

HANDBOOK FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS IN  
GENERAL PSYCHOLOGY with the  
Experimental Concentration (Thesis Option)  
  
EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

Prepared by:

The Department of Psychology  
Eastern Kentucky University  
Richmond, Kentucky

Revised Spring, 2022

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## **Introduction**

This Handbook for Graduate Students in General Psychology is intended to assist students as they pursue their education and to answer many of the common questions concerning the General Psychology Graduate Program at Eastern Kentucky University. (Graduate students who are simultaneously enrolled in the School Psychology Graduate Program should use the HANDBOOK FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY. The current handbook is for graduate students who are not enrolled in the School Psychology Graduate Program.) The Handbook contains information about administrative and academic policies, curriculum, course work and other academic requirements, and a variety of other topics.

It is essential that students become familiar with the information contained in the Handbook in order to facilitate their progress in the program. Hopefully, the information presented here will prevent or minimize misunderstandings and inaccurate expectations. Therefore, it will be assumed that every student has read, and is familiar with, the contents of this Handbook.

This Handbook does not replace the ECU Graduate Catalog. Graduate students are expected to be familiar with the information in the Graduate Catalog, particularly the section on General Academic Information. Students may obtain a copy of the Graduate Catalog from the Graduate School Office.

## **Mission Statement**

The Master of Science degree program in General Psychology offers students advanced training in the core areas of psychology and the opportunity to develop and explore specialized areas of interest. Students work closely with a faculty mentor to design an individualized course of study that combines classroom training and hands-on research experience. Graduates will have a solid foundation for pursuing doctoral-level training in psychology and related fields or for entry into a variety of work settings.

## **Educational Learning Objectives.**

To accomplish the mission, the objectives of the program are that all graduates will:

- (1) demonstrate mastery of the basic principles of general psychology including acquired/learned bases of behavior, social/cultural/systemic bases of behavior, and individual bases of behavior.
- (2) demonstrate knowledge of research design, methodologies, and statistical techniques, and be able to apply that knowledge to the investigation of problems in the discipline.
- (3) demonstrate mastery of the empirical literature in a specialized area of the discipline.
- (4) demonstrate the ability to think critically about psychological issues and research.

## **Graduate Education: Faculty Expectations and Student Responsibilities**

The faculty believes that there are many experiences students should have in order to develop professionally and personally. Some of these experiences are embedded in class requirements, others are demands on time beyond class commitments. A student's attitudes and actions indicate his or her willingness to accept these expectations. The purpose of this section of the handbook is to make clear these expectations. A student can then make informed decisions regarding the responsibilities he or she is undertaking when entering this program. Students will be expected to live up to the tacit contract to fulfill these responsibilities.

First, students are expected to behave in a responsible and assertive manner. This means taking care of their own needs and responsibilities while at the same time being aware of and respecting the needs of others, both peers and faculty. This process requires such actions as being aware of and meeting deadlines, taking responsibility for missed classes, fulfilling class and program requirements, helping other students, being involved in the evolution of the program, and respecting the rights of faculty and other students who have their own lives and stresses.

A second expectation concerns commitment to continued learning. Much of the specific course content learned in the program may be outdated by the time the student graduates or shortly thereafter. There are too many gains being made on too many fronts for any of us, faculty members or students, to keep abreast of everything we might want or need to know in every area of psychology. We expect students to learn the process of how to learn, i.e., how to know what one needs to know, how to find the information, and how to incorporate it into the student's body of knowledge and skills. Students are expected to exit the program with a strong base from which to grow and develop; however, they will have to go beyond the basic program to become competent as a psychological researcher, thinker, and theorist.

Third, students are expected to participate in the program fully. The requirements are not designed capriciously; they each have a purpose and add to one's overall development as a professional. One may question the rationale, offer alternatives to gain the same ends, or challenge the need for a particular experience (as long as one does so in a reasonable and responsible manner -- there are vehicles for doing so). However, a student should expect to satisfy each and every requirement, regardless of all but the most extenuating circumstances, the same as any other student, before exiting with a degree.

We are here to help students learn to become knowledgeable psychologists and effective researchers in the area of their choosing. If a student has temporary problems, we will be supportive and encourage him or her to seek help. But, in short, we expect students to be "together" enough to handle the demands of the program and other life responsibilities.

## Department of Psychology Faculty Available for Experimental Concentration

Theresa Botts, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor)

Ph.D. University of Kentucky, 2001

Interests: Cognitive behavior therapy, feminist perspective, trauma work and gender issues, animal assisted therapy

Michael Chen, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor)

Ph.D. University of Kentucky, 2015

Interests: Human Factors, educational technology, reading processes, computer speech rendering, learning and memory

Dan Florell, Ph.D. (Associate Professor) Ph.D. Illinois State University, 2001

Interests: School psychology, cyberbullying, bullying, technology, ethics, adolescent development, and professional issues

Jonathan Gore, Ph.D. (Professor)

Ph.D. Iowa State University, 2005

Interests: Close relationships in goal pursuit; cultural values; physical self-construal; self-change

Jaime Henning, Ph.D. (Professor, Coordinator of Industrial/Organizational Graduate Program)

Ph. D. Texas A & M University, 2008

Interests: Employee volunteerism, environmental sustainability in organizations, the work-life interface, and workplace safety

Sara Incera, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor)

Ph.D. Cleveland State University, 2016

Interests: Cognitive psychology, bilingualism, foreign accents, second language acquisition, and language development across the lifespan

Adam Lawson, Ph.D. (Associate Professor)

Ph.D. Oklahoma State University, 2001

Interests: Cognitive neuroscience, psychophysiology, memory and aging.

