

**Handbook for the On-Campus Graduate Program,
Department of Psychology
Michigan State University**

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1. Overview

1.1 *Structure of the Graduate Program and the Department*

Congratulations! You are a graduate student in one of the top Psychology Departments in the country. You should be proud of yourself for this achievement. The goal of your graduate training program is to help you become a first-rate scientist, scholar, teacher, and/or practitioner.

The Psychology Department is divided into six **Graduate Programs**.

These are:

1. **Behavioral Neuroscience**
2. **Clinical**
3. **Cognition & Cognitive Neuroscience**
4. **Ecological/Community**
5. **Organizational**
6. **Social/Personality**

Each Graduate Program has a chairperson. The Department maintains a list of Graduate Program chairs and members on the department website.

The Department also has a Chair of the Department, a Graduate Programs Director and the Director of Undergraduate Studies in Psychology. In addition, we have an Office of Graduate Studies (240E) that is staffed by the Graduate Programs Administrator to serve the graduate students and to ensure that policies and procedures are followed.

The "**Graduate Program**" for which this handbook applies is a Ph.D. program which includes obtaining a master's degree on the way to your Ph.D. degree. Therefore, in this handbook, we refer to the Master's portion of the Graduate Program as your "**Master's Program**," and the post-Master's portion as the "**Doctoral Program**." The Psychology Department at MSU also offers a fully online terminal M.A. in Program Evaluation. Its requirements are described in a separate document.

The six on-campus programs run separate graduate training curricula as described in **Section 6** of this Handbook. In most cases, you were admitted into a single graduate training program and therefore you have a home Graduate Program. Each Graduate Program has developed its

own set of policies and guidelines. Some students with strong interdisciplinary interests may be eligible to develop individualized training plans that span two programs. It is possible to initiate this option either during the admissions process or in your first two years of study, prior to admission to the PhD program. Information on this interdisciplinary work is provided below, and early discussion with the Graduate Programs Director is encouraged.

There are University policies and guidelines that describe policies that are University-wide followed by all graduate programs at Michigan State University (see [The Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#)).

1.2 Upon Arrival at MSU

The first things are to get you settled into the Department prior to the start of classes in the Fall semester. To get you started, you have been assigned a "PID" which includes the letter "A" followed by eight digits. This piece of information is important — it's who you are, as far as the University systems are concerned. You can obtain your photo ID from the International Center.

You also have an **MSU NetID**. Your NetID allows you to do things electronically at MSU, including access to email, library resources, and your student record. Your NetID is the first part of your MSU email address **something@msu.edu**. Using your NetID you can also access some server storage space which you can use to create personal web pages.

You should also work with your Graduate Program Chair and/or faculty advisor regarding assignment to your office space. You and your Chair/faculty advisor will need to sign off on a form for you to obtain a key to your office assignment. Keys can be obtained from the staff in room 262.

1.21 Attend an Orientation Session

You are required to attend an orientation session for all incoming graduate students in Psychology. The orientation session will provide basic information about policies and procedures and who to go to for help, and will provide a format for you to ask questions. New students are sent a letter over the summer providing the date and time for the orientation session.

1.22 Take care of your financial support paperwork

You have been provided four years of financial support for your graduate education. Financial support comes in five main types – your source of funding can change over the course of your time here:

- 1) Teaching assistantships (TA); students are eligible to join the Graduate Employees Union
- 2) Teaching assistantships not eligible to join the Graduate Employees Union (e.g., Clinic Coordinators who are labeled as Teaching Excluded or TE)
- 3) Research assistantships (RA)
- 4) MSU fellowships (e.g., University Distinguished Fellowships, University Enrichment Fellowships)
- 5) External fellowships (e.g., from the National Science Foundation or National Institutes of Health)

If you have been awarded a TA, you will be asked at the Orientation session if you want to join the Graduate Employees Union (GEU). During that session, you will be given a card on which you indicate your decision to join or not join the GEU. This issue is discussed during the Orientation Session.

