GRADUATE PROGRAM POLICIES

GRADUATE STUDIES COMMITTEE

The Graduate Studies Committee is charged with (a) developing policies relevant to graduate education in the Psychology Department, (b) providing information to Division Heads that will assist in setting numerical admissions goals for their area, and (c) overseeing the implementation of existing graduate programs policies and procedures. Petitions concerning exceptions to rules are heard and voted on by the Committee, as are non-termination grievance cases that have failed to be resolved via informal mediation. The Graduate Studies Committee is composed of the Director of Graduate Studies, who serves as Chair, three faculty members appointed by the Department Chair, and three graduate students, elected by their peers. GSC membership should represent the five divisions as broadly as feasible.

All cases of academic dishonesty involving graduate students enrolled in the graduate program shall be referred by the instructor to the Graduate Studies Committee for deliberation concerning consequences to the student.

Graduate Studies Committee decisions raising substantial policy issues may be referred to the Executive Committee for further deliberation. Major policy changes must be voted on during a full Department meeting.

The Department offers programs in six major areas of specialization. Interdisciplinary programs that cut across established area and divisional boundaries can be arranged.

Major Programs
The major areas of specialization within the Graduate program are defined as follows: Neuroscience and Behavior; Cognitive Psychology; Developmental Psychology; Social Psychology; Psychology of Peace and Violence Program; Clinical Psychology.

Interdivisional and Interdisciplinary Programs

Interdivisional
Most interdivisional interests are accommodated by concentrating in one or more areas outside of the student’s major area of specialization.

Occasionally a student has a well-defined course of study in mind that does not readily fit into the Department's current structure. For example, a student might wish to pursue a program that integrates neuroscience and behavior and developmental psychology.

To be considered for an interdivisional program, a student is advised to apply to the area that most closely corresponds to his/her primary research area (e.g., neuroscience and behavior or developmental psychology). A student should indicate on the application the nature of the program and the areas of specialization that it incorporates. Interdivisional students must be accepted by all areas of specialization within the Department that are relevant to their training.
ONLY A SMALL NUMBER OF STUDENTS ARE ADMITTED INTO THIS KIND OF PROGRAM.

Interdisciplinary
The Psychology Department also offers the possibility of establishing an individualized program that cuts across Departmental lines into other areas of the University. A good example of such an interdisciplinary effort is the Cognitive Science Program, which involves the Computer and Information Science, Linguistics, Philosophy, and Psychology Departments. The Division in psychology that is most directly relevant to this program is the Cognitive Division, although the Neuroscience and Behavior Division also offers relevant research and training. In addition to the program in cognitive science, the Department of Psychology has collaborative arrangements with the Environmental Institute, the School of Education, and others. In considering an interdisciplinary program, students are advised to apply to the Division that most closely represents their interests, explaining in the personal statement accompanying the application the specific course of study that interests them.

Interpretation of Rules and Petitions for Exceptions to Rules
Questions concerning interpretation of graduate program policies should be addressed to the Director of Graduate Studies. The Graduate Director also handles petitions for exceptions to the rules. The petitioner should justify carefully any requested exception, and a recommendation from his/her advisor and Division Head is required.

Requests for rule interpretations and petitions for exceptions are referred to the Graduate Studies Committee if, in the judgment of the Graduate Director, they raise issues of policy or have the potential to set major precedents for handling of similar future cases. Then a decision is made by a majority vote of the Graduate Studies Committee. If substantial issues of policy arise by this mechanism, a case may also be referred to the Executive Committee.

GRADUATE ADMISSIONS
For University Graduate Admissions information, forms, and guidelines, please see the Graduate School Website.

Departmental Procedures
Graduate Admissions proceeds under the general direction of the Graduate Director and the Graduate Studies Committee, which sets admissions quotas or goals for the various Divisions. The Divisions in turn may establish admissions committees according to areas of specialization. Preliminary admission decisions are then made by Divisional area admissions committees; any of these decisions may be reviewed by the entire Graduate Studies Committee at the request of the Graduate Program Director. Only members of the Graduate Faculty in Psychology may make admissions decisions.

The Department utilizes an admissions policy in which initial quotas are determined by the ability of a Division to fund eligible students. Departmental resources (e.g., teaching assistantships) are distributed to each Division in proportion to the number of its graduate faculty; any additional sources of support generated by a Division are added to its allocation. In
determining a Division’s final quota, the Graduate Studies Committee may take into 
consideration factors other than funding (e.g., programmatic needs, student/faculty ratio, number 
and quality of applicants, job placement), provided that the general Departmental policy on the 
funding of eligible students (see below) is not abrogated.

In keeping with a commitment to the values of diversity and social change, each Division 
Admissions Committee must work closely with the Diversity Committee to attract and recruit 
derunderrepresented groups, including ethnic minorities, women and persons with disabilities, 
thereby achieving a graduate student body representing a variety of perspectives and social and 
cultural backgrounds.

