

**GRADUATE PROGRAM IN EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY**

**GRADUATE HANDBOOK**

**ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021**

**Approved by Experimental Program Committee**

**May 4, 2020**

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## Introduction

This handbook is the most up-to-date rendering of the rules, regulations, and guidelines that will direct you through your graduate study. Because we want our graduates to be well prepared to meet changing professional demands, modifications in the program procedures and requirements are introduced from time to time. You need to be aware of them, because some of them may apply to you. You should track additional notices that are sent regarding the changes or updates to the handbook.

Graduate Students have the option of following the regulations in the most recent handbook or the handbook that was in effect in the year that they entered. This latter handbook typically is specific for the incoming year except for the rare instances when the handbook was not updated that year - - then the handbook is the one that was last approved by the program faculty. A graduate student cannot mix and match regulations across handbooks - - they must choose one handbook. Typically graduate students will find that the regulations in the most recent handbook will provide them with a better program since we are always trying to improve it.

This handbook is divided into six sections:

- **Section 1: The Ph.D. Degree Objective** addresses objectives, timelines, and requirements of the Ph.D. Program.
- **Section 2: Committees** gives an in depth discussion of the types of committees that guide students through the Ph.D. program.
- **Section 3: Guidelines for Major Program Landmarks** discusses the guidelines for the Qualifying Exam Project, the Written Comprehensive Examination, the Oral Comprehensive Examination, and the Dissertation.
- **Section 4 Components of the Experimental Program** addresses the critical details of the Experimental Program that will help you understand how the program is organized.
- **Section 5 General Program Policies**
- **Section 6: What to expect in Committee Meetings with your Faculty** addresses the professional etiquette and format for each of the program meetings you will attend.

The faculty, graduate students, and staff members of the University of South Carolina's graduate program in Experimental Psychology welcome you. We are pleased you have elected to pursue your graduate degree at this institution, and we look forward to participating in your advanced training in scientific psychology. The course work, methodological training, and laboratory experience available in our program provide excellent preparation for the next step in your professional development. You should aim to make the most of these opportunities.

This *Handbook* has been prepared as your guide to the policies of the Experimental Program, the Department of Psychology, and the Graduate School of the University of South Carolina that apply to your program of study. Despite the major role that faculty members play in conveying these policies to you, it is ultimately your responsibility to know them and to follow them. Consequently, students are urged to read the entire *Handbook* attentively. Any discrepancies, errors, or contradictions found within the *Handbook* should be pointed out to the program director or any faculty member as soon as possible. Note that this manual elaborates on the program details and requirements specified in the University's *Graduate Studies Bulletin* for our program as published online on the graduate school's web site. The graduate bulletin will override this handbook in cases of contradictory or inconsistent information, which should be pointed out to the program director. If you have not already obtained the *Bulletin* for your year of entry, please do so.

Most students repeatedly refer to this *Handbook* over the course of their graduate education for information concerning required course work, comprehensive examination policy, and thesis or dissertation policies. Thus, the

*Handbook* is just as valuable for the student finishing their degree requirements as it is for the first-year student. Accordingly, you are advised to keep it accessible throughout your tenure as a graduate student.

Generally, the policies in effect at the time of entry into a degree program are applicable throughout a student's graduate education. However, policies are subject to change. There are three possible effects of policy changes on students: (a) a new policy may apply only to those students entering the program after its adoption; (b) a student and the faculty may agree that it is in the best interest of the student to apply a new policy in his or her specific case, or (c) a new policy may apply immediately and retroactively to all students enrolled in a degree program. In the event of policy change, students will be informed promptly regarding which of these three possibilities applies. Also, changes that occur subsequent to a student's entry into the program will appear in updated editions of the *Handbook*.

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## Section 1: PH.D. Degree Objective

The Ph.D. Curriculum is designed to develop broadly educated scholars trained in scientific psychology and prepared to make significant contributions to specific research areas. There is a series of steps through which professional development is intended to proceed. Within each step, there should be sufficient flexibility to meet your needs and interests. Note that the yearly milestones in the table below are contingent on the date of actually starting the program and not on the time of initial enrollment. Also, time on leave of absence is not counted for these milestones. For example, a student who starts in the Spring semester, or who is on leave for one semester, will have their milestones delayed by one semester.

### ***Ph.D. Timetable***

Time	Action
Prior to start of 1st semester	Meet with Graduate Program Director and then Major Professor to determine first semester courses and expectations
End of 1st semester	<u>Advising Committee Meeting</u> <sup>1</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss <u>Qualifying Exam Proposal Draft</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Program of Study and Courses
End of 2nd semester	<u>Advising Committee Meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal <u>Qualifying Exam Proposal</u> approved<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Evaluation               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Annual Student Evaluation Form</li> <li>○ Individual Development Plan (IDP)</li> <li>○ <b><i>Summary of Individual Progress Form (Optional)</i></b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review Program of Study if you are pursuing a Masters<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>

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<sup>1</sup>A meeting of the Advising Committee will be called when the student receives a grade of C or less, or is placed on academic probation.

<sup>2</sup>M.A. thesis committee and program of study approved if M.A. option chosen.

<sup>3</sup> File for Graduation if M.A. option is chosen

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Program of Study Form (masters form)</b></li> </ul>
End of 3rd semester	Oral presentation related to <u>Qualifying Exam Paper</u>
End of 4th semester	<p><u>Advising Committee Meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieve Ph.D. candidacy by successfully completing the <u>Qualifying Exam Paper by April 15.</u></li> <li>• File Ph.D. <b>Program of Study (DPOS) 4</b></li> <li>• Students may choose to expand their qualifying exam paper into a master’s thesis subsequent to the submission of the Qualifying Exam Paper. Students who make this choice will convene a committee of two members to evaluate the thesis and a third member to evaluate the master’s oral exam.</li> <li>• Students are expected to have completed their core coursework.</li> <li>• Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <u>Annual Student Evaluation Form</u></li> <li>○ Individual Development Plan (IDP)</li> <li>○ <b>Summary of Individual Progress Form (optional)</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
End of 6th semester	<p><u>Advising Committee Meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Annual Student Evaluation Form</b></li> <li>○ Individual Development Plan (IDP)</li> <li>○ <b>Summary of Individual Progress Form (optional)</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Written comprehensive examination committee should have been selected. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Written Comp Exam Proposal</b></li> <li>○ <b>Written Comprehensive Committee Appointment Request</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Doctoral Program of Study (DPOS) should be completed if not turned in yet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Doctoral Program of Study Form</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
End of 8th semester	<p><u>Advising Committee Meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Annual Student Evaluation Form</b></li> <li>○ Individual Development Plan (IDP)</li> <li>○ <b>Summary of Individual Progress Form (optional)</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Usually all required core courses and complementary course work are completed at this point.</li> <li>• Written comprehensive examination is successfully complete or is about to be completed over the summer. <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Written Comprehensive Exam</b></p> </li> </ul>
At the end of each succeeding academic year.	<p><u>Dissertation Committee Meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>At the moment the dissertation committee is formed, your Advising Committee is disbanded and your dissertation committee serves that function for the duration of your training. Your Dissertation Committee <u>may or may not</u> have the same members as your</i></li> </ul>

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<sup>4</sup> If you enter the program with an M.A. or M.S. you must complete at least 30 credit hours beyond that degree

	<p><i>Advising Committee. <b>Dissertation Committee Appointment Request Form</b></i></p> <p><u>Oral Comprehensive Exam Committee Meeting</u> (in conjunction with the Dissertation committee meeting and defense of dissertation proposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Oral Comprehensive Exam</u> conducted by 4-member committee (not all of whom need to be on the dissertation committee)</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Oral Comprehensive Exam Committee Appointment Request</i></b></p>
Beginning of semester in which degree is expected	<p>Apply for graduation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Application For Degree</u> (used in applying for graduation)</li> </ul>
No later than 5 years after successful comprehensive exams, at least 15 days prior to day on which degree is expected	<p><b>Obtain approval of dissertation by <u>Dissertation Committee</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete and submit final draft of accepted dissertation to Graduate School.</li> <li>• <b><i>Dissertation Signature and Approval Form</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>Dissertation Defense Evaluation</i></b></li> </ul>
No later than 30 days prior to the date the degree is expected	<p><u>Dissertation Committee Meeting</u></p> <p>Dissertation Defense evaluated by four-member Dissertation Committee.</p>
By the end of the semester in which the degree is expected	<p>Successfully complete all course work</p> <p>Check with Graduate School that all requirements are completed.</p>
Receive Ph.D. Degree	<p><b><i>Application for Degree</i></b></p> <p>Must complete the <b><i>Survey of Earned Doctorate</i></b></p>

## ***Ph.D. Course Requirements***

To obtain a Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology, you must fulfill all requirements set forth by BOTH the Graduate School and the Experimental program. The Graduate School requires that you take 60 credit hours beyond the B.A. or B.S. degree, including 12 hours of dissertation preparation. You must complete a selected set of courses. If you have completed graduate course work at another institution, you may submit supporting materials to the curriculum committee for consideration as substitutes for required core or complementary courses. Because of the idiosyncratic nature of such courses, substitutions are discouraged. The Graduate School requires that a student will be enrolled in 18 graduate credits across three consecutive semesters (excluding summer sessions). This is a residency requirement of the Graduate School.