Radhika Makecha, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor)

Ph.D. University of Southern Mississippi, 2008

Interests: Elephant cognition and behavior, teaching the public about animal cognition

Michael McClellan, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor)

Ph.D. University of Kentucky, 2014

Interests: Cultural competency, rural mental health, telehealth, scale development

- Robert W. Mitchell, Ph.D. (Foundation Professor, Coordinator of the General Psychology Graduate Program and the Animal Studies Program)  
Ph.D. Clark University, 1987  
Interests: Animal cognition, play, anthropomorphism, cognitive development, human sexuality
- Melinda Moore, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor)  
Ph.D. Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 2012  
Interests: Suicide assessment, intervention, and management; suicide bereavement; posttraumatic growth, veterans and military
- Yoshie Nakai, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor)  
Ph.D. University of Akron, 2011  
Interests: Aging workforce, job search behaviors and unemployment among older adults, recruiting and retaining older workers
- Theresa Nowak, Ph.D. (Associate Professor)  
Ph.D. University of Kentucky, 2007  
Interests: Early childhood, play therapy, assessment, temperament, school psychology
- Richard Osbaldiston, Ph.D. (Associate Professor)  
Ph. D. University of Missouri, 2004  
Interests: Social and personality psychology, organizational psychology, quantitative methods and statistics
- Jerry K. Palmer, Ph.D. (Associate Professor)  
Ph.D. Georgia Institute of Technology, 1999  
Interests: Mindfulness, post traumatic growth, personality, numerically aided phenomenology
- Andrea Strait, Ph.D. (Professor)  
Ph.D. University of Tennessee, 2005  
Interests: Curriculum-based measurement, academic interventions, single-case research design, outcome assessment, and intervention related to children diagnosed with autism
- D. Alex Varakin, Ph.D. (Associate Professor)  
Ph.D. Vanderbilt University, 2006  
Interests: Visual cognition, attention, memory, awareness, time perception
- Steffen Wilson, Ph.D. (Professor)  
Ph.D. University of Georgia, 1997  
Interests: Sense of belonging at the University, online learning, development across the life span

Matthew P. Winslow, Ph.D. (Professor)

Ph.D. University of Minnesota, 1998

Interests: Reducing prejudice, empathy and perspective taking, professional development, pedagogy



## **Model Curriculum for General Psychology M.S.**

Note: This is not intended to be a rigid list of the exact semester you have to take each course; which semester a course appears in may change. Your advisor will assist you in selecting the appropriate courses each semester.

### **SEMESTER I (Fall) (10 credit hours)**

PSY 820 Statistics and Research Design I  
PSY 853 Biological Bases of Behavior  
PSY 779 History and Systems of Psychology (or elective)  
PSY 703 Practicum in Psychology (Data Science) (1 credit)

### **SEMESTER II (Spring) (10 credit hours)**

PSY 862 Statistics and Research Design II  
PSY 849 Advanced Developmental Psychology  
PSY 898 Thesis (3 credits)  
PSY 703 Practicum in Psychology (Data Science) (1 credit)

### **SEMESTER III (Summer) (3 credit hours)**

PSY 859 Cognitive & Affective Bases of Behavior

### **SEMESTER IV (Fall) (10 credit hours)**

PSY 713 Mind and Brain (or elective)  
PSY 837 Social Psychology and Cultural Diversity  
PSY 898 Thesis (3 credits)  
PSY 703 Practicum in Psychology (Data Science) (1 credit)  
GRD 857J Comprehensive Examination (0 credit)  
GRD 858J Thesis Defense (0 credit)

33 hours minimum (students can take more courses if desired)

Note: Courses may be taught in semesters different than those stated above. Be attentive to what is available, and talk with your advisor about possibilities from other departments. Typically, electives are taught every 2 years, so some electives presented offered in the Fall of the first semester may be offered in the Fall of the last semester.

## **Time Line of Significant Events, Activities, and Deadlines**

### Semester I (Fall)

- think about what to study for the thesis project, discover relevant resources in our library or send off for relevant articles from interlibrary loan, confer with your thesis advisor and discuss your ideas and relevant research, and perhaps do independent study relevant to thesis project
- see advisor to discuss the type of material you wish to learn beyond the basic curriculum, which courses you may take in the future semesters, and for assistance with developing your thesis proposal and thesis
- Psychology Graduate Student Organization (PGSO) election of officers
- complete registration for Spring semester (meet with advisor first)
- keep copies of papers for all your courses each semester, as these may come in useful when applying to graduate school beyond the Masters level.
- attend to feedback from your advisors

### Semester II (Spring)

- select thesis chair and submit thesis proposal
- complete registration for Summer semester

### Semester III (Summer)

- continue work on thesis
- contact doctoral programs for application materials
- complete preregistration for Fall classes
- develop study plan for comprehensive exams
- apply for December graduation at the Graduate School office
- register to retake the GRE if necessary

## Semester IV (Fall)

- prepare for and take comprehensive exams (typically scheduled for late October or early November)
- complete applications to doctoral programs
- check status with the Graduate School (i.e., have all requirements been completed, have all the necessary forms been filed, are you on the December graduation list)
- complete thesis (check with advisor on deadlines)
- attend graduation ceremonies

### **Provisional and Probationary Admission**

Some students are admitted to the program under one of two special categories: provisional admission or probationary admission. Students are informed of any conditions of admission in the admission letter sent by the Dean of the Graduate School. If a student is on provisional or probationary admission status, s/he should arrange a meeting with his/her advisor as soon as possible to determine precisely what is necessary to gain clear admission. It is the student's responsibility to remove any conditions of admission within the time frame specified in the Graduate Catalog (see the section on Types of Admission complete details).

According to the Graduate Catalog, provisional admission may be granted when an applicant is unable to supply all of the necessary application materials (e.g. official GRE scores, three letters of recommendation) prior to admission consideration, but who otherwise meets the admission requirements. These materials must be received by the Graduate School by November or the student will not be allowed to enroll for the second semester. If the additional credentials are satisfactory, the student may be granted clear admission; however, provisional admission does not guarantee subsequent clear admission.