1.23 Meet Your Advisor

During the summer before starting at MSU, you are assigned a "Temporary Advisor." In the same letter informing you of your Temporary Advisor, you will receive information about what courses to enroll for during your first year. If you have any questions about them, check with your advisor. Your Temporary Advisor may become your Advisor when you choose your Master's Committee, but this is not necessary. Some of you might already know who you want as your advisor—he or she is the person who contacted you during the admissions process, who might be supporting you on a research grant, or who has simply said "I will be your advisor when you get here." Make sure you meet with this person as soon as possible after you arrive in East Lansing. He or she is one of the most valuable resources you have for information, guidance, and advice.

In addition, within a month of your arrival on campus you must meet with your advisor to (1) talk about who will be on your guidance committee and (2) begin to explore research ideas.

1.24 Next Summer Support and Credit Requirement

It is not too early to think about funding for next summer after your first year here at MSU. While your acceptance letter notes that you have four years of support during the academic year, almost all our students are funded in some way over the summer semester. Each Fall semester, you will receive a letter from the Psychology Department Administration asking if you want to teach a face to face course or an on-line course the following summer. Students can also receive summer support in the form of a research assistantship if they have made such an agreement for support with their advisor or as part of a fellowship. Therefore, make sure you have conversations with your faculty advisor in your Graduate Program about funding opportunities for summer by the middle of the Fall semester.

Summer stipends include up to a five-credit tuition waiver. You are required by the University to enroll in a minimum of **3** credits to hold a summer assistantship as a TA, TE or RA. Typically the 3 credits will be research oriented credits like PSY 899 (thesis credits).

Summer support can also come in the form of an hourly wage on a project. In that case, students do not need to be registered for summer course credits as hourly wages do not include the tuition waiver. See the Programs Administrator for additional information.

1.3 How to Use this Document

The main body of this Handbook summarizes the Department-wide policies of our Graduate Programs. **Section 6** describes the guidelines for each Graduate Program. All Departmental forms that you need to fill out can be downloaded using links in the relevant sections of this Handbook or from our **Forms web page**. The files are in MSWord format, so you can fill them in electronically.

This Handbook is divided into these main sections:

- Degree Requirements for Masters and Ph.D. Programs
- Graduate School Related Issues
- Resources Available from the Psychology Department
- Regulations for specific Graduate Programs

- Issues related to research activities
 - Graduate School and University-wide Materials and Resources
-

2 Degree Requirements, Guidelines, and Forms

2.1 *Master's Program*

You are considered to be in the **Master's Program** if you were admitted to the Graduate Program in the Department of Psychology and you don't have a Master's Degree from another University. If you have a master's degree from another University, it is up to your Graduate Program to determine if you will be required to complete an additional master's thesis at MSU. This issue should be clarified before the start of your first academic semester at MSU. If you have been admitted directly into the Ph.D. Program (accepted master's thesis), go to Section 2.2 on Ph.D. Program requirements. This section refers to a number of forms that need to be completed. Click [here](#) to access all Master's Program relevant forms.

2.1.1 **Set up Master's Guidance Committee**

Your Master's Guidance Committee helps you with your Master's Plan of Study and also supervises your Master's research. The Master's Guidance committee membership that starts with helping you with your plan of study can be changed as it becomes clearer which faculty members fit best given the direction of your thesis. To change the membership of your committee, you must file "The Master's Plan of Study Amendment Form" with the Graduate Office (room 240E).

The committee requirement is for a minimum of three members including your Chair. The restrictions on committee membership include:

- The Chair of your Guidance Committee must be a Psychology Department faculty member within your Graduate Program
- Two of the 3 committee members must be regular members of the Psychology Department (someone who has a tenure-track or tenured appointment at MSU).

- Therefore, only 1 of the 3 committee members may be either a faculty Emeritus (retired from the University but maintain a courtesy appointment) or a regular faculty member from outside the Psychology Department.

You can have an additional (4th) committee member who can be an adjunct faculty member. Your committee membership is reviewed and must be approved by the department's Graduate Program Director.

It is occasionally appropriate for a student to want a fixed-term (non-tenure-stream) faculty member from MSU or a regular faculty member from another University to serve on their committee. In this case, you need to seek approval from the Graduate Programs Director.

If you are developing an individualized, interdisciplinary plan of study that spans two of the department's graduate programs, then you must have one faculty member from each of these programs on your committee. The chair of this committee must come from one of the two programs.