## **Ph.D. Curriculum**

### **Two Basic Methods Courses (6 hours)\***

PSYC 709      3 hrs      Basic Quantitative Methods I

PSYC 710          3 hrs      Basic Quantitative Methods II

*\* Students may alternatively complete the [STAT 700, 701] or [STAT 702, 703] sequence to satisfy this requirement.*

**One Advanced Quantitative Methods Course (3 hours)\***

PSYC 702E        3 hrs      Experimental Design

PSYC 821         3 hrs      Psychological Measurement

PSYC 823         3 hrs      Multivariate Analysis

PSYC 824         3 hrs      Seminar in Quantitative Methods

PSYC 825         3 hrs      Introduction to Statistical Mediation Analysis

*\* Students may alternatively complete a 700-level or 800-level course in BIOS or STAT to satisfy this requirement.*

**One Advanced Area Methods Course (3 hours)**

Course to be selected in conjunction with the students advising committee and with the approval of the program director. Can include additional advanced quantitative courses as well as more specialized courses in research methods offered as PSYC 888 Special Topics courses.

Examples:

PSYC 888         3 hrs      MRI Methods

PSYC 888         3 hrs      EEG/ERP Methods

PSYC 888         3 hrs      From Image to Inference

PSYC 888         3 hrs      Behavioral Neuroscience Methods

PSYC 888         3 hrs      From Molecules to Behavior

**Ethics & Professional Development Courses (3 hours)<sup>iii</sup>**

PSYC 792A        1 hrs      Responsible Conduct of Research in Psychology and Neuroscience

PSYC 792B        1 hrs      Issues and ethics in Research and Teaching in Psychology

1 additional hr, to be approved by student's advising committee. (e.g., PSYC 790 – College Teaching of Psychology)

**Breadth Courses (6 hours)**

Breadth courses are electives whose focus is outside the student's primary area of study, but can be complementary to their research focus. Courses should be selected in conjunction with the student's advising committee and approved by the program director.

**Core Area Courses (6 hours)**

Specialized seminar courses necessary for the student's curriculum and research goals. Typically, these are core courses within the Department of Psychology, however with approval of the advising committee and graduate program director survey courses from other departments can be substituted (e.g., PHPH, Public Health, School of Medicine, Statistics)

Examples of Core Area courses include:

PSYC 801	3 hrs	Cognitive Neuroscience I
PSYC 802	3 hrs	Cognitive Neuroscience II
PSYC 702A	3 hrs	Basics of Neuroscience
PSYC 702B	3 hrs	Basics in Cognitive Psychology
PSYC 702D	3 hrs	Basics in Learning and Motivation
PSYC 703D	3 hrs	Integration: Areas of Psychology
PSYC 703E	3 hrs	Integration: Areas of Psychology

### **Electives (21 hours)**

Additional training tailored to each student to enhance specialized training in the field. Elective courses can include seminars and laboratory work done as individual research credit hours (PSYC 889; maximum 9 hrs). At least six of these credit hours must be done under the direction of a graduate faculty member other than the major professor. Elective courses may be taught by any graduate program or professional school at the University of South Carolina, although typically a student will take at least some of his or her elective courses within the program. Your Advising Committee must approve all elective courses. You must submit an Approval of Elective Courses to your committee. The standard time to do so is during your yearly Advising Committee Evaluation meeting. Electives are tailored to each student to enhance specialized training in the field.

### **Dissertation Research Credits (12 hours)**

The Graduate School requires a minimum of 12 credit hours of Dissertation Preparation (PSYC 899).

### **Total Credits = 60 hours**

<sup>iii</sup> It is recommended that anyone working on NIH Research take an ethics course every four years in order to be in compliance with Responsible Conduct in Research (RCR) regulations stipulated by NIH.  
<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-10-019.html>

### ***Course Substitutions***

All degree requirements for graduate students are approved by the Dean of the Graduate School, the student's Major Professor, and the Graduate Program Director. Petitions for exceptions to departmental degree requirements must be approved by the student's Major Professor, the Graduate Program, and the Chair of the Department. Course substitutions must be approved by the Advising Committee and the Program Director prior to enrollment in the course. Substitutions must have a strong written rationale from Major Professor (with approval from the Advising Committee). The Program Director may decide to bring the particular course substitutions to the Experimental Program Committee for discussion and approval.

## Section 2: Committees

There are two broad classes of committees: Advising and exam committees. Advising committees meet with students multiple times throughout their academic career, and are responsible for submitting a yearly Evaluation of Progress form to the Experimental Program. Exam committees are convened for the purpose of guiding the student through the oral exam and written comprehensive examination process. Members of the committees can be changed upon request and approval of the program director. The existing committee will remain as the committee of record until the program director sends written notification to the new committee members and the student that the new committee is in place. It is not always possible to honor students' requests for committee changes. The program is obligated to provide each student with an Advising Committee, but it retains the right and responsibility of naming the committee that best serves the training needs of the student, regardless of student preferences.

### ***Advising Committee***

Advising Committee consists of appointed faculty members who are tasked with the responsibility of evaluating students' ongoing progress as they advance through the program. Until the Dissertation Committee is formed, the student's Advising Committee will evaluate progress. Once the Dissertation Committee is formed it will serve as the student's Advising Committee. These committees meet once a year and then present a recommendation regarding the student's standing within the department.

The Advising Committee is appointed before a student's first semester, and includes three faculty members from within the Experimental Program. The Advising Committee is responsible for approving your elective courses and complementary course or lab work and evaluating your progress until the doctoral dissertation committee is approved<sup>5</sup>. The Advising Committee also evaluates the Qualifying Exam Paper of a doctoral student. The Advising Committee evaluates the student annually (until the Dissertation Committee is formed).

The Graduate School states that courses must be passed with a C or better to receive credit for a required class. A meeting of the Advising Committee will be called when the student receives a grade of **C** or less, or is placed on academic probation. The student and the Advising Committee, in consultation with the graduate instructor, will submit a written plan to remediate this problem to the Graduate Program Director. The written plan should be submitted to the Program Director before the beginning of the next academic semester following the unsatisfactory grade. Remediation of the coursework does not result in a change of the grade.

Changes to the Advising Committee must be approved by the Program Director. Student requests for changes will not be considered during spring semester.

The members of the committee will include representatives from the student's major area of training and other faculty who are familiar enough with the student's area to make contributions to the development and evaluation of the [Qualifying Exam Paper](#). The first meeting will be held before the end of the first semester so that the student and committee have an opportunity to evaluate the student's progress in relationship to the first year goals and make any necessary changes before the first Advising Committee progress meeting. Students will also discuss their ideas for a qualifying proposal during this meeting. The Advising Committee progress meetings are held each April, your progress will be discussed and your programmatic goals for the next year will be planned. The student is responsible for organizing these annual evaluation meetings including arrangements for their time, place, and the notification of committee members. You must bring your Individual Development Plan (IDP) to the

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annual progress meeting. Faculty members will bring the completed IDP for their mentee to the Annual Evaluation Meeting in May, when student evaluations are completed by the faculty and signed by the Program Director. A copy of the Annual Student Evaluation form with the IDP attached will be placed in the student file. At least two weeks prior to your annual meeting with your Advising Committee, you should verify that your student record file contains a copy of your previous Annual Evaluation form. Your Advising Committee will prepare your initial evaluation for the program's yearly evaluation of your progress.

*In the semester in which the student takes a written or oral comprehensive exam, the annual evaluation meeting should be held after the exam is graded.*

### **Policies for Graduate Student Advising**

The Advising Committee consists of appointed faculty members who are tasked with the responsibility of evaluating students' ongoing progress as they advance through the program. Until the Dissertation Committee is formed, the student's Advising Committee will evaluate progress. Once the Dissertation Committee is formed it will serve as the student's advising committee and this committee still must evaluate the student as to progress. These committees meet once a year at a minimum and then present a recommendation regarding the student's standing within the department.

Each student's standing is evaluated once a year by the Experimental Program. The faculty as a whole will review the written evaluation of progress submitted by the current Advising Committee and consider other faculty members assessment of the student's performance in all relevant areas. These areas include classroom performance, assistantship activity, research involvement, and meeting program milestones. Emphasis is placed on research involvement. It is possible to have excellent grades and satisfactory performance as a teaching assistant, but fail to show satisfactory progress in the program due to lack of involvement and focus in research. Students should be provided feedback during their advisory meeting with their advisory committee but should be informed that the final rating is determined by the Experimental Program.

Students can be rated excellent, satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Excellent refers to those students who have met their program goals with distinction. Students are rated excellent when they have distinguished themselves based on scholarship or professionalism in at least one domain while maintaining satisfactory performance in other domains.

Satisfactory performance refers to students who have met all of their program goals.

Unsatisfactory performance refers to students who have failed to meet a key program goal within the standard timeline or whose performance in one or more domains does not meet the standards for scholarship and professionalism. A student who fails to convene an annual Advising Committee Meeting receives an unsatisfactory rating automatically. After an unsatisfactory rating, the student must have another advising committee meeting within six months at which he or she will be rated. The performance in all relevant domains of the student must improve during that period of time such that the rating is either satisfactory or excellent.

**Two consecutive unsatisfactory ratings will result in automatic termination from the program.** Students with multiple but not consecutive unsatisfactory ratings will be considered for termination at the annual program meeting for the evaluation of students.

All ratings of students will be vetted by the Experimental Program committee.