Readmission
Students who withdraw from the program in good standing, or who are dismissed and who wish 
to be reconsidered because of extenuating circumstances, may reapply for admission later. 
Applications for readmission will ordinarily be considered in the spring, during the regular 
admission period and following standard procedures. In extraordinary circumstances, 
applications for readmission may be considered at other times, in which case the relevant 
Division will review the application and make its recommendation to the Graduate Program 
Director and Graduate Studies Committee.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Students receive financial support from a variety of sources, including teaching assistantships, 
research assistantships, traineeships (e.g., NIMH training grant), University Fellowships, as well 
as stipends from non-Departmental sources within and outside the University.

The amount of money associated with each of these forms of support varies, as do arrangements 
concerning waivers of tuition and fees. The size of teaching assistant stipends may vary also, 
depending on the assignment. Currently, assistantships of ten or more hours per week each 
semester carry full tuition and curriculum fee waivers and 95% exemption of the costs of 
individual health insurance fees (90% for the family plan). The student will remain responsible 
for other mandatory University fees. Please see the Graduate School for current fees.

Admissions and distribution of funding are determined by each Division and recommended to 
the Graduate Program Director who makes final decisions.

All Divisional funding plans strive to maintain the quality of the program while simultaneously 
seeking to provide the support necessary for the continued progress of advanced students.

Please check with the individual graduate programs for their guidelines on student support.

Neuroscience and Behavior Division
Cognitive Division
Developmental Division
Social Division
Teaching Assistantships
Teaching Assistantships are stipends provided by the University for the purpose of assisting in undergraduate courses. These assignments involve an average of either 10 or 20 hours of work per week over the course of a semester (approximately 15 weeks). It is important that students work the number of hours for which they are paid. It is especially important that all students work the same number of hours for the same amount of money. Faculty should be responsible in their requirements and accurate in estimating the number of hours that they need. Students should recognize that the TA assignment is a job, not a gift, and that they have a responsibility to meet their contractual obligations.

TA Priorities
The current list of course priorities for assigning teaching assistants are:

First Priority:

- Psych 240 Statistics
- Psych 241 Methods
- Psych 392 Junior Year Writing Seminar (this requires enrollment in Psych 891B: Teaching/Writing in Psychology)
- Psych 494 RI Interdisciplinary Directions in Psych (Integrative Experience)
- Psych 640/641 Grad Statistics

Second Priority: Core courses required for the major, other large undergraduate courses, and intensive graduate courses

Baseline TA allotments will be 1 TA (20 hours/week) per section for all first priority courses and 1/2 TA (10 hours/week) for second priority courses. The Department normally hopes to provide at least the baseline allotment for all second priority courses, with larger courses having priority over smaller ones.

TA Commitments / Failure to complete all TA Commitments
Teaching assistantships benefit both the recipient and the Department. Acceptance of such support is regarded as a contractual agreement. The nature of this agreement is as follows:
1. Once a TA has accepted an assistantship, he/she is expected to complete his/her assigned duties. Faculty supervisors are responsible for informing TAs about these duties. TAs are required to be available from the beginning of the semester until the date the final grades are due. Late arrivals or early departures must have faculty supervisor approval and must be discussed prior to the beginning of the semester.

2. Acceptance of a TA obligates the student for the entire period of appointment. Early termination of an assistantship by the recipient or the faculty supervisor requires approval of the Graduate Program Director.

3. If a TA is thought to be performing unsatisfactorily or an instructor is believed to be treating a TA unfairly, the first level of resolution resides with the Graduate Program Director. If the Director cannot resolve the problem, the second level of resolution is with the Division that accepted the student. If required, a committee composed of Division Heads, Director of Graduate Studies, and the Department Chair may be formed to reach a resolution. Failures to perform appropriate duties may justify withdrawal of future Department funding, withdrawal of eligibility for Continuing Education assignments, and other actions.

4. At the end of each semester, all faculty supervisors will provide their graduate TAs and the Graduate Director with a formal TA evaluation. This evaluation will be filed in the student’s graduate file.

ADVISING AND EVALUATIONS

Relationship with Advisor
Every Graduate student in the Psychology Department works with an academic advisor whose primary (not adjunct) appointment is in the Psychology Department. The student and faculty research interests and the current load on faculty will be taken into consideration when making determinations.

At the beginning of each year, the student and his/her advisor should agree on what they expect to be accomplished that year. This agreement includes:

- The specification of course work appropriate to the student’s interests and the Divisional and Graduate program requirements
- Setting of realistic goals with respect to research, teaching, and/or clinical experience.
- Discussion of priorities, time management and the desired quality of performance.

Formal Student Evaluations
At the end of each year, the faculty of a Division or area must provide written feedback to students. Although the advisor’s input into this evaluation is very important, the responsibility for accurate, informative, and thorough feedback is shared by all relevant faculty in a Division. Faculty within each division decide on the exact structure through which the evaluation is carried out, but the written statement must be, at a minimum, the product of evaluation conducted by
more than one faculty member. The written evaluations become part of the student’s Graduate Office file.

It is important that faculty expectations and evaluations be expressed as clearly as possible and be responsive both to the faculty’s sense of what is desirable in a UMass Ph.D. and the individual student’s level of training, interests, and abilities.

Termination from the Graduate Program
Students who fail to meet Departmental Standards may be terminated from the Graduate Program. A student may appeal their Division’s decision to terminate by speaking with Graduate Program Director who will assemble an evaluation committee composed of the Graduate Program Director and the Division Heads, and chaired by the Department Chair. This Committee has the power of final decision regarding the Department’s recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School.