Probationary admission may be granted to the applicant who does not meet certain requirements for clear admission but does show promise for successful graduate study (see the Graduate Catalog section on Types of Admission). For example, probationary admission may be granted to a student who lacks prerequisite undergraduate course work, or whose GRE score is below the minimum requirement. According to the Graduate Catalog,

Students must be removed from probationary admission prior to registering for any graduate course work beyond an initial 12 hours. The minimum condition for transfer from probationary admission status to clear admission status is the successful completion of at least nine hours of graduate course work with a grade point average of

at least 3.0 and with no more than one grade (regardless of the number of course credit hours) of "C" or lower.

Other special requirements (e.g. satisfactory completion of prerequisite course work, achieving a minimum score upon retaking the GRE) may be imposed by the Psychology Department.

Students on probationary admission status may not hold an assistantship.

### **Advisor and Graduate Committee**

Each student will be assigned a faculty member as his/her advisor upon admission to the program. This person will handle all advising responsibilities (e.g. registration, providing feedback from faculty evaluations) until the student is admitted to candidacy at the end of his/her second semester. At this point the student will select a graduate committee. The person selected to chair the committee will then serve as the student's advisor for the remainder of the program.

Graduate Committee. The graduate committee performs several duties. It plays a particularly important role in comprehensive examinations. Based on the student's overall performance, the graduate committee makes a recommendation to the graduate school that he/she be awarded (or not awarded) the Master's degree. This committee is also responsible for prescribing and overseeing remedial work should the student's performance be unacceptable. The graduate committee serves as the thesis committee.

The graduate committee consists of three or four members. The chair of the committee, who is the graduate student's thesis advisor, must be a full member of the graduate faculty. If the person chosen by the student to chair the committee is not a full member, he/she may serve as co-chair along with a full member. The student may also select a faculty member from another department as a (non-chair) committee member. It is the student's responsibility to ask faculty members to serve on the committee and to communicate choices to the advisor.

## **Evaluation of Student Progress in the Program**

There are several mechanisms by which psychology graduate students are evaluated by the faculty. They include course grades, written work (including thesis work), precandidacy evaluation, candidacy evaluation, and the comprehensive examination.

### **Grades**

The following grades (and grade points) may be awarded for graduate courses: A (=4), B (=3), C (=2), D (=1), F (=0), I, or IP. Graduate students are expected to earn at least a grade of "B" and to maintain a graduate GPA of 3.00 or above. Graduate students whose graduate GPA falls below 3.00 will be placed on academic probation by the Graduate School. Students on academic probation are not permitted to hold a graduate assistantship. Students who fail to raise their GPA to a 3.00 by the end of the probationary semester will no longer be allowed to enroll in graduate courses without the recommendation of their advisor, the department chair, Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

### **Written Work**

For your courses and thesis, you are required to provide written work. Written work from courses is, of course, part of the basis for your grades, they are also examined by faculty members for potential problems with writing. This is especially true for your thesis work. Be prepared to provide numerous revisions of your original proposal and thesis; your thesis chair and thesis committee will offer numerous "suggestions" for revision that must be dealt with if your thesis proposal and thesis are to be accepted by the graduate school.

### **End of Semester (and Other) Evaluations**

At the end of each semester, the student's instructors and other interested faculty meet to conduct evaluations of the students and their progress in the program. Academic performance and awareness of (and behavior consistent with) the university and APA ethical principles and accepted standards of professional responsibility are the broad areas to be evaluated. During this evaluation, members of the faculty and instructors will discuss the student's written work in classes, attitude toward the program, their professors, and their peers, and progress toward the thesis and other research. Faculty generally considers three general areas of functioning: academic performance (students must have a graduate GPA of 3.00 or above), professional skills (e.g., writing skills, research proficiency), and awareness of (and behavior consistent with) the university and APA ethical principles and accepted standards of professional responsibility. If progress in one or more areas evaluated is inadequate, the student may be dismissed from the program. The student's examination scores, course grades, and faculty observations, may be considered. The student's advisor will email a request for the courses the student is currently taking near the end of the semester and, following the meeting with faculty to evaluate the students, will provide a summary of the evaluations of the faculty (see Appendix A). The original will be placed in the student's permanent file. Students are encouraged to discuss any questions they have about the evaluation with their advisor and/or with any faculty members they choose.

As a result of the evaluation the faculty may determine that the student's progress in all areas is adequate or they may decide that there are certain deficiencies in his/her performance. Depending upon the nature and severity of the deficiencies, the student may be asked or required to engage in corrective/remedial activities (e.g., discuss/remediate weak academic performance with the course instructor, resolve interpersonal conflicts with classmates or faculty), or s/he may, in the case of more serious problems, be placed on departmental probation or dismissed from the program. Examples of "more serious problems" include, but are not limited to, violation of ethical standards, academic dishonesty, poor academic performance, and evidence of a lack of professional responsibility. If a student is placed on departmental probation, s/he will receive a written statement from his/her advisor outlining the steps that need to be taken in order to remove the student from probation, as well as the consequences of failing to do so within the specified time.

If a student has failed to maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher, s/he will receive a letter from the Graduate School indicating that they are under academic probation. Students are typically allowed one more semester to gain a higher GPA before dismissal from the program.

In addition to decisions made during the end of the semester evaluations, the faculty may determine that a student at any point in the program is not showing adequate academic performance and/or is not adhering to University and APA ethical principles and accepted standards of professional responsibility. If so, the faculty may recommend that the student be dismissed from the Graduate School.

## **Psychology Comprehensive Examinations**

All students must successfully complete comprehensive examinations prior to being awarded the Master's degree. The comprehensive exam enables the faculty to determine whether the student has acquired the skills and knowledge base necessary for performing psychological research. Preparation for the exam provides students with an opportunity to integrate what they have learned in classes and while engaging in research, and to identify and fill any gaps in their training.

### **Format**

To assess the candidate's mastery of the broad domain of scientific psychology, he or she is required to take an objective examination consisting of about 154 multiple-choice questions. The questions cover the following 5 major content areas:

1. Biological bases of behavior (PSY 853).
2. Cognitive and affective bases of behavior (PSY 859).
3. Social and cultural aspects of behavior (PSY 837).
4. Research design and statistics & Behavioral research methods (PSY 820S & 862).
5. Developmental psychology (PSY 849).