2.1.2 Write your Plan of Study

To obtain a Master's degree you must complete a minimum of **30 credit hours** of coursework and research credits. It is expected that graduate students will complete a formal Master's thesis (the University calls this the Plan A option) or a project based research study (Plan B option). Programs in Clinical, Ecological/Community, Organizational and Social/Personality typically require a Plan A Master's thesis while the Behavioral Neuroscience and Cognition & Cognitive Neuroscience Programs typically require a Plan B research project. On your plan of study, graduate students pursuing a Plan A Master's thesis must have a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 8 credits of PSY 899 (Thesis Research) and Plan B Master's Project students must have a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 8 credits of PSY 890. Students with individualized, interdisciplinary plans of study must work with their committees to determine whether a Plan A or Plan B project will be completed. The Department's Graduate Office must be informed prior to data collection.

Work with your advisor/committee to determine the agreed upon course and thesis credits (if applicable) to reach the 30 credit minimum. You should not exceed the 30 credit minimum on your plan of study as any credits over 30 cannot count towards your PhD plan of study.

The only Departmental requirement is that all students take (and pass) PSY 815, "Quantitative Research Design and Analysis in Psychology", or its equivalent. Additional requirements are set at the Graduate Program level. The courses you take must satisfy the requirements of your graduate program. If you wish to pursue an individualized, interdisciplinary plan of study that spans two of the department's programs, your committee may recommend a unique set of core course requirements to be approved by the Graduate Programs Director.

Finally, a University restriction you should be aware of is that no more than 6 of your 30 credits may come from courses at the 400 (undergraduate) level. It is not expected that you will take undergraduate courses as part of your Master's plan, but that decision rests with your Master's Guidance Committee.

For students who have determined that a research oriented Ph.D. degree is not the career direction they now desire or if they are not making satisfactory progress, there is an option to obtain a non-thesis terminal Master's degree. See the Graduate Programs Director or the Graduate Programs Administrator for further information.

Master's Plan of Study Forms

Your Plan of Study is an important document, so work with your advisor/committee members. The Plan of Study contains information about

- The courses you will take
- The number of research credits you will sign up for
- Your research area
- Your Guidance Committee members

The plan of study must be signed by all members of your Master's Guidance Committee and is not official until it has received departmental approval by the Graduate Director. **The Plan of Study must be filed before the end of your second semester (typically spring semester, first year) as a graduate student for you to remain eligible for fall registration.**

As noted, your Plan of Study (including the composition of your committee) may be amended with a **Master's Plan of Study Amendment Form**. As you can see from the form, before it is official it must be signed by you, the Chair of your Guidance Committee, and the Graduate Programs Director.

2.1.3 Course Credits

Students must be registered during the academic year (fall or spring semester) for a minimum of 6 credits to be eligible for a Graduate Assistantship. The maximum number of credits covered by Graduate Assistantship is 9 credits. As noted in your offer of admission letter, the Psychology Department will provide 4 years of support during the academic year, as long as you remain in good standing. Click [here](#) for more information about Graduate Assistantships.

Summer stipends for Assistantships include up to a five credit tuition waiver. You are required by the University to enroll in a minimum of **3** credits to hold a summer assistantship as a TA, TE or RA.

Summer support can also come in the form of an hourly wage on a project. In that case, students do not need to register for summer course credits as the hourly wage does not cover the tuition waiver.

2.1.4 Master's Proposal

Your Master's Proposal is a formal description of your Master's thesis research. Your committee will provide guidance on what is expected in the proposal, and your Graduate Program describes the expected timeline for the proposal to be defended.

Your Master's proposal defense is a formal meeting with your committee. Work with your advisor/committee chair to prepare the written proposal to be ready to defend your proposal. Once your committee chair agrees that the proposal is ready for the defense, contact your committee members for possible dates and times – giving the committee at least 2 weeks to read and prepare for the defense.

Be particularly careful when **setting up meetings for the summer**. Most faculty members are on 9-month appointments, so they are under no obligation to meet during the summer months (May 16 -August 15). Therefore, you should check early with your committee members to make sure they are willing to meet in the summer, and to find out when they will be available.