The following are descriptions of the standards that are expected from graduate students to receive a satisfactory or excellent rating at the annual advising meeting.

First year graduate students are expected to have submitted a qualifying project proposal draft and met with their Advising Committee to discuss their progress and proposal by the end of their first semester. By the end of their second semester, a formal proposal is submitted for consideration by their committee and discussion at the spring Advising Committee meeting. Failure to meet this second goal does not prevent a satisfactory or excellent rating if a change in the graduate mentor is made in the second semester. Satisfactory (B or above) performance in all courses is expected and PSYC 709/710 should be completed by the end of their first year. Effective performance as a teaching or research assistant and active involvement in laboratory research is expected.

Second year graduate students are expected to present their research data in a setting accessible to faculty members and graduate students - - this is typically done in a special colloquium event taking place by the end of their fall semester. Their formal qualifying project must be submitted to their Advising Committee by April 15<sup>th</sup> and at least one week prior to the Advising committee meeting at the end of the spring semester. The qualifying project in conjunction with all other course work should be considered satisfactory to qualify for Ph.D. candidacy by the end of the second year. Satisfactory (B or above) performance in all courses is expected and the majority of course work should be completed by the end of the second year. Effective performance as a teaching or research assistants expected. Student should be presenting their research at scientific meetings and have either submitted or be preparing to submit manuscripts for publication.

Third year students are expected to complete most of their course work and have at least formed their Written Comprehensive Exam committee by the end of the Spring semester of their third year. At least one manuscript should be submitted for publication by the third year.

Fourth year students are expected to be finished with most course work except for dissertation hours and have at least one published manuscript based primarily on research on which the student has taken lead. Students should have completed their Written Comprehensive Exam before starting their fifth year.

Fifth year students are expected to be either finished or about to finish their dissertation (within six months of the spring semester of the fifth year). If a fifth year student is not about to finish their dissertation, a specific written plan needs to be formulated by the student in conjunction with their advising or dissertation committee that outlines how the Ph.D. degree will be finished by the end of the sixth year. A failure to finish the Ph.D. degree by the end of the sixth year results in an unsatisfactory rating unless there are extenuating circumstances such as approved leave for illness or family matters.

Some students in the Experimental Program are also jointly enrolled in the university's Behavioral-Biomedical Interface Program (BBIP), which is supported in part by an NIH/NIGMS T32 institutional research training grant. Note that students completing the BBIP training program are expected to meet these expectations with two exceptions with respect to timing. For BBIP students, the qualifying project is expected to begin in the second year and be completed by the third year and the majority of modules and PSYC 709/710 are expected to be completed by the end of their second year.

### ***Dissertation Committee***

The dissertation committee is formed after the Written Comprehensive Examination is successfully complete, at the time when the student is ready to begin the dissertation process. The guidelines for the dissertation process are discussed in detail in [Guidelines for the Dissertation](#). The Dissertation Committee is also charged with administering the Oral Comprehensive Exam, which will occur in conjunction with a meeting of the Dissertation committee before approving the dissertation proposal.

## ***Examination Committees***

### ***Written Comprehensive Committee***

The Written Comprehensive Committee is formed after the student successfully completes the qualifying exam paper, and becomes a doctoral candidate. It is recommended that the core and elective course requirements be completed prior to the start of the written comprehensive examination.

### ***Oral Comprehensive Committee***

The oral comprehensive examination will be administered by the dissertation committee (see above).

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## **Section 3: Guidelines for Major Program Landmarks**

The major program landmarks include the Qualifying Exam Project, the Written Comprehensive Exam, the Oral Comprehensive Exam/Dissertation Proposal Approval, and the Dissertation.

### ***Qualifying Exam Project Procedure***

Note. Students starting the PhD program with an MA in a related field and who submitted an MA thesis as part of that degree, may request their advising committee to accept their MA thesis as their qualifying exam. If approved by the advising committee and Program Director, these students will be considered as having satisfied their Qualifying Exam Project requirement and will not be subject to the timeline and requirements described in this section.

Prior to the first-semester Advising Committee meeting, the students must consult with his or her major professor to develop a qualifying project draft proposal that, in a few paragraphs, outlines the research problem to be addressed and its rationale, the method used to investigate the problem, and anticipated results. The outline will be distributed to the members of the Advising Committee at least one week prior to the first-semester meeting. At the meeting, the Advising Committee will discuss the proposal and, if necessary, suggest modifications. A formal proposal with the [Qualifying Proposal Form](#) must be approved no later than the annual advising meeting held at the end of the second Spring semester in order for the student's progress to be rated "Satisfactory" or better at the annual evaluation meeting. The approved proposal will include a date by which the project must be submitted and the written form in which it must be presented to the committee. The formal proposal will be a full document of 20 pages or more that includes an introduction, literature review, and timeline for when qualifying exam should be completed. The submission date must be no later than April 15<sup>th</sup> in the second year of the student's graduate career.

There are a few exceptions to these deadlines. In the rare cases of admission in January, the qualifying project is due December 15<sup>th</sup> of the fourth semester (not including summer semesters). Students admitted to the BBIP Program may take an extra year to complete their qualifying project with all of the deadlines adjusted accordingly. Thus, the qualifying project proposal is due in the Spring semester of the second year, the qualify project itself should be presented in the fall semester of the third year and the final written qualifying project is due April 15<sup>th</sup> of the third year in the program at the latest.

All students will also be required to present the results of their projects in a forum open to all faculty and graduate students in the program. The presentation will be made during the student's third semester in the program. Presentations are scheduled at the convenience of the program and may either precede or follow the submission date for specific projects.

The written project is submitted to the Advising Committee for evaluation by the date specified. **Failure to submit the project by the submission date will result in an "Unsatisfactory" rating at the following annual evaluation meeting and provides grounds for evaluating the project as "Fail" which leads to dismissal from the program.**

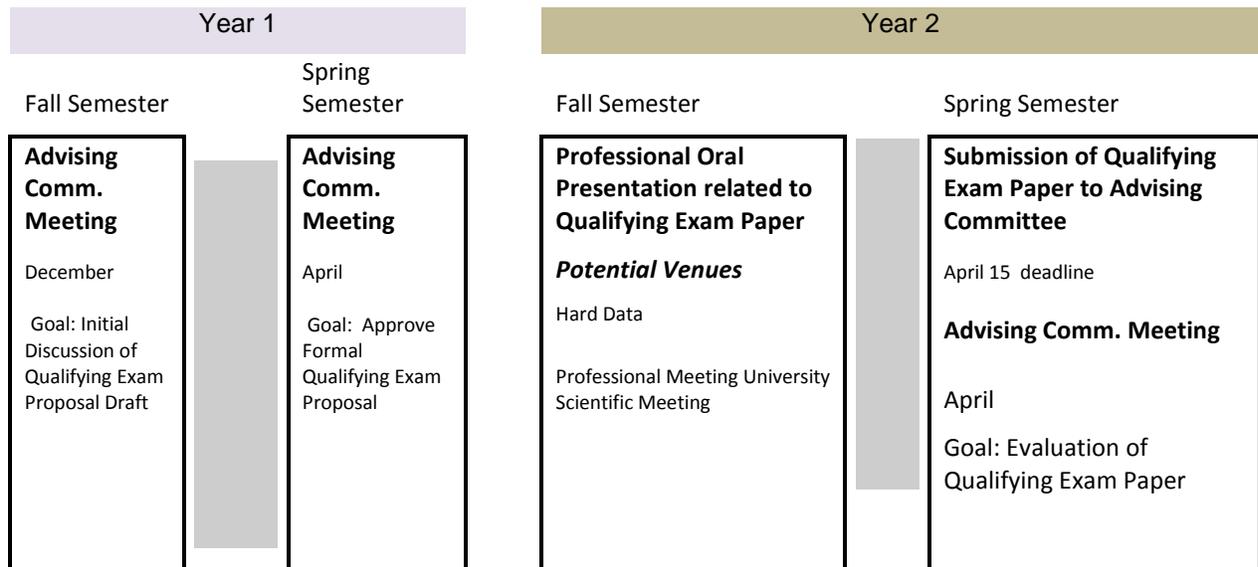
### Evaluation of the Qualifying Project

The Advising Committee will base its evaluation of the qualifying project on the student's ability and motivation to meet the conceptual and methodological requirements of the project. The project will be considered a sample of behavior that is predictive of later success in meeting the subsequent requirements of doctoral training. The project will receive one of three possible outcomes:

- *Pass*--The student qualifies for doctoral candidacy in Experimental Psychology;
- *Fail but M.A. recommended* -- The student does not qualify for doctoral candidacy in Experimental Psychology, but he or she may wish to pursue an M.A. degree. This option is available only for students entering without an MA degree in Psychology;
- *Fail* -- The student does not qualify for doctoral candidacy and pursuit of an M.A. degree is not recommended; the student is dismissed from the program.

The evaluation must be completed within two weeks of the submission date. The chair of the Advising committee will convey the outcome in writing to the student and to the program director; the outcome will include feedback and also the required [Qualifying Examination Evaluation Form](#). The chair of the Advising Committee will also present the outcome to the faculty at the annual evaluation meeting. Within one week of the evaluation meeting, the Program Director will inform the Graduate School by memo of the student's Qualifying Examination and place a copy of the memo in the student's file.