To evaluate these content areas, faculty has devised 20-24 questions on each of the following 5 topic areas: biological bases of behavior; cognition; social/cultural psychology; research methods and statistics; and development. In addition, the student may be asked some other questions, either to evaluate performance in other areas of psychology (e.g., courses taken as electives) or to develop the test bank.

The candidate is required to pass the objective examination. If the candidate fails the objective examination, the committee will require that the candidate pass another examination. (See below.) The committee can choose to evaluate the candidate through an oral examination, an essay examination, or a paper (e.g., a literature review).

### **Schedule**

The objective exam is normally scheduled during the student's second Fall semester in the program (if the student is full-time). The student will receive official notification of the exam schedule through email at least two weeks prior to the date of the exam. If further exams are required, the student will receive notification as soon as possible.

### **Grading**

Scores on the objective exam can range from 0 to 156 points (i.e., each multiple-choice question is worth one point). A student will receive a score for each of the 5 subtests based on the percent correct, and an overall score. A minimum passing grade on the objective exam will be determined by the department.

The decision to pass or fail a student resides entirely with the student's graduate committee. A grade of either "pass" or "fail" will be reported by the committee to the Dean of the Graduate School. (Note: There are several options within each choice, i.e., clear pass, pass with suggested additional study, failure of one or more subtests of the exam accompanied by one or more required remedial activities. However, failure of any component of the exam results in an overall official grade of "fail.") In order to receive the Master's degree, a student must pass either the objective exam or an alternative exam. The alternative exam is only offered if the student fails the objective exam, in which case the committee may also require the student to undertake specific remedial activities ranging from assigned readings, to additional course work. The composition of the alternative exam will be determined by the graduate committee. The alternative exam will be scheduled by the student's committee for a date no less than 60 days and no more than one year from the date of the first examination. If the student fails the second exam, he or she will not be awarded the Masters degree from Eastern.

The alternative exam. If a candidate is required to take an essay exam or write a paper due to failure on the objective exam, the essay or paper will be graded by at least two members of the candidate's graduate committee. Each essay is evaluated by at least two readers who (when possible) are blind to the student's identity. Each reader independently assigns each essay a score ranging from 1 to 5 (a score of 1 indicating a poor performance, a score of 5 indicating an excellent performance, and a score of 3 indicating a minimally passing response). If both readers score a response as a 3 or above, then the answer is assigned a grade of "pass." If both score a response as a 2.9 or below, then the answer is assigned a grade of "fail". If there is disagreement among the readers as to whether a response is a pass or a fail (that is, if one grader scores a response 3 or above, and the other scores it 2.9 or below), the response is graded by a third reader who serves as a tie-breaker.

The student's grades on the essay responses, along with comments from the readers, are forwarded to his/her graduate committee. The committee reviews the student's performance, identifying any areas of weakness. The committee may then examine the student on these areas of weakness during an oral examination. Based on the scores assigned by the grading committee and (if an oral exam is given) the student's performance during the oral exam, the committee determines the final grade (pass-fail) on the essay component of the exam. In addition, the committee may require the student to engage in remedial work in one or more of the content areas covered by the essay examination (see below). The oral examination is not assigned a grade. However, performance during the oral exam may help the committee reach a decision on a grade for one of the other components of the exam, particularly in the case where performance on one or more of the other components is marginal.



## Appeals

If a student believes that the committee has treated him or her unfairly (e.g. a student received a failing grade for a performance the student believes to be acceptable), the student has the right to appeal the grade through the Psychology Department's Academic Practices Committee. It is recommended that all informal channels of appeal be exhausted prior to appeal to this committee. (Contact the chair of the department for further information.) Appeal of this committee's decision is available through the University's Graduate Appeals Committee on procedural grounds only.

## Research Opportunities

Usually in the second semester of the student's program, he or she will enroll in 3-credit hours of PSY 898 (Master's Thesis), and will take another 3-credit hours of PSY 898 in the third (Fall or Spring) semester. The student will be responsible for planning, carrying out, and reporting on an empirical research project that makes a meaningful contribution to the literature. In order to complete the thesis in a timely manner, it is strongly recommended that the student begin work on the project as early in the program as possible. **Detailed requirements and guidelines for carrying out the thesis are contained in Appendix A.**

### Thesis Supervisor and Committee

The student will need to select a thesis supervisor and a thesis committee. These individuals will provide guidance as the student develops and carries out the project, and will be responsible for evaluating student work. The supervisor should be a faculty member who is familiar with the student's area of interest (see the Faculty section of this Handbook). The supervisor will serve as the chair of the committee.

Master's Thesis Committee. The thesis committee is the same as the graduate committee. In other words, the group that the student selects as his/her graduate committee will also serve as his/her thesis committee. The procedures for establishing this committee are discussed in Appendix A of this handbook. The chair of the graduate committee also serves as the thesis supervisor and, therefore, should be someone familiar with the student's research area who is willing to supervise the project. There are some restrictions on the composition of the graduate committee. The chair must be qualified to be chair according to Graduate School standards. The student has the option of selecting a faculty member from another department to serve on the committee, though this person cannot be the chair or a co-chair.

The faculty strongly recommends that the student begin work on the development of the thesis project at least by the beginning of the second semester, if not by the beginning of the first semester. The student should be in frequent contact with the chair of his or her committee (most likely the faculty member with whom they initially decided to work). Faculty members sometimes have students work outside the

Psychology Department or even outside EKU on projects with faculty members elsewhere. Should problems arise, either with faculty members or with conceptual or methodological problems in developing or designing the study, the student should contact the chair of his/her committee.