A student who is recommended for termination and wishes to appeal should present to the Evaluation Committee any information regarding his/her individual set of circumstances. This information will assist the Committee in making a fully informative and careful decision. In addition, the following guidelines are followed in order to provide further uniformity of standards:

1. To allow the student ample time to prepare his/her case, a two-week notice of an evaluation meeting is given to any student who will be under consideration.
2. The student has a right to be represented at the evaluation meeting.
3. Termination may be recommended based on numerous criteria including, but not limited to, failure to meet deadlines, poor course performance, poor research performance and/or failure to make adequate progress in the Graduate Program.

A termination recommendation must have been preceded by at least one written warning in a preceding semester that a student is having academic difficulty and is in danger of being recommended for termination. The student in question should be informed in writing of a termination recommendation, by means of a letter from his/her Division Head that includes a statement of the justification for the termination recommendation and informs the student that s/he may request a review of the decision from the Evaluation Committee.

Failure to meet any of the Department or Graduate School statutes of limitations (described below) may also result in termination from the program.

REQUIREMENTS

Research
Early in the first semester of residence all students participate in research under the supervision of a faculty member. The student is expected to pursue his/her research interest during the first year with focus on developing topics for the Master’s thesis. The student is expected to continue his/her research productivity throughout his/her graduate career, which culminates in an original scholarly dissertation.
Teaching
Students are required to acquire teaching experience under the supervision of one or more faculty members (see Ph.D. teaching requirements). Most students acquire this experience while receiving funding from a Teaching Assistantship. While TA responsibilities generally involve assisting in a course taught by a faculty member, advanced students sometimes have an opportunity to teach their own courses. Most opportunities to teach one’s own course arise through Continuing Education or Summer School courses.

Teaching Practicum
Occasionally a Teaching Practicum may be offered as a seminar or graduate course. However, in general, the Teaching Practicum is arranged on an individual basis, following an apprenticeship model. The Department has adopted the following policy guidelines concerning Teaching Practicum:

1. Teaching Practicum is not required.

2. Those that elect to teach a Research Methods lab may enroll in up to 3 credits of Teaching Practicum during their first semester teaching the course.

3. For those who elect Teaching Practicum for courses other than Research Methods, it will be in the form of an apprenticeship model, as follows:
   - The student and faculty member will develop a contract specifying the goals of the apprenticeship, including the number of credits to be earned, the inputs of the student, his/her attendance at the lectures, and any teaching seminars to be instituted, etc. The contract will be filed in the student’s folder.
   - At the end of the semester, both parties to the contract will write evaluations and discuss them with each other. The evaluations of the student’s performance will be filed in his/her folder.

4. A student need not be a paid TA to enroll in Teaching Practicum.

5. Students with good reputations or evaluations as teachers, by their performance in Teaching Practicum or in other settings, may be given priority in assignments of TAs in general and of TAs for given courses, where possible.

Timetable for Satisfactory Progress in Graduate Program
Students and advisors should be guided in their expectations and goals by the following the Guidelines to Graduate Degrees. These guidelines below serve as a standard defining pace at which graduate students are expected to progress through their programs. Students should check with their individual program for program completion expectations.

1. Master’s thesis planned during the first academic year and proposal signed no later than October of the second year.
2. Master’s and core requirements completed by the end of the second academic year.

3. Comprehensive examination proposal approved by October of the third academic year.

4. Comprehensive examination completed and dissertation proposal approved no later than the end of the third academic year.

5. Dissertation completed by the end of the fourth academic year.

The Clinical division requires 5 years in residence, with the 6th year as the clinical internship year. The 5th year includes enrollment in a clinical supervision team.

Statues of Limitations
Although these guidelines define satisfactory progress in terms of the standards set by the Psychology Department, some students complete degrees in less or more than the expected time. Provided that a student’s advisor and Divisional faculty agree to an extended program, it is possible for students to complete the program at a slower pace than specified by the guidelines. Time limits are set by the advisor and the Divisional faculty, but may not exceed those specified by the Statutes of Limitations.

The Statue of Limitations (SOL) is the time period in which all degree requirements must be completed. For doctoral students admitted after the Summer 2009, the SOL set by the Graduate School is six (6) years prior to achieving candidacy and five (5) years once candidacy is achieved. For students entering the program already possessing a Master’s degree in psychology, the statute is four years. Please note these statutes include the time required for the Clinical Internship. The Graduate School also has a three-year statute of limitations for completion of the Master’s degree.

Petitions for extensions of any of the above statutes are initiated by a student’s Division Head on his/her behalf. The petition is sent to the Graduate director. The Graduate Director makes the final decision regarding an extension on any of the above statues and informs the Dean of the Graduate School of such approval. The Dean of the Graduate School must approve any extension after the Graduate Director provides supporting approval.