### Summary of Qualifying Exam Procedure



### Written Comprehensive Examination Procedure

This examination is required of all Ph.D. candidates based on regulations set forth in the *Graduate Studies Bulletin*. In the Experimental Psychology Ph.D. program, the Written Comprehensive Exam process (including the formation of the Written Comprehensive Exam committee) cannot be initiated until the student has qualified for Ph.D. candidacy. The Written Comprehensive Exam requires factual knowledge in an area consistent with the program's mission statement (Behavioral Neuroscience, Cognitive Psychology, Quantitative, or Developmental Psychology) or

in the integration of two or more of these areas. The material covered by the Written Comprehensive Exam will be defined by a Written Comprehensive Exam proposal constructed by the student and approved by the student's Written Comprehensive Exam committee. The form for the Written Comprehensive Exam is available online. In all cases the Written Comprehensive Exam process will consist of the following steps:

1. Formation of a Written Comprehensive Exam Committee approved by the program director.
2. Development and approval of (a) the reading list and (b) the proposal, which includes a set of questions and/or issues that the reading list is intended to address and a description of the examination process, time frame for the exam, and method of evaluation. The approval is by the Written Comprehensive Exam committee and the program director. The program director's approval is to ensure that the contents of the proposal meet regulations.
3. Writing the Written Comprehensive Exam.
4. Evaluation of the written product by the Written Comprehensive Exam committee.

### ***Formation of the Written Comprehensive Exam Committee***

The student's Written Comprehensive Exam committee shall consist of at least four faculty members, selected by the student in conjunction with her or his major advisor. The Written Comprehensive Exam committee must be approved by the program director. At least three of the faculty members must be regular graduate faculty in the Department of Psychology with primary affiliation with the program. One member must be a graduate faculty from another department. The designation graduate faculty refers to those faculty members who are eligible to teach graduate courses and serve on graduate students' committees (see *USC Graduate Bulletin* for details). The term primary affiliation is meant to connote the program to which a faculty member devotes the majority of his or her research, training, and service efforts. Members of the core graduate faculty in Experimental Psychology are listed online. Other members of the Written Comprehensive Exam committee must be eligible graduate faculty with appointments at the University of South Carolina (for example, program adjuncts, graduate faculty in other psychology programs, graduate faculty outside of department). Regardless of the total number of committee members, the majority of the members must be graduate faculty members in the Department of Psychology with primary affiliation with the Experimental Program. The Written Comprehensive Exam committee in consultation with the student should choose one of the core program faculty members as its chair.

The responsibilities of the Written Comprehensive Exam committee are to advise the student on the Written Comprehensive Exam reading list and proposal, approve the Written Comprehensive Exam reading list and proposal, and evaluate the Written Comprehensive Exam product. The chair of the committee is also responsible for supervising the Written Comprehensive Exam process, including student advice, arranging examination times and materials, presenting the Written Comprehensive Exam committee to the program director for approval, and informing the program of the outcome of the Written Comprehensive Exam. The chair of the Written Comprehensive Exam committee is also responsible for summarizing feedback on the Written Comprehensive Exam from all committee members in written form and providing this written feedback to the student. Once the Written Comprehensive Exam committee is approved by the program director, it cannot be changed during the Written Comprehensive Exam process.

### ***Developing the Written Comprehensive Exam Reading List and Proposal***

The student is responsible for a formal Written Comprehensive Exam proposal and reading list to be submitted to the Written Comprehensive Exam committee for approval. The proposal should include a set of questions and/or

issues that the reading list is intended to address (consistent with the mission statement of the program) and will include a description of the written product to be evaluated. This product designed to insure a broad appreciation of the research area chosen or a broad integrative appreciation across one or more research areas consistent with the Experimental Psychology mission statement. Examples of written products that could be possible for a Written Comprehensive Exam include a traditional written exam (for example, 2 days, 6 questions per day), a major paper reviewing research in a designated area quantitatively and qualitatively similar to a Psychological Bulletin article; several small papers reviewing research in designated area(s), or a complete grant proposal.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of activities that could NOT be possible for a Written Comprehensive Exam:

1. An approved set of courses (not broad enough; not integrative, no written product).
2. A research project and manuscript submitted for publication (too narrow).
3. Reading from a list (no written product).
4. Teaching undergraduate or graduate courses (narrow; no written product).
5. A single brief review paper.
6. Conducting experiments (too narrow; not written product).

In addition to the description of the product, the proposal must include a time-table for completing the exam, a statement concerning how the product will be evaluated, and a statement concerning whether the student may consult with Written Comprehensive Exam committee members during the writing of the exam and, if so, the extent of such consultation. The matter of consultation, as well as the timetable and means of evaluation, must be decided by committee vote. If consultation with Written Comprehensive Exam members is permitted, the student must keep a record of each consultation, indicating the parties involved and the nature of the consultation. The record must be submitted along with the finish product to the Written Comprehensive Exam committee when the exam is completed. No other consultation is permitted. The Written Comprehensive Exam approval takes place at a meeting of the Written Comprehensive Exam committee and the student. The Written Comprehensive Examination Proposal form is filled out at this time.

### ***Evaluation of Written Comprehensive Exam Product***

The student shall submit the Written Comprehensive Exam product to the Written Comprehensive Exam committee by the proposed deadline. After reading the exam, the Written Comprehensive Exam committee will meet to evaluate the written product. Upon initial evaluation, three outcomes are possible.

- Pass: The student qualifies
- Incomplete: The student's success or failure will be determined only after revision or partial re-examination involving a specific aspect or area that has been found to be deficient.
- Fail: A new proposal and Written Comprehensive Exam process will have to be followed anew.

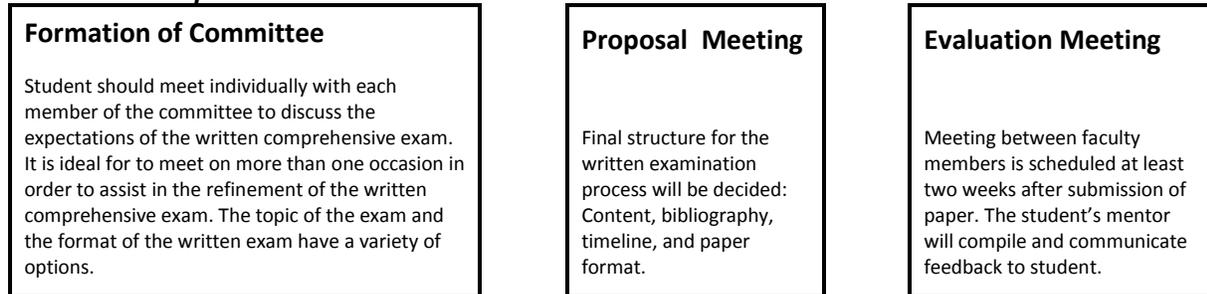
Failure to submit the Written Comprehensive Exam product by the deadline will result in failure of the exam. In order to pass, the majority of the Written Comprehensive Exam committee must approve the product. Only one "incomplete" can be assigned prior to each "pass/fail" decision. A student is given a maximum period of up to 3 weeks to complete the exam after an incomplete is rendered. Normally, the outcome of the evaluation process will be provided within two weeks of the submission of the Written Comprehensive Exam product. The program director (with approval of student and Written Comprehensive Exam committee) may waive the two-week limit under unusual extenuating circumstances. After either a "pass" or "fail," the chair of the Written Comprehensive

Exam committee will provide a written summary of feedback on the written product and [Written Comprehensive Examination Evaluation Form](#). Every incomplete is reported to the program.

Failure of an initial Written Comprehensive Exam results in repetition of the Written Comprehensive Exam process. If the Written Comprehensive Exam is failed twice, the student will be terminated from the program. The entire program faculty must approve any petition for an exception to this policy.

### **Summary of Written Comprehensive Exam Procedure**

#### **Written Comprehensive Exam Timeline**



### **Guidelines for the Oral Comprehensive Exam**

#### **General Oral Comprehensives**

Each student in a doctoral program will take an oral comprehensive examination. The University of South Carolina Graduate School requires a general oral comprehensive examination. The purpose of this examination is to provide evidence to the department that the student is competent in the student's area of expertise. Specifically, the oral comprehensive assesses: (1) knowledge in psychology as relevant to the student's area of expertise; (2) the student's ability to integrate knowledge from diverse areas; and (3) the student's ability to perform as an expert in psychology in a conversational and interrogatory setting. This last purpose has direct transfer to participation in professional meetings, to dealing with professionals other than psychologists, and to similar types of occasions.

#### **Committee**

The student's dissertation committee will serve as the Oral Comprehensive Exam Committee.

#### **Time Frame**

The oral comprehensive examination will occur together with a meeting of the Dissertation Committee and must be successfully completed at least 60 days before a dissertation defense occurs. An [announcement of the Doctoral Oral Examination](#) must be posted.

## ***Evaluations***

The vote will be by written ballot on the following [Ph.D. Oral Comprehensive Examination form](#). A student can be given three possible evaluations.

- **Pass:** A positive vote by at least three members of the Committee is required for a "pass."
- **Incomplete:** The student's success (that is a pass) will be established only after reexamination in a specific area or areas which were deemed deficient. There is only 1 attempt at re-examination.
- **Fail:** Students are expected to pass within two attempts. If re-examination is to take place the committee will be reconvened. Failure to pass with two attempts constitutes unsatisfactory progress toward the Ph.D. and the student's Graduate Program Committee may recommend that the student be terminated from the program.