## Written Reports

The thesis proceeds through several phases, detailed in Appendix A. Written work for the thesis receives a formal evaluation from the thesis committee at two points: once to evaluate the thesis proposal, and once to evaluate the completed thesis. In addition, depending on the thesis topic, the student will be required (once it has passed the committee's evaluation) to submit the thesis proposal to the department ethics review board, and may be required submit the thesis proposal to the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The final product of the Master's thesis is a written report. This report typically includes a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to the study, a clear statement of the purpose of the study and the hypotheses to be tested, a description of the methodology and results, and a discussion of the results. The student can find examples of theses in the library.

According to the Publication Manual of the APA (p. 323), "The introduction in a thesis . . . is similar to that in a journal article . . . except that the author of a thesis . . . may be expected to demonstrate familiarity with the literature by developing the background more comprehensively." In order to provide some guidelines as to what to expect in the introduction to a thesis, rather than to be completely restrictive, the faculty recommends that:

(1) Theses should contain citations to at least 25 different references in the introduction, although the author may need substantially more citations to provide a thorough presentation of the scientific literature. (The thesis committee decides whether the references used are appropriate and sufficient.)

(2) In addition, the introduction to the thesis should be at least 20 pages, and should demonstrate knowledge not only of research findings, but also some knowledge of how the research findings were discovered. Students may require more than 20 pages to substantially cover the material relevant to the thesis project.

The final draft of the thesis must conform to guidelines set forth by the Graduate School. The guidelines specified for the write-up for the thesis should be available on the ever changing Graduate School webpage (<http://gradschool.eku.edu/>). The Graduate School is very particular about format of the paper (e.g. margin widths, location of page numbers, labeling of tables and figures, the rag content of the typing paper, arrangement of the table of contents, etc.) and will not accept papers that fail to conform to the guidelines. Therefore, it is very important that the student be familiar

with the guidelines and that the student consult with the committee chair and the Dean of the Graduate School on any questions regarding the format of the thesis. The student will be required to provide copies of the thesis to the committee members, the department, and the Dean of the Graduate School. Again, the student should look to the ever changing Graduate School webpage (<http://gradschool.eku.edu/>) for help on how copies are to be provided.

### Oral Defense for Thesis Proposal and Final Thesis

The student will be required to carry out an oral defense of the thesis proposal, and the final thesis. The presentation for the thesis proposal should include a review of relevant literature, the hypotheses to be tested, and the methodology to be employed. The presentation for the final thesis should include a review of relevant literature, the hypotheses tested, the methodology employed, the results, and the interpretation of the results. Committee members, as well as other interested faculty and students, will be present and may ask questions concerning the project. The typical defense lasts about an hour. Immediately after the defense is completed, the committee will meet to discuss any revisions that need to be made and to determine a grade for the work.

The oral defense must be scheduled by the committee chair through the graduate school. The necessary form must be sent to the graduate school office two weeks before the date of the defense. The student should check with the committee chair to see that the form is filed by the appropriate date. In addition, the defense must be completed no later than two weeks before the end of the semester in which the student plans to graduate.

An important point to keep in mind is that papers of this type typically require several rewrites. For example, a student may give an initial draft to his/her committee chair who will probably ask him/her to make some revisions prior to distributing the manuscript to other committee members. The committee members may ask the student to make some revisions prior to the defense. Additional revisions may be required after the defense and, in the case of a thesis, the Dean may ask the student to make some changes before giving final approval. The student should anticipate this and allow plenty of time for the revision process (including time for faculty to read the paper and comment on it, and for the typist to make the specified changes). Thus, the student should not wait until the last minute to give the paper to the committee.

### Evaluation of the Thesis

The thesis is graded by the committee as either pass or fail; if a pass is given, it is further graded into above average, average, and below average. Generally, the grade is based on the quality of the written report. Criteria include organization, clarity of writing style, comprehensiveness of the literature review, appropriateness of the design and statistical analyses, and the extent to which the discussion relates the results of the study to the original hypotheses and to relevant literature.

## **Student Grievances**

Formal mechanisms for handling specific grievances are outlined in various sections of this Handbook (e.g. Academic Dishonesty, Comprehensive Examinations, Student Evaluation). However, it is possible to resolve many student complaints and concerns on an informal basis. If the student has a complaint involving a particular course or instructor (e.g. he/she disagrees with a grade or course requirement) or believes that he/she has been treated unfairly by any member of the faculty, it is entirely appropriate (in fact, the student is encouraged) to discuss his/her concern with the individual involved. If this proves unsatisfactory, the student should feel free to discuss the matter in confidence with his/her advisor, the program coordinator, and/or the department chair. The department chair can also advise the student on the appropriate procedures for lodging a formal complaint.

If the student has concerns of a more general nature involving, for example, departmental policy or the general psychology program, he/she should feel free to discuss them with the program coordinator and/or the department chair. The department welcomes student input.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

### Psychology Department Policy

Cases of academic dishonesty among graduate students in psychology will also be viewed as issues of professional ethics and suitability for the profession. As such, they will be considered by the faculty in the broader context of eligibility for the degree.

### Guidelines

While the instances of academic dishonesty among graduate students are fortunately few, they have occurred. To address this issue, the Department of Psychology has established these guidelines, consistent with the previously stated policy.

The major purpose of the graduate program is to provide qualified individuals with the academic training and professional preparation in order that they can enter the profession as Master's level psychologists or continue on to doctoral training. In carrying out this task, the Department has responsibilities to three groups: graduate students, the public (as specified, in part, by state law), and relevant professional organizations (the American Psychological Association).

It is within the context of these departmental obligations that cases of academic dishonesty on the part of graduate students must be viewed. The Department's best estimate of a student's ability to adhere to professional standards is often his or her ability to adhere to standards of academic honesty.

In most instances, cases of academic dishonesty at the undergraduate level are dealt with by the involved faculty member. The decision of the faculty member can be appealed by the student to the Department Academic Practices Committee, which may refer the matter to the University Student Disciplinary Board, under the policies and procedures described in the Eastern Kentucky University Faculty Handbook and the University Handbook for Students. This procedure is effective in most cases of academic dishonesty involving undergraduates. However, it does not address the critical issues relevant to graduate education and professional preparation.