Leaves of Absence
Provided that a student is granted a formal leave of absence from the program, leave-time is not counted against the above statues of limitations. Petitions for leaves of absence are addressed to the student’s Division Head. Once the Division Head has approved the leave, the petition goes to the Dean or Associate Dean of the Graduate School, who makes the final decision concerning the granting of the leave. The policy of the Graduate School is to grant leaves only if they are justified. Students must pay program fees even though a leave has been granted. Failure to remain on program fees means that the student must reapply to the Graduate School for admission to the Psychology Department.
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MASTER’S DEGREE

A Master’s degree in Psychology must be earned before going on to the Ph.D. A minimum of 30 credits is required for the Master’s degree, 21 of which must be in psychology, including 6 in statistics (see below). A minimum of 16 credits must be on a letter-graded basis. A Master’s thesis must be completed, and an oral examination (based primarily on, but not limited to, the thesis) must be passed. A maximum of 10 research credits (Psychology 699) is allowed for the Master’s thesis. The Master’s degree cannot be awarded unless a student’s cumulative grade point average is 3.0 or higher.

Divisions and specialized programs may set additional requirements for the award of the Master’s degree. These requirements are outlined on each Division’s Policies and Procedures.

Requirements for Master’s degree: Transfer Students
A Master’s degree obtained at another university may satisfy the requirements for holding a Master’s degree in psychology before proceeding to the Ph.D. if the student demonstrates (1) that training obtained through course work elsewhere is comparable to training obtained in our Master’s program, and (2) that a Master’s thesis project was completed that is comparable to projects in our Master’s program. The Graduate Studies Committee (GSC), with the advice of the student’s Division Head and advisor, will determine whether these two conditions have been fulfilled.

Determinations of these two conditions are independent and the student may remedy a negative determination of the thesis requirement by completing the equivalent of a Master’s thesis project (Psychology 699) in this Department or remedy a negative determination of the course work requirement by completing a program of study at UMass that meets the approval of the GSC.

The substitution of a Master’s thesis from another university will not permit the receipt of a University of Massachusetts degree; approval of a non-University thesis merely allows a transfer student to proceed to the Ph.D. if the other requirements for a Master’s thesis are fulfilled.

Steps to Completing a Master’s Degree
Each student carries out a Master’s thesis under the direction of a Master’s Committee. To set up a Master’s Committee, a student generally starts with an area of interest or a specific problem within psychology and then finds a faculty member with similar interests to chair the committee. However, some students start with a faculty member with whom they would like to work and tie into that faculty member’s area of interest.

Master’s Committee
According to Departmental policy, the Master’s Committee consists of three or more members of the Graduate Faculty. At least two of the Department’s areas of specialization must be represented on the Committee. Areas are defined as Neuroscience and Behavior; Cognitive Psychology; Developmental Psychology; Social Psychology; Psychology of Peace and Violence;
Clinical Psychology. However, if one Committee member is chosen from outside the Department, only one of the Psychology Department’s areas need be represented. This modification of the “two area rule” can only be granted if the specialization of the outside member is not the same as that of the other committee members. Ordinarily, a student’s own area of specialization is represented by at least one member of the Committee, and usually the Chair is from the student’s own area. However, with the approval of a student’s Division Head, the Chair, as well as all of the other Committee members, can be chosen from outside of the area. At least two members of the Committee must have their primary appointment in the Psychology Department.

Five College Graduate Faculty and adjunct Graduate Faculty may serve, but not chair, Master’s Committees with the approval of the Graduate Director.

Exceptions to these rules are handled by petition to the Graduate Director.

Master’s Proposal
Traditionally the Master’s proposal consists of a review of the literature relevant to the research problem and a statement of the methodology proposed for the project. However, because the proposal is considered a contract between the student and his/her committee, it is necessary for the committee to formally approve the proposal. After the student has met with his or her committee to discuss the proposal and the proposal has been approved and signed, it should be submitted to the Graduate School through the Graduate Secretary. Two copies of the proposal must be given to the Graduate Secretary: one for submission to the Graduate School and one for retention in the student’s file in the Graduate Office. The proposal should be typed with the approval signatures of the committee on the cover page of the proposal. The Master’s proposal must be submitted to the Graduate School four months prior to the oral exam.

Master’s Research
Modest Departmental funds (generally about $300) are available to aid students in carrying out their Master’s thesis research. Students will be eligible for this grant only if they are working with a member of the Psychology Department. This money can be used for photocopying expenses associated with the research, payment for subjects, purchase of equipment, etc. If a student requires this financial aid, a request should go to the Associate Chair of the Psychology Department. If a student has once received money for Master’s research, s/he is not eligible for Departmental funding for Master’s work in future semesters even though s/he may not have finished the thesis.

Please be aware that the University Institutional Review Board must approve all research. If the proposed Master’s research involves the use of human subjects in any context, a student must receive permission from the Departmental Human Subjects Committee before recruiting subjects.

Final Oral Examination
When a student has completed the Master’s thesis, s/he will take a general “defense of thesis” examination. This examination need not be limited to the thesis topic. The thesis itself must be approved and the final oral examination voted “pass” by all members of the Master’s Committee.
The Department Chair must also sign the thesis as “approved.” Four weeks before the orals, the Graduate Secretary must be informed of the time, place and date of the exam, as well as the title of the thesis, for publication via email to Department members. A part of the oral examination, namely the presentation of the thesis work by the candidate, is considered public and faculty and graduate students are invited to attend.