## ***Guidelines for the Dissertation***

Guidelines for the Dissertation are adopted from portions of the departmental guidelines for the dissertation. The departmental guidelines are a comprehensive guide to the dissertation process which should be read as soon as a graduate student qualifies for admission into the doctoral program. This document is a supplement of the departmental interpretation of the graduate school requirements and does not replace that document.

## ***Developing an idea***

The dissertation is designed to be a meaningful venture. Students should develop an idea which has theoretically or practical utility. It is recommended that students define their topic in a manner which satisfies the following criteria:

1. The study is stated in terms of a question or problem which needs to be solved;
2. The question or problem is meaningful and interesting to the student, to the point that the student can sustain the interest over the course of an extended period of time
3. The proposed study follows from some previous work such as a pilot study, a previous study conducted by the student, a review paper, work by other students and faculty in the department, or specific work in the field
4. The proposed study helps to answer the questions being proposed.

## ***Proposing the idea***

Technically, the dissertation may be proposed at any time during the student's normal course of study. Practically speaking, most students propose the dissertation in their fourth year. However, there is nothing to prevent a well-prepared student from beginning a dissertation earlier. The process actually begins by developing a committee.

## ***Forming a committee***

A committee is composed of the student's faculty mentor<sup>6</sup>, at least two other faculty members in the Department, and one faculty member outside the department is also selected by the student in consultation with the Mentor. At least one of the other two faculty members from the department should have some substantive knowledge in the area being proposed. This knowledge does not have to be especially focused, but the faculty committee members should be able to substantively add to the student's direction and research.

### *Outside faculty member*

The faculty member who comes from outside the psychology department is on the committee to ensure quality control and to certify to the graduate school that the dissertation and its process have met university procedures and standards. This faculty member may have an interest and expertise in the student's area of research, but specific expertise is not necessary. Faculty members on the university staff who are affiliated psychologists (for example psychologists who work for the medical school training psychologists and psychiatrists) are normally excluded from dissertation committees. It is felt that such psychologists' ties to the psychology faculty and its programs are usually so strong that the intent of objectivity and quality external control is compromised. Other faculty members who may have been trained as psychologists, but who do not practice psychology or who principally identify with some other discipline (for example social work or education), may serve as committee members. Consultation with the Mentor or the graduate program chair will usually aid a student in determining who would be an appropriate faculty member from outside the psychology department.

### *Committee approval*

Any faculty member, indeed any individual at any institution, can be proposed; exceptions to the standard policy require the approval of the program chair, the department chair, and the Dean of the Graduate School. These faculty members constitute the student's dissertation committee and in most instances, will constitute the examining committee for the oral defense. All members of the committee must be a member of the graduate faculty. The committee acts for the department in all matters concerning the dissertation proposal, its execution, its final form, and examination on it. All dissertation committees must be approved by the graduate program chair and then the department chair. Appeals of decisions by the department chair may be made to the operations committee (with the department chair abstaining from any vote of the operations committee in such an instance).

### *Changing a committee*

Once a committee is approved, it is considered exceptional for committee membership to change. A faculty member unable to carry out committee duties (e.g., due to illness, sabbatical leave, etc.) may, with approval by the student, ask for permission to be removed from the committee. A substitute member would then be obtained in keeping with procedures for original selection of the committee. A student changing the dissertation topic substantially may, with approval of the committee members, ask for dissolution of the committee. Under such circumstances, a new committee would be formed, and the entire normal process would resume from the beginning (i.e., approval of a proposal, etc.). If the Mentor or member of the committee leaves prior to the initiation of the actual data collection, a substitute Mentor and/or member must be appointed. If the Mentor or a member of the committee under whom the work was performed leaves USC after the initiation of data collection, the member may continue as the Mentor or member of the committee if the defense of the dissertation takes place no later than one academic year following the proposal meeting. This substitute must be approved by the department chair and the Dean of the Graduate School.

### ***The Proposal Meeting***

The student arranges for a proposal meeting and the [announcement of this meeting](#) is posted at least one week ahead of time. The student should make arrangements for holding the proposal meeting with the graduate office in the department. Any faculty member or graduate student in the department may attend the proposal meeting. The dissertation committee will review the proposal with the candidate. A copy of the final proposal with the [written approval of all committee members](#) is filed in the student's folder

## *Preparing a proposal*

Although there are minor variations in how the proposal should be written (each faculty member has a view of the proposal and you should consult with your Major Professor about this), there are major common elements of the written proposal. The proposal shall follow APA style guidelines.

### *Sections*

There are four major sections: introduction, method, handling of results, and bibliography. The introduction should contain a concise and relevant review of literature pertaining to the question or problems at hand. The question should be formulated within this section and the specific rationales should be given for the project. The introduction should read like a persuasive argument. Namely, the literature cited should indicate what has been done and why the proposed project follows logically from what has been done previously. The argument usually makes an explicit statement of the specific hypothesis tested in the research. The argument should also convince the reader that the particular way in which this project will be undertaken is necessary for a successful resolution of the problem.

The method section should include the following sections as appropriate to the project: subjects or participants, design, treatment conditions, raters or testers or observers, measures, tasks, apparatus, procedures, and scoring. (These are the most common sections but there are others. Not all sections have to be included.) The method section should be given in sufficient detail so as to allow the committee members to understand and critique all aspects of the proposed project, including preparatory details such as method of recruiting subjects. If there are supportive details or information (for example, consent forms, recruitment strategies, and copies of measures) these can be left out of the text of the method section and instead placed in appropriate appendices at the back of the proposal. By placing materials in the appendices, the method section can read like a good journal article.

The third section, shorter than the previous two, is the only section which will be discarded when the final dissertation is written. This section details the method of statistical analysis and the potential interpretation of the results. This section should give a detailed account of all statistical analyses that are planned, including specifications of planned and post hoc analyses. Secondly, this section should include a description of expected results. Finally, the significance and implications of expected results should be discussed. The entire section can be accomplished in anywhere from three to ten pages. It should not be very long but nevertheless should be inclusive.

A bibliography must be included in the proposal; it is a complete list of literature cited, prepared in proper APA form. Any additional information which is useful to the committee such as informed consent forms, instructions to participants, examples of stimuli, or other materials should be included in the proposal (and the final dissertation) as appendices.

### *The written draft*

The proposal can vary in length depending upon the complexity of the problem and procedures undertaken. The final proposal draft should be double spaced and typed neatly with all pages carefully proofread. It is important that the committee not be convened until the Mentor and the student feel that the proposal is in proper form. It is often the case (and most Mentors insist) that the student will have shared the proposal with all of the committee members in advance of any committee meeting being called. The proposal should demonstrate that the student has full command of the area under investigation, that the basis for the project is sound, and that the procedures have been carefully thought out. A rushed proposal is likely to engender reluctance and skepticism from committee members. The candidate may have a reasonable expectation that the dissertation will ultimately be approved if the research is conducted in the manner specified in the approved proposal. It is important, therefore, for the committee to reach agreement upon the design and implementation procedures of the research.

## *Review of Progress*

No later than two years after the proposal meeting, the student's dissertation committee must have a formal committee meeting to review the progress of the research during April of every year. If no meeting is held within two years after the proposal meeting, the student will be required to start anew. It is the responsibility of the student to see that the meeting is convened. If, during the course of the research, the student encounters difficulties so that the student is not able to continue in the manner approved at the proposal meeting, the student should obtain written approval of the student's committee to amend the proposal. This amended proposal must be placed in the student's file.

## ***The Preparation of the Document***

The final document (after having been reviewed and approved by the mentor) may be submitted at least once to the other committee members for their feedback. After feedback from committee members, the final version of the document can be prepared. This final version should be consistent with the guidelines published by the graduate school (type size, margins, paper weight and other such rules), and in APA style. Committee members should have a completed document for two full weeks prior to the date of the defense.

## ***The Dissertation Defense***

The defense of the dissertation is the culmination of a lengthy process of research and scholarly effort. It is a time of celebration and of closure; it also marks the beginning of new careers. The psychology department fully expects that each candidate who has proceeded through the process of developing a dissertation should see and mark the occasion of the dissertation defense in a positive manner.

The defense has traditionally been seen as an examination. While it is still an evaluation of the student's final piece of work, the likelihood that a student will pass is exceedingly high, if all other stages and aspects of the dissertation process have been successfully navigated. Students should approach the defense as a meeting of closure with anticipation, but with every expectation for success. The faculty and students of the psychology department are encouraged to come to dissertation defenses. Each student's culmination of work should be seen as a success not only for the student, but for the department, the university, and the academic body as a whole. The dissertation defense should not be scheduled until (1) the mentor is satisfied with the final draft; (2) all other work and department or university requirements are completed including the PhD. Orals, and (3) the dissertation committee members will have had sufficient time to read the final draft (a minimum of two weeks). ***The oral defense of the dissertation must be announced at least one week in advance.*** The meeting will take approximately one to two hours and will preferably be scheduled on Friday afternoons to facilitate attendance by others in the university community.