At the graduate level, academic dishonesty is viewed as more than just an academic breach. It is evidence of a failure to conform to ethical standards. Given that the Department has the obligation to protect potential consumers by insuring that its graduates show evidence that they will uphold the ethical standards of the profession, incidents of academic dishonesty will be treated as a matter of professional irresponsibility in addition to being treated as academic breaches requiring disciplinary action. The entire faculty of the Psychology Department may be called on to consider any case of academic dishonesty as a matter that reflects on a student's suitability for the profession, including cases that have been or may be subject to action under the procedures described in the Faculty Handbook and Student Handbook.

Within the domain of academic dishonesty fall such acts as plagiarism of any form, fraudulently obtaining course materials or tests, cheating during in-class exams, and collaborating with or copying from other students while completing out-of-class assignments or take-home tests (unless permission to collaborate is explicitly granted by the instructor). Assisting another student to engage in plagiarism is an offense as well. Moreover, lying, or otherwise attempting to cover up violations will be regarded as a further breach of professional ethics and standards. Professional psychologists are expected to take action to protect the public when they suspect a colleague of unethical behavior. It is a student's responsibility to take action if he or she has evidence that a fellow student engaged in unethical behavior.

Courses of action. Possible actions by the Department will vary depending upon the individual, the infraction, and the circumstances surrounding the infraction. Options range from a variety of remedial actions in less serious cases, to dismissal from the program in the event of a major violation of standards of academic honesty.

Appeals Procedures. As in other matters involving graduate students, appeals to the Academic Practices Committee and, on procedural grounds, the University Graduate Appeals Committee are available.

## **Graduate Assistantships**

Most qualified graduate students, typically 11-12, are awarded assistantships. A full assistantship requires approximately 20 hours of work per week and carries a stipend of approximately \$5,600 per semester and a waiver of out-of-state tuition. A half assistantship requires approximately 10 hours of work per week and carries half of the stipend and waiver of one class a semester. The role of the graduate assistant is described in Appendix C.

Most graduate students who are awarded assistantships are assigned to work with one or more Psychology Department faculty members. Departmental assistants typically fill one or both of the following roles: research assistant or teaching assistant.

Some students are offered assistantships by other departments/offices on campus. Depending on the particular department, duties range from tutoring to collecting research data.

### **Applying for an Assistantship**

The student can begin the assistantship application process by completing an assistantship application form and submitting it to the Graduate School, specifying the department(s) in which the student wishes to work. Many students complete this form when they apply for admission to graduate school.

Assistantships in the Psychology Department are typically awarded to students from the first to the last semester in the program, excluding the Summer session, during which there are no assistantships available from the Psychology Department. During each semester in the program, the student will be asked by the department chair to indicate interest in being considered for an assistantship. This information is forwarded to a faculty committee that makes recommendations to the Chair, who in turn makes recommendations to the Dean of the Graduate School. Faculty recommendations to the Chair are based on consideration of students' academic performance, maturity, financial need, professionalism, and progress in the program, as well as faculty needs. In the case of recommending students for assisting in teaching a psychology course, the student's ability to teach independently and competently, and to represent the department appropriately to undergraduates, are taken into consideration. Once assistantships are awarded, the department chair is responsible for assigning students to particular members of the faculty.

Other departments/offices on campus frequently have openings for assistants and will contact the Dean and/or the Department Chair in order to identify potential candidates.

## **Extracurricular Professional Activities**

Psychology graduate students are expected to participate in a variety of extracurricular activities designed to demonstrate a serious commitment to the profession and to foster professional development. Such activities include, but are not limited to, attendance at departmental colloquia, membership in appropriate professional organizations (e.g., American Psychological Association: [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org); American Psychological Society: [www.psychologicalscience.org](http://www.psychologicalscience.org)), attendance at conventions, attendance at outside seminars and workshops, and active participation in the Psychology Graduate Student Organization (PGSO, see below). Although financial constraints place limitations on the degree of participation in some of these activities (e.g., convention attendance), most are available at minimal or no cost. Participation in extracurricular professional activities is an important component of graduate training and should be viewed as such. It also establishes a pattern for future professional growth. The Department of Psychology has some money available to help students to attend conferences.

### **Psychology Graduate Student Organization (PGSO)**

All graduate students in the Psychology Department are automatically members of the PGSO. The organization was founded by graduate students in order to provide a forum for discussing common concerns and to foster mutual support. PGSO also appoints representatives to various departmental committees: Colloquium, Graduate Curriculum, Ethics, and Academic Practices Committees) as a means of providing student input into departmental policy and operations. There are no membership dues for the PGSO. Officers are elected during the Fall semester.

## Doctoral Programs

Although the M.S. degree in general psychology at ECU is a terminal degree, a number of our graduates have gone on to doctoral programs (Ph.D. and Psy.D.) in psychology. If a student is considering pursuing the doctoral degree, there are several steps to take. Because doctoral programs, particularly Ph.D. programs, are research oriented, one should, in addition to completing and publishing the MS thesis, become involved in a faculty member's research program. These activities demonstrate the student's interest in research and probably enhance chances for admission. If the student's GRE scores are marginal, he/she should plan to retake the exam. Several review texts and courses are available and it is to a student's advantage to study before the retake. The student should also consult the APA Guide to Graduate Study in Psychology (a copy is available in the Department office and in the Reserve Room of the library) and discuss plans with his/her advisor and other faculty members. They may be able to help the student realistically evaluate his/her chances for admission and suggest programs where the student might apply (e.g. programs that have taken our graduates in the past, programs that have been willing to accept transfer courses from the Master's program).

Admission to psychology doctoral programs is very competitive. The student should plan on applying to five to ten programs (one or two "ideal" programs and several others that may be less competitive but still acceptable to the student). Contact schools for application materials early -- the summer break following the first year is a good time to get this done. Application forms are typically lengthy and many require written statements of professional goals and/or interests. The student will also need adequate time to request graduate and undergraduate transcripts, GRE score reports, and letters of recommendation. Deadlines for submitting application materials range from mid-December to early February.