*Scheduling of Master’s Orals*

Orals should not be scheduled during summer months unless absolutely necessary. The Department policy relevant to that is as follows:

In planning their research schedules, students should not expect faculty to provide intensive research supervision or to schedule their orals during the summer months. It is expected that thesis, comps, and dissertation meetings will be held during the academic year and that students will plan accordingly. Exceptions to this pattern are at the discretion of the particular faculty involved, and must be negotiated well in advance. Since Graduate School deadlines are at the end of August, the Department will consider the deadline for completing the master’s thesis to be the end of the spring semester. Orals will be scheduled beyond this time only with the permission of the thesis chair and committee members.

*Final Steps to Completing the Master’s Degree*

A booklet, Guidelines for Master's Theses and Doctoral Dissertations is available from the Office of Degree Requirements of the Graduate School. The Office of Degree Requirements will not accept theses that do not comply with Graduate School Guidelines. These guidelines reflect University-wide standards and are not equivalent to field-specific standards, e.g., as stipulated in the APA Publication Manual. The thesis should also include an abstract with a maximum of 350 words.

A master’s thesis must be typed in the style explained in Guidelines for Master’s Theses and Doctoral Dissertations. The thesis must be submitted through the UMass Amherst Scholar Works website (scholarworks.umass.edu/theses/). The thesis must be approved and signed by all members of the thesis committee and the Department Chair. One original copy of the thesis signature page, on acid free, 20 lb. weight, 8 1/2” x 11” paper, with signatures must be submitted to the Office of Degree Requirements.

Provided that all requirements for the M.S. degree have been fulfilled, students must complete a Master’s Degree Eligibility Form. This form can be found on the Graduate School’s webpage. The completed form goes to the graduate secretary’s office. Candidates must also complete and submit a Psychology Departmental Requirements Completion Form for the Master’s Degree. It is available on the Psychology Department web site. The departmental form must be completed by the student and signed by several department members.

*Submission Deadlines*

The University confers degrees three times a year: February, May and September. Submission guidelines are published in the Graduate School’s Academic Calendar. Deadlines are absolute.
For current information on deadlines and requirements, please see the Graduate Schools Webpage on [Master’s degree Requirements and Thesis Information.](#)

**NOTE: Just about everything that you do requires a memo from the Psychology Graduate Office to the Graduate School. If you have questions check with the graduate secretary.**

DEPARTMENTAL CORE COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The core course program consists of two requirements: (a) two courses in quantitative methods, and (b) three content area courses.

*Quantitative Courses*

All first year graduate students are required to enroll in Psychology 640 (Statistical Inference in Psychology I) and Psychology 641 (Statistical Inference in Psychology II). Students must pass both courses with a grade of B- or higher. The only exception to this rule is if a student has obtained a waiver on the basis of having successfully completed a comparable graduate-level course elsewhere. Waivers may be requested from Department faculty who normally serve as instructors for the course. The Psychology 640/641 sequence serves as the introductory course for advanced statistics courses in the Department.

*Content Area Courses*

Students are required to complete three core courses outside of their area. To fulfill the core-course requirement, all three courses must be outside the student’s major field of concentration (but not necessarily outside of his/her division). Course area is contingent upon the division in which the instructor is affiliated. Thus, if a faculty member from developmental psychology is teaching a course, it will count as a developmental course. If a course is co-taught by members of more than one division/area, the student (and his/her advisor) will determine how the course will be used to meet the core requirement. If the faculty member teaching the course is affiliated with more than one division, the faculty member teaching the course will decide how the course will count for individual students. Three core courses will be required and no courses (even if taught by members of two different divisions) will count for more than one core requirement.

Students need to consult with their advisor when selecting their core courses.

Statistics courses can never be used to meet the core-course requirement.

*Waivers of content area courses*

Waivers of content area courses may be granted on the basis of a passing grade in comparable graduate courses, and demonstrated competence in the subject matter, but waivers are not granted for prior undergraduate work. Faculty members who teach a particular core course should be consulted if a waiver is desired for that course. If the instructor is unavailable or unable to judge equivalence for certain core courses, students should contact the relevant Division Head for a recommendation concerning an appropriate faculty member. Core Course Waiver Forms can be found either on line in the Graduate Secretary’s Office.
**Prerequisites to core course program**

Ordinarily graduate students are accepted into the program only if they have acquired extensive and fundamental background knowledge in psychology. Students who lack such background in psychology may be required to make up deficiencies in their undergraduate records. The advisor, after examining the undergraduate record of the advisee, shall determine whether a student’s undergraduate record is satisfactory in this respect. The advisor should also examine the sufficiency of the student’s background for satisfactory progress in the first-year statistics sequence (Psychology 640/641). If a student’s record is weak in any of these respects, remedial work may be required to bring his/her background up to the level necessary for satisfactory progress in the graduate core program. Past experience suggests that remedial work may especially be advisable for some students in preparation for the statistics sequence. Advisors are encouraged to consult the same faculty who provide waivers for the content area courses and for the statistics sequence to provide guidance concerning the adequacy of the student’s undergraduate records.