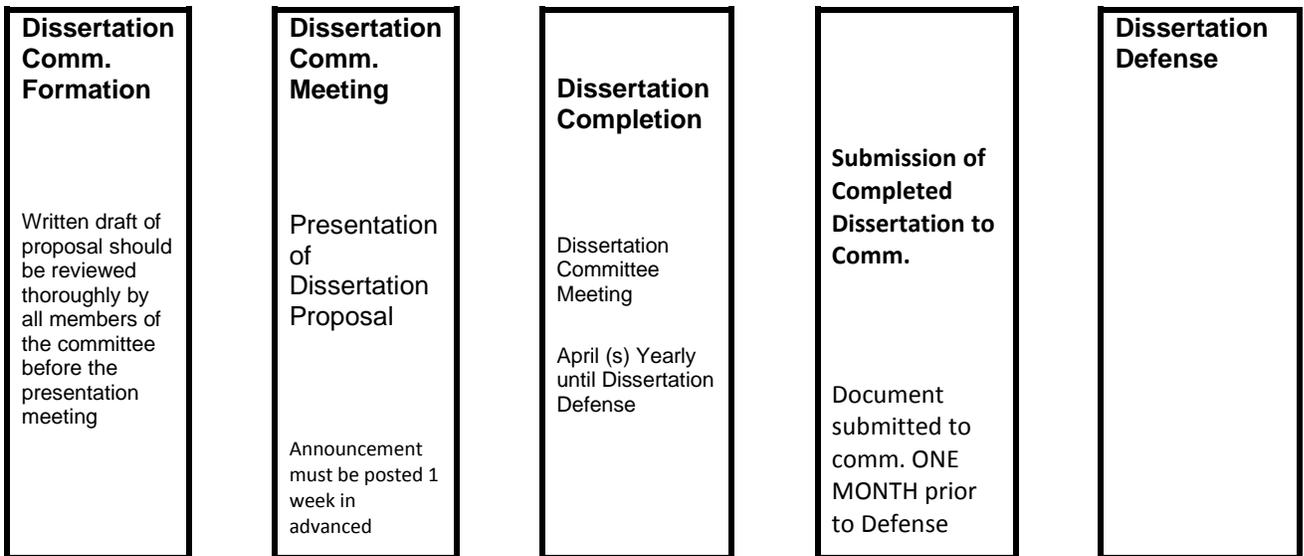
The chair of the examining committee who will conduct the proceedings will be someone other than the Mentor. The mentor will introduce the student to those assembled (briefly). The student will then make a one-half hour presentation of his or her research. The presentation will be followed by a series of substantive questions by the examining committee. The nature of the questions will deal with issues that are raised by the research; this should be an intellectual debate of theories, data, or applications. Questions and comments would not ordinarily deal with proofreading and technical errors; such matters should be dealt with in advance of the oral defense. Anyone else assembled may then ask any relevant questions that they might have. At the conclusion of the examination, the examining committee will ask all assembled to leave the conference room so that they may deliberate. There are four outcomes. (1) Students can successfully pass the oral defense and signatures placed on the cover sheet to the dissertation. (2) students can pass the defense, but a signature of the mentor might be withheld until a student has made certain necessary changes in the document as deemed appropriate by the committee, (3) students can be told that major changes need to be incorporated into the dissertation, that the defense meeting is being broken into two parts, and that the committee will reconvene to consider the changes that the student makes, (4) the student fails—failure would come about because of gross incompetence, plagiarism, unethical behavior, or some

other major unforeseen situation which in the eyes of the faculty nullify the process and the product of the dissertation. This is a highly unusual circumstance that would come about only in quite exceptional cases, if all other aspects of the dissertation process have been followed successfully. The outcome of the dissertation defense should be documented by signatures from all of the committee members on the form for the **Results of the Dissertation Defense**.

### **Publication**

Students are encouraged to publish their dissertations. The student must be the sole or senior author of the publication. The student, however, may assign junior authorship to others who have made substantive contributions to the work.

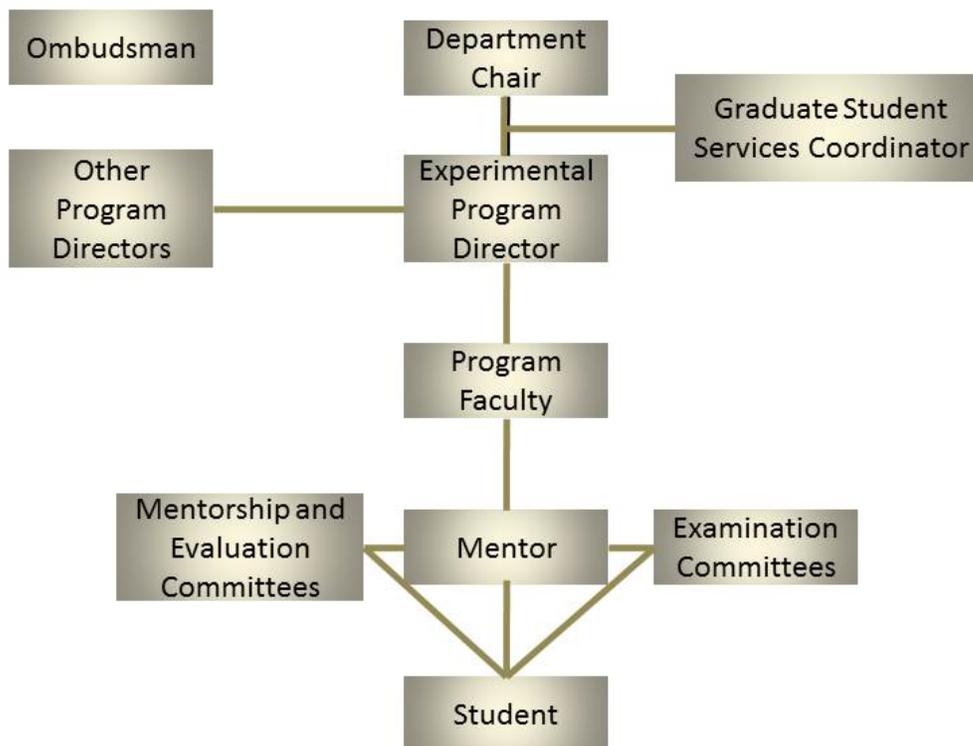
### **Summary of Dissertation Timeline**



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## Section 4: Components of the Experimental Program

Relationship of the Components of the Experimental Program



### ***Graduate Student Services Coordinator***

The graduate student services coordinator is the graduate students' point of contact for all administrative paperwork within the program. The Coordinator maintains graduate student records, and assists the program directors and department chair in a variety of tasks related to ongoing student administration.

### ***Graduate Student Records***

Your graduate student records hold several key pieces of information which provide critical documentation of your ongoing progress in the program. Records are maintained by the Graduate Student Services Coordinator. All forms go through the coordinator.

### ***Major Professor (Mentor)***

The major professor (or Mentor) is a member of the graduate faculty who is responsible for directing a student's doctoral dissertation and who is typically a member of the student's advising committee. Establishing a working relationship with a major professor is of critical importance to every graduate student. In addition to supervising thesis or dissertation research, this faculty member serves as a mentor and professional role model. After the student completes his or her degree work, the major professor usually becomes the student's chief source of letters of recommendation in applications to Ph.D. programs or professional positions.

The relationship between a graduate student and major professor is based on mutual consent. Typically, admissions to the program assumes a match in research interests and expectations between you and your designated major professor. While it is expected that you will continue working with the same major professor through your time in the program, both parties must agree to continuing the relationship. If at any time you wish to change major professors, you may do so with the agreement of the current and prospective major professors and program director. Changing major professors after thesis or dissertation research has begun is problematic and should be requested only under extraordinary circumstances.

### ***Program Director***

The program director will provide your first information about your research or teaching assistantship, your advising committee and your major professor. Throughout the graduate education timeline, students can have input and seek information regarding assistantships, committee composition, and course offerings through the program director.

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## **Section 5: General Program Policies**

### ***Appeals***

An appeal is a request to reverse or modify a decision made by a professor, a committee, or the program director. Appeals must be directed to the Department Chair, and must be specific as to the decision that is being appealed and the grounds for that appeal. A copy of this appeal must be provided to the program director. The Department Chair will investigate the situation surrounding the appeal and then render a decision on behalf of the Department. If the student is dissatisfied with the Department Chair's decision, then he or she may appeal to the Graduate School; appeal to the Graduate School is possible only after a departmental decision has been rendered.

An appeal to the Graduate School is first directed to the Dean of the Graduate School, who will attempt to resolve the conflict. If no resolution is reached, the Dean will refer the matter to the Graduate School's Petitions and Appeals Committee. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the Petitions and Appeals Committee, he or she may appeal the matter to the Office of the Provost.

### ***Assignment of Work prior to beginning of the semester***

In general students should not expect to have required course assignments to complete prior to the first week of any semester. Faculty may expect compensatory work to insure that students have attained some level of familiarity with prerequisite material prior to the start of the semester. In some circumstances it may be desirable for faculty to assign work before the official class start date. However, should a faculty choose to assign work in advance of the semester, the assignments must be announced in advance and the faculty member must make every effort to notify students taking the course of these expectation at the time of pre-registration.

### ***Change of Area of Concentration with the Program***

By your own choice or at the suggestion of the faculty, you may seek to change your area of concentration in the program. To do so, a petition to the program director must be filed indicating the desired change. The petition must be approved by faculty members in the area you wish to leave and by faculty members in the area in which you wish to relocate. You would be wise to work closely with your advising committee if such a change is desired.