## APPENDIX A

### Guidelines/Requirements for Completing the Master's Thesis

#### Thesis:

The purpose of the following material is to provide some information for those individuals who are pursuing their Thesis as part of their degree program. (Other relevant and important information about the thesis is presented on pp. 13-16 of this manual.) First, the Masters Thesis is defined, and time expectations are discussed with the goal being to provide you with realistic information as to whether you want to undertake this challenging task. Then, a general overview of the process is provided, in the form of a time-line, with the hope of providing you with a general roadmap of the process that takes place in the completion of a thesis. Finally, several references are cited that may provide you with additional material to complete the process.

#### Thesis Defined:

The M.S. thesis fulfills two major purposes: (1) it is an intensive, highly professional training experience, the successful completion of which demonstrates the candidate's ability to address a major intellectual problem and arrive at a successful conclusion independently and at a high level of professional competence, and (2) its results constitute an original contribution to knowledge in the field (Council of Graduate Schools, 1990, p.21).

#### Time Expectations:

In terms of time allotted for the completion of an M.S. thesis, the candidate should anticipate that the effort will entail three to six months of intensive, productive effort. The thesis is a challenging task, addressing a major intellectual problem.

#### **General Overview of the Process:**

##### A Map of the Minefield!

In terms of carrying out your thesis, a general overview is provided that may assist you in this endeavor.

Choose a Topic: Your first task in preparing a thesis is to select a topic of interest to you. This topic should be, as noted above, "a serious intellectual problem".

It should be kept in mind that this is a very important part of your task. Once you commit to a task or problem, you will have to live with this topic (on a full time basis) for three to six months. Thus, pick your topic carefully. You are strongly encouraged to seek guidance from faculty members during this process.

Select Your Chair: Once you have selected a topic that you would like to pursue, you need to select the chair of your thesis committee. This is usually done by identifying a faculty member who has

interest and/or expertise in your topic area. This is an important decision on your part, because this person will guide you along the way, as to what topics need inclusion, appropriate writing style, etc.

Select Your Thesis Committee: In conjunction with your thesis chair, you next need to select the additional members of your thesis committee. You need at least two additional members.

Preparation of the Thesis Proposal: Your next task, is the preparation of your thesis proposal (Chapters 1 and 2 , the Introduction and Methods chapters) of your thesis. The process of writing your proposal has two major components:

First you need to informally meet with each of your committee members, preferably with a 3-4 page outline of the problem you intend to study, your specific questions (hypotheses) derived from your review of the relevant literature, and your ideas on how to effectively answer these questions. In these interactions, you will also want to carefully consider your committee member's suggestions, (as to possible methods, areas of the literature you need to cover in your literature review, etc).

After meeting with your committee members informally, and gathering information, ideas, etc. your next task is to write up your first two chapters of the thesis (Introduction and the Methods chapters). These two chapters, including copies of relevant measures and consent forms, will constitute the thesis proposal. This phase of the process is tedious, and generally takes four or five rewrites of the chapters. Typically, this phase is generally done between the candidate and the major advisor, (using the ideas and suggestions of the other faculty members). As noted above, you should anticipate that this phase will entail a number of rewrites, modifications, changes in the form of your proposal. Remember, the thesis is a demonstration of your ability to solve a serious intellectual problem at a high level of professional competence.

Presentation of Your Proposal: Once all of the bugs are worked out of your proposal and your major advisor has approved of your written work, your methodology, etc., then you are ready to present the proposal to your full committee.

This is a very important step in the thesis process. Basically, acceptance of the thesis proposal by your full committee serves as a written contract to which all parties are bound. In essence you propose:

1. I want to study this problem, and specifically to answer this/these questions.
2. This is the way I intend to go about answering this/these questions.

Once the full committee approves your proposal, they, in essence, agree to the following:

1. We believe that this is a valid and serious intellectual problem.
2. We believe that the questions you are asking about this problem area are valid and serious intellectual questions.
3. We believe that your methodology is a valid, and appropriate way of setting about to answer your questions at a high level of professional competence.

4. And, if you follow the steps exactly as you have outlined in your proposal, (gathering exactly the same number and type of subjects, analyzing the data as you propose) then we will approve of your final work (pending editorial changes, etc).

There is one important caution here. At times candidates want to start gathering subjects before their committee approves of the Proposal in writing (the topic, the methodology, etc.). It is recommended that this not be done. You put yourself at high risk in doing this, because if your committee recommends changes in your proposal (which may eliminate the use of subjects that you have already gathered) you could end up losing these subjects. (Often it takes one to two hours per subject, and losing even three or four is a major waste of the candidate's efforts). Thus, do not gather data before you have received the written approval of your full committee.

Changing the Contract: At times, problems arise in the completion of a thesis. For example, one cannot find enough of the type of subjects that one originally proposes to gather, etc. Your committee is aware that such problems do at times arise, despite the best of plans. However, once you and your committee have agreed to a proposal, you are in a binding contract. As such, you cannot simply change your proposal on your own. If you run into difficulties, you need to go back to your committee and get the full committee's written permission to change your proposal.

In summary, the Thesis Proposal stage of your project is a very important and demanding stage. In essence, your committee views it as a written contract. Once they agree to your approach to the problem, you can then begin to gather subjects. Subjects gathered before the committee's approval are done at your risk, and are frequently not allowed as part of the thesis. Finally, this proposal can be modified when problems arise, however, you have to go back to your full committee to modify your project.

Ethics Committee(s): Once your committee has agreed to your proposal, you need to take your proposal before the Psychology Department's Ethics Committee for their approval as well. You must have the ethics committee approval before you gather any subjects. This approval usually takes about five to seven working days.

Keep in mind that if you are proposing to use subjects from other populations, (e.g. Comp Care, a school, or a prison or jail population) you are quite likely required to take your proposal before the agency's Institutional Review Board (IRB) as well. This caution is critical. Institutional Review Boards may only meet one time a month, and if you are proposing to use some other agency's patients, your project may be delayed until after their IRB has met and approved of your project.

