unsatisfactory" evaluations.
- A total of three or more "unsatisfactory" evaluations aggregated across all evaluation periods.
- Two grades of "C" or lower.
- A cumulative G.P.A. below 3.0 at any time after at least one Academic Year.
- Failing to complete a Thesis or Dissertation by the deadlines set by the department.
- Failing to pass a Thesis or Dissertation defense.
- Failing the Comprehensive Examinations.

Department of Psychology Dismissal Procedure. If any of the above criteria are met, the student's Research Chair and/or the Graduate Coordinator may recommend dismissing the student from the program. When this recommendation is made, all tenure-track faculty in the Department will vote on the action to dismiss. A 2/3 majority vote is required to formally recommend that a student be dismissed from the program. The formal dismissal recommendation will be forwarded to the Graduate School. Note that the Graduate School can initiate dismissal independently (e.g., failing to maintain a 3.0 GPA for two consecutive semesters).

Transfer Policy

Transferring Course Credits: Students transferring into MSU's doctoral program in Psychological Science from other universities may be eligible to receive credit for coursework requirements if they have successfully passed equivalent courses at their institution(s). The student's research chair, along with the faculty of the Department of Psychology, should be consulted in order to determine the transfer equivalency of coursework completed elsewhere.

In order to receive consideration, students must submit (a) an academic transcript that shows the course(s) completed and grade(s) earned at the student's previous institution, (b) a syllabus that describes the content of the course(s) to be considered, and (c) a completed form outlining the equivalent course for which the student seeks to receive credit, signed by the student's research chair and the current instructor for the proposed course at MSU. For forms submitted during the academic year, students will receive a response from the faculty regarding course transfers within 30 days. Students who have taken graduate courses but not earned a M.S. degree can transfer up to 9 credits, whereas students who have earned a M.S. can transfer up to 30 credits, prior to graduate course work.

Transferring Thesis Project Equivalency: Students who have earned a Master's degree in Psychology may apply to have the thesis project requirements of MSU's graduate program in Psychological Science waived. The decision to waive the thesis requirements will be made by a graduate committee that reads and evaluates the student's thesis in relation to the departmental requirements for acceptable thesis projects. The graduate committee will comprise experts in the topic area, similar to the traditional Master's thesis committee. A minimum of two committee members should reside primarily in the MSU Department of Psychology.

If a student's existing Thesis does not conform to the departmental requirements (e.g., it is not empirical), that student must complete a thesis project at MSU in the same manner as students completing the Master's en route to the Ph.D. In this case, students have 4 semesters to defend their final thesis (or, 5 with departmental probation), although would ideally defend in their first year. However, no degree will be conferred in this case, as the student already possesses the degree. Student's who have earned a Master's degree in a discipline other than Psychology will be required to complete the Master's in Psychology en route to the Ph.D. at MSU.

The graduate committee will communicate their decision to either (a) accept the previous degree as meeting the requirements for a satisfactory thesis or (b) require that the student complete a separate thesis as part of their graduate training at MSU, to the student and Research Chair. This information will be used to complete the Program of Study form.

Change of Research Chair Policy

The professional relationship between a student and their Research Chair is a very important aspect of graduate training. All students are admitted into the program with the understanding that they will be working with a specific Research Chair throughout their tenure in the program. Students officially establish a Research Chair with the program of study form, and can change the Research Chair with a committee revision form. However, students should follow the formal procedure below to switch Research Chairs.

1. The student must send a signed letter (via email) to the Graduate Coordinator indicating the desire to switch Research Chairs.
2. The student must meet with the Graduate Coordinator to discuss the issues raised in the letter.
3. The student must contact another tenure-track faculty member in the Department and request that they serve as the student's Research Chair. If the faculty member does not agree to serve in this capacity, the student must find an alternative. If the faculty member agrees to serve as the Research Chair, they and the student must notify the Graduate Coordinator in writing.

4. Students can then request a department administrator change the advisor information in MyInfo, with approval from the Graduate Coordinator.
5. The student may then file the committee revision form with the Graduate School to make the change official.

Leave of Absence Policy

The Psychology Department is committed to the development and career training of each student admitted into our doctoral program. We expect that all students will, in turn, remain steadfastly committed to achieving their goals and contributing to the program in positive ways. In certain situations, however, a student's ability to fulfill the expectations of the program may be undermined due to various life circumstances (e.g., financial hardships, personal issues, etc.). In these situations, a student can request to take a Leave of Absence from the program. We strongly encourage the student to discuss this possibility with their Research Chair and/or the Graduate Coordinator before making this request. The Research Chair and/or Graduate Coordinator can help the student understand the issues that a Leave of Absence would introduce and the potential benefits and drawbacks associated with it. If the student does elect to request a Leave of Absence, a formal procedure for making the request must be followed at the departmental level:

1. The student must submit a signed letter to the Research Chair and Graduate Coordinator indicating their intention to take a leave of absence.
2. The student will then meet with the Graduate Coordinator to discuss the Leave of Absence policy and generate a formal plan. This plan must include a specific date that the student will rejoin the program, which may be modified in subsequent agreements for pre-masters students. (Students who have already completed any portion of comprehensive examinations must follow the Graduate School procedures and policies for "Leave of Absence Status.")

Once a plan has been agreed upon, the student is responsible for furthermore understanding and following the Graduate School procedures and policies for "Leave of Absence Status."