### ***Conflict Resolution***

When a conflict occurs between a student and a member of the program that cannot be resolved directly, the student may seek advice and assistance from available resources within the department. The program director is the first individual who should be consulted in such a situation. In times when the program director is not appropriate, the Department Chair or a Department's Ombudsman from a different program is also available to aid in the resolution of conflicts. When resolving a conflict within the department is not appropriate, the university Ombudsman is also available to aid in resolving the conflict and providing further guidance.

### ***Continuous Enrollment***

All degree-seeking students must be enrolled for course credit each Fall and Spring semester (for at least 1 credit hour). Failure to register for a Fall or Spring semester will be taken as withdrawal from the program, and a letter of dismissal will be issued by the program director.

Under exceptional circumstances, students may petition for a leave of absence from the program. The petition is submitted to the program director and voted on by the entire Experimental faculty. The opinion of the major professor and of the advising committee is of critical importance in the decision reached by the faculty regarding such petitions. All petitions for a leave of absence must state clearly the reason for and the duration of the

proposed leave. Failure of the student to conform to the conditions of a leave as approved by the faculty constitutes grounds for dismissal from the program.

### ***Employment outside of the University***

Graduate students are expected to be full-time students and not to be employed outside of the Department of Psychology. You should not perform services for which you are unqualified, nor burden yourself with outside jobs so that you seriously neglect your basic academic work. You normally should take nine credit hours (or three graduate courses) each semester and average 20 hours of assistantship (teaching or research) service weekly.

All employment of a psychological nature must be obtained and managed in consultation with your advising committee. If you are changing advising committee members, you must obtain permission from the program director until your new advising committee is formed. Failure to obtain committee (or program director) approval may result in termination from the program.

During a regular semester, students without an assistantship may be gainfully employed up to a maximum 20 hours per week and may carry a course load of up to nine hours. However, students enrolled in more than 12 credit hours will be limited to 10 hours of outside employment each week. If you accept a position defined by an employer as "full-time," you may enroll in only one course. An exception to this rule is granted for doctoral students who have completed all degree requirements except the dissertation. With permission from their committee, these students may work in a full-time position while enrolled in more than three credits of dissertation research.

Your Advising committee must approve all anticipated professional employment during summers and all periods when you are not enrolled in courses. If you are enrolled in six credit hours during a summer session, you may work up to 10 hours per week. If you are enrolled in three credit hours, you may work up to 20 hours per week.

### ***Ethical Conduct***

All graduate students are expected to follow the ethical guidelines of the university and of the profession. You should obtain a copy of the publication Carolina Community: USC Student Handbook and Policy Guide, which details university policies relevant to student life. Each student is responsible for familiarizing herself or himself with the Code of Academic Responsibility, university policy towards alcohol and other drugs, Rights and Freedoms of Students (which covers issues such as academic freedom, confidentiality, grievance, and discrimination) and other regulations covered in this document.

The Code of Academic Responsibility makes it clear that behavior such as bribery, cheating, lying, and plagiarism run contrary to the nature and purpose of the university and, consequently, subject the student to disciplinary action. In the past, some students have expressed a lack of clarity with regard to behavior that constitutes plagiarism. Accordingly, the definition is included here.

Plagiarism is defined as "presenting, as one's own, the work or the opinions of someone else." Most students define plagiarism as "copying material of some sort, either word for word or sense for sense." Although that definition is accurate, the criterion is not merely copying material; ideas, conclusions, and ways of organizing material can be plagiarized. Specifically, one is guilty of plagiarism when:

1. Words, sentences, ideas, conclusions, examples, and/or organization of an assignment that are borrowed from a source (a book, an article, another student's paper, etc.) without acknowledging the source.
2. A student submits another's work in lieu of his or her own assignment.

3. A student allows another person to revise, correct, or in any way rewrite his or her assignment without having the approval of the instructor.
4. A student submits written assignments received from commercial firms, fraternity or sorority files, or any other source.
5. A student allows another person to take all or part of his or her course.
6. A student submits as assignment (a paper, a library assignment, a revision, etc.) done together with another student without having approval from the instructor.

### ***Professional Principles***

Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the American Psychological Association's "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct," particularly those principles which apply to the conduct of psychological research. The "Principles" can be found in the December 1992 issue of the American Psychologist. Every student engaged in research is expected to follow Federal, professional, university, and department guidelines regarding the treatment of human and animal participants.

### ***Graduate Research Assistantships (GRAs) and Graduate Instructional Assistantships (GIAs)***

Financial support in the form of research assistantships and instructional (teaching) assistantships have traditionally been available for doctoral students. Assistantships are funded through two major sources, the Department of Psychology and grant-supported research projects. The department strives to provide research and instructional assistantships for as many graduate students as possible, but funds are limited. Faculty members who direct grant funded projects assign research assistantships for those projects.

While support can never be guaranteed, it is departmental policy to give highest priority for funding to students in good standing during their initial three years of training. Students in their fourth year of training receive somewhat lower priority. Students you are in their fifth year or beyond, receive the lowest priority. Students who have received an unsatisfactory evaluation for an academic year also receive the lowest priority for financial support.

***Continuation of all support is contingent upon satisfactory performance of duties, as well as satisfactory progress in the program.***

### ***Involvement in Academic and Professional Organizations***

Students are expected to participate in a variety of professional activities in the Department and will be submitting articles for publication in scientific journals, will be presenting at conferences, and are expected to show continued interest in matters of importance to psychologists. Further, students are also expected read scientific publications on a regular basis.

### ***Individual Development Plans***

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are a written document used to outline past accomplishments, identify areas in need of development and create feasible professional goals in order for a graduate student to successfully work towards a desired career. Graduate students in the Experimental Program are required to complete an IDP each year and it must be brought to each annual progress meeting. IDPs create an opportunity

for graduate students and faculty mentors to openly discuss career goals and work together to create a plan to reach those goals. For students funded by NIH, this is a requirement to do research. The USC Office of Research and The Graduate School strongly encourage the use of IDPs for all graduate students for identifying professional development opportunities and to aid in career planning. There are two formats available to you and your mentor may help you choose which format is preferable.

You may use the IDP form found on the Graduate School website: ***IDP- Graduate School***

Or you may use this online version which will prompt you to update your information periodically: ***IDP- MyScienceCareers***

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## Section 6: What to Expect in Committee Meetings with Your Faculty

This section of the handbook gives you some guidelines about the social atmosphere of your meeting. You will learn about the formality of the meetings, the types of topics you may discuss, and the materials you should bring to each meeting. Some meetings are more casual, while others will be quite formal and you will be expected to interact with your colleagues on a purely professional level. It is always your responsibility to understand the meeting structure.

**Introductory Meeting.** This will be the first time you meet with your Advising committee. The meeting will most likely take place in one of the faculty member's offices or a small conference room. You should bring your graduate student handbook along with a notebook and pen to the meeting. During this meeting your faculty will introduce themselves, give you information regarding their areas of research, and the courses that they teach. They will want to know about you as well. What are your research interests, what types of coursework have you had that you've enjoyed, and other types of information. During this period they are forming an initial impression of you, but in a very informal manner. You may wish to dress in business casual for this meeting (such as slacks or skirts rather than t-shirts and jeans). This meeting most likely will last 20-40 minutes.

**First Semester Check Meeting.** You will be expected to arrange a meeting with the three members of your Advising committee near the end of your first semester. This will be the second time that you meet with your Advising Committee. This meeting is moderately informal, and will most likely take place in one of the faculty members' offices or a small conference room. You should consider dressing in business casual. If you have had issues during your first semester, such as difficulties in coursework, issues within a laboratory, or other academic problems your committee will attempt to help you solve them during this meeting. You should bring note-taking materials and a copy of this handbook. You will be asked about your class performance and your laboratory work. Your committee will also want to review the draft of your [Qualifying Exam Proposal](#). It is expected that you send the committee your proposal a few days before the meeting so that they have time to read it before the meeting. It is helpful to bring your grades to the meeting. You will also need to bring your [Individual Development Plan \(IDP\)](#). Your mentor will help you fill out this form before the meeting.

**Advising Evaluation Meetings.** You will be expected to arrange a meeting with the three members of your Advising Committee during the final month of each academic year. This meeting is moderately informal, and will most likely take place in one of the faculty members' offices or a small conference room. You should consider dressing in business casual. Each year you will be evaluated based on how you have met the program goals, and how you have answered the suggestions on your most recent evaluation. You need to bring a copy of your Curriculum Vita, your most recent evaluation, your most recent transcript, [and your Individual Development Plan](#). You can expect to answer questions about your career trajectory, about your research plans, and your accomplishments during the previous year. For the advising meeting at the end of your first year, you should also come prepared to talk about your full Qualifying Exam Proposal which you should have sent your committee a week prior to the meeting.

**Written Comprehensive Exam Meetings.** You will meet with your Written Comprehensive Committee at least twice, although you may meet with individual members of the committee several times throughout your development of the Written Comprehensive Exam Proposal. Your Written Comprehensive Exam Proposal meeting will be an informal committee meeting at which you will be expected to be at your highest level of professional interaction. You will need to defend the decisions you have made in constructing the proposal and its bibliography. Your committee will test you on your ability to incorporate their input in a meaningful way so be prepared to take notes. Taking notes is particularly important during the proposal meeting as you will not meet with your committee again until after you submit your written comprehensive exam. The committee must meet within 15 days of the submission of the exam. The committee will discuss their evaluations of your work and assign a grade of pass, pass with revisions, or fail. You will not be present at this meeting, but your major professor will provide a written summary of the committee's evaluation.