Finally, gathering data without Ethics Review Committee and IRB approval has serious ethical and legal consequences. The University, the College, the Department can be sued. Those review boards are in place for the protection of subject's rights. Thus, while it is always enticing to start gathering data, you very likely could be in danger of serious legal and/or ethical sanctions.

Data Gathering: Once all of the earlier steps have been completed, you are now able to gather your data.

Preparation of Your Results and Conclusions: After your data have been gathered, you begin to analyze your results and draw your conclusions to your problem of interest. This stage of the project usually consists of two steps: Data Analysis; Drawing and Writing Conclusions.

In the data analysis phase, you will get together with your thesis chair and, often, a statistical consultant, and analyze the data.

With the data in hand, one then sets about to draw empirically valid, reasonable conclusions. Again, this stage is primarily done in conjunction with one's major advisor. What generally takes place here is that you draw conclusions about your study and then present these ideas to your advisor. He\she may suggest additional conclusions, modifications, deletions and perhaps even additional analyses. Then you will take this material and write up a draft of the Results and Conclusions sections.

It should be noted that the writing up of the results and conclusions is not as easy as one might suspect. This typically takes several rewrites before the material is polished up. Thus, you need to plan into your program time to complete a number of rewrites.

Thesis Defense: Once the thesis is in good shape, then a final defense is scheduled. Generally, from the time that you hand out the latest version of your thesis to your committee, you need to plan on at least two to three weeks before you can have the actual defense. You have to allow time for the full committee to carefully review the thesis. Also, you are in the difficult position of trying to find a time when three busy faculty members can all meet with you for the defense.

At the actual defense, the candidate is expected to "defend" his\her conclusions, demonstrating how they are valid, etc. Even though the committee members make efforts to make this a comfortable process, it is always stressful for the candidate (it was tense for your faculty members when they were students as well).

As a suggestion for this phase, you need to carefully prepare a 60-90 minute presentation. In this presentation, you will summarize your review of the literature, your problem, your questions, and then go over your methodology, results and conclusions. Following this presentation, committee members will ask a number of questions, make suggestions for further revisions of your project, and argue among themselves.

At this meeting your committee members may make suggestions for changes in your thesis. You are expected to incorporate their suggestions into your final product.

Final Product: After your defense, you are expected to incorporate all changes suggested by your committee. This may involve anything from minor editorial changes to additions of blocks of material into the thesis. Once these modifications have been incorporated, you present it to the members of your committee, and obtain their signatures on the cover sheet of the thesis, signifying that each of committee members has approved of your final product.

The Last Hurdle: After you have completed all of the earlier hurdles, there is one final hurdle to complete. You must submit the thesis to the Graduate School. The Graduate School has very stringent rules governing the format of the written document (e.g., spacing, margins, etc.). A handbook of thesis requirements is available from the Graduate School webpage. Make sure that you examine closely the information in this handbook, and follow it carefully. (Actually, at this final stage, many students employ a typist familiar with the graduate school requirements). Nevertheless, these format requirements are quite detailed and the Thesis will be returned if they are not strictly adhered to.

A second point on the final product. Your thesis has to be at the Graduate School by a specified date for a particular graduation date. Be aware that date exists, and plan your time accordingly. Check with the Graduate School webpage for the exact date for the semester in which you plan to graduate.

Some Suggestions:

There are several helpful books concerning the completion of the thesis. They are in the library. These references are:

Madsen, D. (1992). Successful Dissertations and Theses. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Long, T.J., Convey, J.J., Chwalek, A.R. (1988). Completing Dissertations in the Behavioral Sciences and Education: A Systematic Guide for Graduate Students. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass Publishers.

Another helpful suggestion is that you go to the library and review several completed theses. You might ask your major advisor for the titles of several that are good examples of well-done theses.

## APPENDIX B

TO: Graduate Assistants

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_

RE: Role of Graduate Assistant

DATE:

The purpose of this memo is to attempt to clarify the role of the graduate assistant in the Department of Psychology.

Above all, I would like to stress my desire that you become a member of the departmental community, a group of psychologists engaged in teaching, scholarship, and service. I hope that as a graduate assistant you will feel as though you are an integral and important part of the department, and that you will adopt the values and goals of the department.

If you are assigned to participate in research with one of the faculty, you may consider yourself part of an enterprise that is quite important to the discipline as well as to the faculty member and the department. While this will provide a valuable learning experience for you, your assistance is very much needed and we are grateful for it. Because of the delays in writing, review, and publication, few of you will see publication of the research in which you participate during your tenure here, but you may well see presentation at a regional or national meeting. Be assured, however, that it is of high quality. Faculty members in your department compete for space in journals and on the programs of meetings with very much success. During a typical academic year the faculty and students of the department are responsible for 15-20 papers presented at meetings, about 15 papers published, and several other papers accepted and awaiting publication. Students are listed as co-authors of many of these.

In general, any assignment that you receive is one for which you are needed, and which contributes to the teaching and scholarship of the department. The faculty both expect and appreciate your contribution. While you will probably not be able to make payments on a new Porsche from your income, the hourly wage for a nominal 15-hour week is over \$7.00. We regret that not all assignments offer an intellectual challenge all the time, but then none of the faculty were allowed to start at the top either. Be assured that whenever possible your assignment will be designed to provide a learning experience.

I wish you an enjoyable and productive tenure in your assistantship with the department.

**APPENDIX C**

Graduate Assistantship Agreement  
Department of Psychology

I understand that by accepting a Graduate Assistantship in the Psychology Department, I am agreeing to be available for work Monday through Friday (except during the time I am in class or at a practicum site). I understand that I may be expected to be present on campus to work, to pick up work materials, or to drop off completed materials Monday through Friday even if I don't have classes on those days. I also understand that failure to meet these obligations may result in my assistantship being revoked.

CHECK ONE:

I accept a Graduate Assistantship

I do not accept a Graduate Assistantship

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_