**Concentration option contingent upon demonstration of breadth.**

As an alternative to completion of three content area core courses to meet departmental core requirements, students, in consultation with faculty, may, if they have demonstrated breadth in psychology through their undergraduate work, develop and complete a coherent program consisting of three courses outside of their specialty area (e.g., peace psychology, statistics, neuroscience, etc.). The student, with the approval of his or her advisor, must provide a transcript of all prior undergraduate and graduate level course work for evaluation. Because undergraduate courses are typically less intensive than graduate courses, breadth using undergraduate work will generally require that the student have completed courses in a broad spectrum of the field including cognitive, biological, social or developmental, and personality or abnormal psychology. In addition, at least one of these areas should include one or more advanced undergraduate courses distinctly outside of the student’s primary field of graduate study.

In keeping with the purpose of the core course system, the student must also complete the [Concentration in Lieu of Core Courses Proposal form](#) and provide a description that documents how the concentration of three graduate courses proposed for this option forms a cohesive program that complements and provides breadth to the student’s training. All three graduate courses proposed for the concentration must be unambiguously outside of the student’s major field of study. Moreover, two of the courses must be outside of the student’s own division (except in the case of quantitative/methodological courses). The concentration may not include courses required by the department or division, such as Psychology 640 and Psychology 641.

The faculty members of the Graduate Studies Committee are charged with evaluating a student’s undergraduate record and the proposed concentration to determine if both are in keeping with the spirit of the core course system. The student’s Advisor and the Director of Graduate Studies also must approve this option. **When employing this option, a student must submit a proposal no later than the end of his or her second year in the graduate program to allow ample time to complete the planned course of study. Importantly, no more than one course taken prior to committee approval of the student’s proposal may count toward completion of this requirement.**

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Completion of core course requirements
It is recommended that students complete their core course requirements by the end of the second year in the program. Because of special program needs, some students may require
longer. But all core course requirements must be completed before the Ph.D. dissertation can be officially started (i.e., before the dissertation proposal is approved and sent to the Graduate School).

PRELIMINARY COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

The preliminary comprehensive examination (Comps) serves both an educational and evaluative role. Its objective is to develop and demonstrate a level of scholarship and knowledge in the student’s chosen area of study that is appropriate to the doctoral level scientist-professional. It is intended to demonstrate a student’s integrative and theoretical abilities in a general area of Psychology, as well as a specialized field within that area. The preliminary comprehensive exam has a different function than the master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation in which the objective is the demonstration of research competence. It also differs from teaching and clinical practice in which the objective is the demonstration of competence in teaching or clinical work. The objectives of the comps and the criteria for determining that the candidate has met those objectives should be well defined. The comps committee may form the nucleus of the dissertation committee in many cases, but should not routinely be considered so.

Comps will consist of a demonstration of competence in a student’s area of specialization and a demonstration of competence in a broader domain of psychology relevant to a student’s program of study. The demonstration of specialized competence could take the form of an extended written examination or the form of a critical paper examining research issues within the area of specialization. The demonstration of competence in a broader domain of psychology could again take the form of an extended written examination, or preparation of an extensive paper. Opportunity for an oral defense connected to the examination will be optional.

Because Departmental policy holds divisional and area faculty primarily responsible for any evaluation of a candidate’s performance, and because divisions are typically groups of people having similar interests, there will be a tendency for the form of the comps in any one division to be similar. Because the intent of this policy, however, is to allow for individual professional development and demonstration of scholarly competence, the imposition of a single examination for all the candidates in a given division would not be consistent with the intent of this policy. If there is overlap in the projected scope of the preliminary comprehensive examination for a number of candidates studying in a division or area, some questions common to all candidates may be included.

Procedures

Comps cannot be officially started until the Master’s thesis has been completed. Comps and all core course requirements must be completed before the Ph.D. dissertation can be officially started. Students should complete all courses by the end of the second semester of the third year of graduate work. The candidate and his/her advisor then discuss and agree on the general area, subject matter, material, deadlines, etc., to be covered by both aspects of the comprehensive exam. The comps committee is composed of a minimum of three faculty who are all members of the Graduate Faculty (at least two from the Psychology Department; of those two, one must be
from the student’s own area of specialization). Any one of these faculty may serve as chair of the committee.

When comps is completed and approved by the faculty serving on a student’s committee, the chairperson of the committee sends a memo to the Graduate Program Director indicating that this requirement has been satisfactorily met. A copy of the written components of the comps should be attached for placement in the student’s file in the Graduate Office. Please note that the only information sent to the Graduate School is a memo from the Graduate Program Director indicating that a student has completed the comps.

If copies of the comprehensive exam are needed for distribution to committee members, it is the student’s responsibility to provide them.

**Ph.D. DEGREE**

In addition to the Master’s thesis or its equivalent, each student must meet the following specific academic requirements in order to obtain the Ph.D.:

1. Fulfillment of the departmental core requirements;
2. Fulfillment of any divisional requirements;
3. Fulfillment of any individual requirements negotiated with a student’s advisor and area;
4. Passing a preliminary comprehensive examination;
5. Completion of a doctoral dissertation;
6. Passing an oral examination based primarily upon, but not limited to, the dissertation;
7. Fulfillment of the Graduate School’s residence requirement of a minimum of one academic year as a full-time graduate student in University residence.