**Oral Examination Meeting.** During this meeting, you will present your proposed dissertation research and the members of your Dissertation Committee will ask you questions in your specialty area and questions that are general to psychology that may be relevant to your dissertation. The meeting will last 90 minutes. This meeting will take place in a conference room. During this meeting you should be prepared to be at your most professional. Be sure to dress in professional attire, and to be polite to the members of your committee. Remember to name the researchers whose works you reference when answering questions. The process of giving credit to previous researchers in the field is not only good scholarship, but is also good etiquette. Be sure to thank your committee for their time and effort.

**Dissertation Proposal Meeting.** This meeting can be casual in dress, but you should be ready to present your work as a rigorous academic. Expect your committee to suggest many changes to your proposal, and be ready to note these changes. Make sure that you arrive with a copy of the dissertation proposal to keep on hand for easy reference. Your proposal meeting will be advertised 1 week in advance, and you may have other individuals in attendance. The rules for the dissertation process are complex. In order to make the meeting go smoothly you should bring the Guidelines for the Dissertation section of this document.

**Dissertation Defense Meeting.** This meeting is the most professional of all meetings you will attend at the University. It is at this meeting that you will present yourself as a full colleague. You will be expected to present your Dissertation in front of your Committee and an audience and to defend your work based on rigorous scientific principles. This meeting is open to any members of the academic community, and will be advertised. The department highly recommends that you attend other defenses before scheduling your own defense.

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## **M.A. Degree Program**

The MA in Experimental Psychology is an option available for students enrolled in the Experimental Psychology, Ph.D. who choose to take the additional steps to obtain the master's degree concurrent with the doctoral program in Experimental Psychology. Students seeking a terminal master's degree are not admitted to the program; instead, students admitted to the doctoral program are automatically admitted to the master's program, if they desire that degree.

The MA curriculum is designed to provide expertise in one area of Experimental Psychology, along with advanced knowledge of several additional areas within the field. The degree is awarded upon successful completion of course work, submission of an acceptable thesis, and satisfactory performance on a comprehensive, oral examination. The sequence of events necessary for completion of the M.A. degree is at the end of the descriptions of the requirements in the [M.A. Degree Timeline](#).

### ***M. A. Course Requirements***

To obtain an M.A., all requirements for this degree set forth by BOTH the Graduate School and the Experimental program for this degree must be filled. The Graduate School requirements are that you must obtain 30 credit hours, at least 15 credits must be at the 700 level and above (excluding Psychology 798 and 799), and no more than 6 of the 30 hours may be in Psychology 798 and 799.

The program requirements are that one course must be taken from Methods (see Table 1), 12 credits from Core courses, and enough graduate Psychology electives to complete 30 hours with at least 15 hours at the 700 level of above. These required courses are also part of the Ph.D. core curriculum in Experimental Psychology.

### ***M.A. Curriculum*** Required courses are:

#### **Two Basic Methods Courses (6 hours)\***

PSYC 709            3 hrs    Basic Quantitative Methods I

PSYC 710           3 hrs    Basic Quantitative Methods II

*\* Students may alternatively complete the [STAT 700, 701] or [STAT 702, 703] sequence to satisfy this requirement.*

#### **Breadth Course (3 hours)**

Breadth courses are electives whose focus is outside the student's primary area of study, but can be complementary to their research focus. This course should be selected in conjunction with the student's advising committee and approved by the program director.

#### **Core Area Courses (6 hours)**

Specialized seminar courses necessary for the student's curriculum and research goals. Typically, these are core courses within the Department of Psychology, however with approval of the advising committee and graduate program director survey courses from other departments can be substituted (e.g., PHPH, Public Health, School of Medicine, Statistics)

#### **Electives (9-12 hours)**

Additional training tailored to each student to enhance specialized training in the field. Elective courses can include seminars and laboratory work done as individual research credit hours (PSYC 889; maximum 9 hrs). Elective courses may be taught by any graduate program or professional school at the University of South Carolina, although typically a student will take at least some of his or her elective courses within the program. Your Advising Committee must approve all elective courses. You must submit an Approval of Elective Courses to your committee. The standard time to do so is during your yearly Advising Committee Evaluation meeting. Electives are tailored to each student to enhance specialized training in the field.

### *Thesis preparation (3-6 hours)*

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All students must take at least 3, but no more than 6 credit hours of PSYC 799 (Thesis Preparation) with their main advisor. The specific number of credit hours will be determined in consultation with the advising committee so as to ensure that, with the elective courses, the student meets the 30 credit hours requirement for the Masters degree.

### ***M.A. Thesis Requirements***

The Graduate School requires a minimum of two semesters of course enrollment at USC for an M.A. degree to be awarded; the Program normally expects you to complete the M.A. Program within two years. During this period, you must write an acceptable thesis based on research directed by your major professor.

There are five steps in satisfying the thesis requirement: (1) forming the Thesis Committee (2) getting a proposal approved by the committee on the **required form** (3) conducting the research; (4) writing the thesis in approved form; and (5) defending the thesis.

Your thesis committee will consist of your major professor and at least one additional faculty member. The Department Chair and the Dean of the Graduate School must approve this committee. Your thesis committee acts for the department in all matters concerning the proposal, conducting of the research, final format, and defense. The defense of the thesis may be combined with the Comprehensive Exam (see below). If the thesis committee already consists of three members, then this group can also serve as the exam committee, pending approval of the Department Chair. If your thesis committee consists of two members, you must choose a third member to serve on the oral comprehensive portion of the examination. This third member does not have to read the thesis or attend the thesis defense portion of the examination, but he/she must evaluate the M.A. Oral examination.

Once the committee is approved, it is considered exceptional for its membership to change. A faculty member unable to carry out committee duties may ask to be removed from the committee. A substitute member would then be obtained by following the procedure for original selection of the committee. If you subsequently desire a thesis committee other than the one that has been approved, you may appeal to the Departmental Executive Committee (the Department Chair will abstain from voting). If you change your thesis substantially, you may, with the committee's approval, ask for dissolution of the committee. Under these circumstances a new committee will be formed and the entire process will resume, beginning with approval of a proposal.

Your thesis work begins with committee approval of a proposal, which includes an introduction, method, and proposed analyses. You should work closely with your major professor to develop a proposal, but it is also wise to consult with other committee members during its preparation. Your proposal must be approved at a proposal meeting attended by all members of the committee (see form on p. 46).

Your data should be collected on the Columbia campus or in the Columbia area, under the direct supervision of your committee. Exceptions are possible under unusual circumstances, but the rationale should be persuasive. Your thesis committee, the Experimental faculty, and the Operations Committee of the department must approve all exceptions. Off-campus research -- just as is the case with on-campus research -- requires approval by the department's Ethics Committee, as well as any similar body for the setting in which research is pursued.

### ***The Relationship of the Qualifying Exam Project and Master's Thesis***

The Master's Thesis and the Qualifying Project Exam are distinct entities. The qualifying project exam is a document submitted to your Advising committee for approval, and must be completed within two years of entering the program. The Master's Thesis may take longer, and may include the data gathered for the qualifying project. If you decide to complete the Master's option you will be required to have an oral defense and submit a formal thesis to the graduate school.

### ***M.A. Oral Comprehensive Examination***

Candidates for an M.A. degree must take a comprehensive oral examination that assesses knowledge of psychology and ability to communicate with other professionals. The oral examination must be taken and passed not more than two years or less than 15 days prior to the end of the semester in which your degree is to be awarded. The M.A. oral examination should be announced by the [appropriate form](#).

This examination normally consists of presenting the Master's Thesis and answering questions about it. It is conducted by the MA thesis committee. Evaluation concludes by filling out a ***M.A. Oral Examination and Defense form***.

<b><i>M.A. Degree Timeline</i></b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Action</b>
1st semester	<a href="#">Advising Committee</a> Meeting Before the first day of classes each student will meet with the <a href="#">Advising Committee</a> to determine a first semester class schedule.
End of 1st semester	Committee Meeting  <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss <a href="#">Qualifying Exam Proposal Draft</a> <input type="checkbox"/> Discuss <i>Program of Study and Courses</i>
End of 2nd semester	Committee Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss <a href="#">Qualifying Exam Proposal</a></li> <li>• Thesis committee approved by Department Chair and Dean of Graduate school.</li> <li>• Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Individual Development Plan (IDP)</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Master's Program of Study must be submitted to the graduate school. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Program of Study Form</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
At least two semesters before degree is expected	<a href="#">Master's Committee</a> Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Annual Student Evaluation Form</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">Individual Development Plan (IDP)</a></li> <li>○ <a href="#">Program of Study Form</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	Thesis proposal approved by committee.
At the beginning of the semester in which degree is expected	Apply for graduation.
At least 60 days before the end of the semester in which degree is expected	Submit draft of Master's Thesis to Faculty Mentor
At least 30 days before end of semester in which degree is sought and at and at least 7 days before comprehensive oral exam	Obtain approval of thesis and pass M.A. Comprehensive Oral Exam conducted by 3-member committee (appointed by the Department Chair).
By the end of semester in which degree is expected	Complete Course work.
Receive M.A. Degree	