The student’s advisor, together with the faculty of his/her division, will determine how many graduate course credits in psychology or related disciplines that the student should earn, beyond those specified for the Master’s degree. According to the Graduate School’s rules, at least 10 dissertation credits (Psychology 899) must be earned, and the Ph.D. degree cannot be awarded unless a student’s cumulative grade point average is 3.0 or higher.

**Language and other technical requirements**

There is no University- or Department-wide foreign language requirement for either the Master’s or Ph.D. degree. However, the Department may require that a student be examined in a foreign language, if competence in a foreign language is necessary for the student’s program of study and research. Similarly, the satisfactory completion of a basic course in computer science, or some
other technical course, may be required for the Ph.D. degree. Such a course is usually completed early in the student’s program of study so that it provides a research tool.

Seminars
All advanced students are expected to participate in graduate seminars. Ordinarily students are expected to take at least three seminars for credit. Usually such seminars are taken in the student’s specialty area and are three credits each. Often students participate in the selection of the topic to be investigated by the seminar and lead discussions before the group.

Transfer Students
In addition to fulfilling the University requirements for the Ph.D., transfer students must take three substantive courses or seminars in Psychology (excluding independent study, internships, practica, comprehensive exam, and thesis and dissertation credits).

Teaching Experience
To obtain the Ph.D. degree, all students are required to obtain one semester of teaching experience. Generally this experience is acquired through serving as a Teaching Assistant for a course taught by a faculty member within the Department. The Graduate Studies Committee has determined that the teaching requirement can be fulfilled through participation in a (paid) Teaching Assistantship consisting of at least 10 hours per week for a full year, or 20 hours per week for one semester. This assistantship must include substantive teaching duties. As an alternative, the teaching requirement can be fulfilled by actually teaching a one-semester, three-credit course or by teaching a course through Continuing Education.

Ph.D. Dissertation
The doctoral dissertation is the last research project undertaken during a student’s graduate career. It is the major research undertaking of a student’s program and is expected to involve most of a year’s investment of time and energy. The format of a student’s dissertation is a discretionary matter involving the mutual agreement of a student and his or her Dissertation Committee. Those individuals involved, as they deem it to be appropriate in each case, decide the specific research. However, the dissertation should constitute a significant and original contribution to the field of psychology.

Dissertation Committee
Each student carries out a Ph.D. dissertation under the direction of a Dissertation Committee. Departmental requirements for the composition of the Ph.D. Dissertation Committee are as follows:

The Doctoral Dissertation Committee consists of four or more members of the Graduate Faculty. The chairperson of the Committee is usually from the student’s own area within the Department and is typically the student’s academic advisor. However, with approval of a student’s Division Head, the Chair, as well as other Committee members, can be chosen from outside the area.

Once the Chair has been agreed upon, the student and that faculty member should constitute the remainder of the Committee according to the guidelines that follow. The faculty member then
submits a request to the Graduate Director to appoint the Committee, naming him/herself as Chair. If the Graduate Director approves the Committee membership, the Director will submit a formal nomination to the Dean of the Graduate School, who has the ultimate authority in the appointment of dissertation committees. It is understood that faculty members nominated for appointment to a dissertation committee have already agreed to serve in that capacity.

At least one member must be chosen from faculty in Divisions other than that of the student. As in the case of the Master’s Thesis, the member from outside the student’s own Division should provide a breadth of perspective in analyzing and assessing the student’s work. This member also acts as a representative of the Departmental Chair to ensure that procedural guidelines are properly followed.

In addition, at least one member of the Committee must be chosen from outside the Psychology Department. This member, according to Graduate School regulations, will act as a representative of the Graduate Council. He/she may not be adjunct or cross-appointed to the Psychology Department unless his/her doctorate is outside Psychology, as the Graduate School specifies that its representative be outside of the student’s discipline.

All members of the Dissertation Committee, including those outside of the student’s Division and outside of the Psychology Department, will attend all meetings of the Committee. They will be present at the final examination and will be full voting members. Should any Committee member not approve the dissertation, the dissertation will be reviewed by the Committee of Division Heads, which will make a written recommendation to the Departmental Chair. The Committee of Division Heads will obtain statements from the doctoral candidate, the Chair of the Doctoral Committee, and the dissenting Committee member(s), and may seek other information that it deems appropriate. After considering the recommendation from the Committee of Division Heads, the Departmental Chair will decide whether or not to sign the dissertation, thereby recommending its acceptance or non-acceptance to the Graduate School.

Any exceptions to these regulations are handled by written request of the Graduate Director. This includes the nomination of non-UMass faculty members to serve on dissertation committees. Although the Graduate School does not encourage this practice, an exception may be granted if clearly justified (e.g., the requisite expertise is not available on campus). It should also be noted that Five-College faculty may serve on dissertation committees as non-voting consultants, again with the approval of the Graduate School.

Dissertation Proposal

Most of the procedures for the Master’s proposal (see above) hold true for the dissertation proposal.

Students should start their proposals at the beginning of the second semester of the third year, with the goal of completing the proposal by the end of the third year. The proposal should describe in detail the work to be done for the dissertation. Traditionally the dissertation proposal consists of a review of the literature relevant to the research problem and a statement of the methodology proposed for the project, as well as a report of any preliminary work that has already been conducted. Once prepared, the proposal is discussed at a meeting attended by the
student and the entire Dissertation Committee. If approved, the proposal is signed by each
member of the Dissertation Committee to indicate approval of the topic and its plan of execution.
Two copies of the proposal must be given to the Graduate Secretary: one for submission to the
Graduate School and one for retention in the student’s file in the Graduate Office. The proposal
should be typed with the approval signatures on the cover page of the proposal (similar to that of
the dissertation signature page--see below). The dissertation proposal must be submitted to the
Graduate School seven months prior to the oral exam.

Dissertation Research
The amount of Departmental money available to support dissertation research is generally about
$300 per student. The procedure for applying for this money is the same as that described for the
Master’s thesis--contact the Associate Chair.

Students are required to take dissertation credits (Psychology 899) while working on the
dissertation. At least 10 dissertation credits, but not more than 27, must be earned. There is no
total credit hour requirement for the Ph.D. degree imposed by the Graduate School other than the
dissertation credits.

NSB dissertation students may receive a one-time grant in the amount of $500 to be used to
conduct dissertation research. Students will be eligible for this grant only if they are working
with a member of the Psychology Department.

Final Oral Examination
When all members of the Dissertation Committee have tentatively approved
penultimate draft of the dissertation, the oral defense of the dissertation examination is held. A
memo stating the date of the examination, which has been agreed upon by the student and all
members of the Dissertation Committee, is sent to the Graduate School. This memo must reach
the Graduate School four weeks in advance of the orals so that the details of the examination can
be announced in the “In The Loop” electronic newsletter at umass.edu.

The orals constitute the traditional “defense of the dissertation” examination. As its name
implies, this examination is usually completely oral; however, at the discretion of the
Department, written parts are not precluded. The exam pertains primarily to the dissertation,
although it is not necessarily limited to the dissertation. The examination is conducted by the
Dissertation Committee, all members of which must be present, including the outside member.
To pass, a student must receive the unanimous vote of the Dissertation Committee; other
Graduate Faculty members present may not vote. The oral examination is public, and faculty and
graduate students are encouraged to attend.

Scheduling of Ph.D. Orals
Orals should not be scheduled during summer months, unless absolutely necessary. The relevant
Department policy is as follows:
In planning their research schedules, students should not expect faculty to provide intensive research supervision or to schedule their orals during the summer months. It is expected that thesis, comps and dissertation meetings will be held during the academic year and that students will plan accordingly. Exceptions to this pattern are at the discretion of the particular faculty involved, and must be negotiated well in advance. Because Graduate School deadlines are at the end of August, the Department will consider the deadline for dissertation orals to be the end of the spring semester preceding the statute of limitations. Orals will be scheduled beyond this time only with the permission of the dissertation chair and committee members.

Final Steps to Completing the Ph.D.
A memo from the student’s Dissertation Committee Chair stating the Ph.D. oral examination was passed must be sent to the department Graduate Program Director. The department will notify the Graduate School of the results.

A booklet called Guidelines for Master’s Theses and Doctoral Dissertations is available online or from the Office of Degree Requirements at the Graduate School. The guidelines for the dissertation are similar to, but somewhat more stringent than, the guidelines for the Master’s thesis. Adhere carefully to the guidelines. To aid you in the process, the Graduate School also provides a Checklist for Doctoral Degrees.

After the dissertation is completed and approved by the Dissertation Committee, and the final orals have been passed, the following steps remain:

1. The Department Chair needs to sign the dissertation signature page after the Departmental Degree Requirements Form has been completed. This form must be signed by the student’s division head, the department graduate secretary, and the building coordinator.

2. A onetime fee (the Graduate School Service Fee) will be charged to all entering graduate students. This fee will cover expenses associated with Thesis and Dissertation Binding, Graduate Commencement, and transcripts.

3. An abstract of the dissertation of no more than 350 words must be filed with the Graduate School. The abstract must also be included in the preliminary pages of the dissertation.

4. The dissertation must be typed in a prescribed style (see the Typing Guidelines for Master’s Theses and Doctoral Dissertations) and submitted electronically through the University’s dissertation submission site at UMI Dissertation Publishing/ProQuest. The dissertation must be approved and signed by all members of the dissertation committee and the Department Chair. The Graduate School is the final and only arbiter of what is an acceptable dissertation. Copyrighting the dissertation is optional. There is a $65.00 fee which should be paid if you want UMI Dissertation Publishing to register your copyright with the Library of Congress Copyright Office. The dissertation will be cataloged in the Library of Congress and in the W.E.B. DuBois Library. Microfilm copies may be purchased from UMI/ProQuest online. The Graduate School also has a list of binderies available. Students must fill out a form entitled, Certification of Eligibility for a Doctoral Degree, which is available at the Graduate School’s website. It requires the signatures of
the Psychology Department Graduate Program Director and the Psychology Department Chair.

5. An [Graduate Database Information Form](#), available online, must be completed for the departmental data base.

NOTE: You must be an “active” graduate student to obtain your degree. This means taking credits or paying the Program Fee every semester before you graduate. No fee is needed to maintain active status over the summer.

You are now a Ph.D.! Congratulations!!