Once your proposal is accepted by your committee, you must complete either a **Plan A Master's Proposal Approval Form** or a **Plan B Master's Project Approval Form** as appropriate. In addition, you must email a copy of your proposal to the Graduate Program Administrator.

2.1.5 Defend Master's research

You will then write up the study according to the guidelines that are appropriate given your area of work. Set up a defense meeting, giving committee members at least a 2 week lead time. [Guidelines concerning formatting of the thesis](#) are on the web.

After your defense, your committee will evaluate your research and your defense of it and decide upon a grade. This grade will be applied to all of your previously deferred PSY 899 credits (for Plan A). Usually, you will have some revisions to do, no matter what grade is assigned.

Students should bring a copy of the **Report on MA Level Achievements Form for Plan A Master's students** form or **Master's Plan B Completion Form** to the meeting. Once completed and signed by your committee, return the form to the Graduate Programs Administrator.

Your committee chair and at least one other member of your three-person thesis committee must give you a passing grade (3.0 or higher) in order to pass your thesis defense. If a committee member dissents, they must explain their grade/decision on the "Master's Level Report on Plan A MA Level Achievements" form. Your thesis grade is determined by your entire committee, with the chairperson making the final determination only in the event of a deadlock on the part of the committee.

2.1.6 Obtain Master's degree

All Master's degree candidates must be enrolled during the semester in which they orally defend their thesis or research project. When you register for classes for the semester you plan on receiving your degree, you must complete an application for graduation. This begins the procedure by which the various offices involved will be notified of your intention to graduate. Check the university calendar for specific deadlines to be eligible for each semester's graduation.

After all signatures have been obtained on the necessary forms, file them with the Graduate Programs Administrator in the Departmental Graduate Office (room 240E Psychology Building).

Plan A Master's Program students **MUST** submit their thesis electronically to The Graduate School via ProQuest. The instructions for electronic submissions are available from [Theses and Dissertation Submissions page](#). The target date for the **FINAL APPROVAL** of an

electronic Thesis or Dissertation to the Graduate School for graduating the semester of that submission is FIVE working days prior to the first day of classes for the next semester (see future target dates below). **Be aware that a submission via ProQuest does not mean that the document has been ACCEPTED.** The review process is interactive and final approval can take anywhere from a few hours to weeks, depending upon the extent of the necessary revisions and how diligent the author is when making the necessary revisions.

2.1.7 Admission to the Ph.D. program

Your Master's Guidance committee reviews all of your work and makes a recommendation to your Graduate Program Chair on your admission to the Ph.D. program. After consultation with the regular faculty members in your Graduate Program, the Program Chair signs off on the Master's completion forms and makes a recommendation on your admission to the Ph.D. program. Once the Graduate Programs Director has approved, you are now officially admitted in the Ph.D. Program.

Therefore, admission to the Ph.D. program is not automatic upon completion of the master's thesis. Students may not be recommended for advancement to the Ph.D. Program for a variety of reasons. The written feedback you have received from your Graduate Program Chair as well as your general conversations with your advisor and committee members should serve to keep you well-informed about your progress in the program prior to this recommendation.

2.1.8 Time limits

There are two types of time limits, imposed by (1) University policy and (2) specific Graduate Program requirements. The University time limits are broader (all requirements must be completed within 6 years of taking the first course on your Master's Plan of Study) than the Department's Graduate Program specific requirements. Note that the time requirements to be making adequate progress are described in the individual Graduate Program requirements. Not making adequate progress in your Graduate Program has implications for funding and for continuation in the program beyond the master's degree.

2.1.9 Academic Standards for Master's Program Completion

The College of Social Sciences has a policy about course grades. To successfully complete a Master's program, you must maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average for classes on your Master's Plan of Study. In addition, you can only earn two individual grades below 3.0 (including N grades in the P-N grading system). A third grade below 3.0 will result in you being dismissed from the Graduate Program. You will receive a warning letter from the Graduate Office if your academic performance is below 3.0 or when you have two class grades below 3.0.

2.2 Ph.D. Program

You are considered to be in the **Ph.D. program** when you have met the requirements outlined in Section 2.1.9. There are few specific course requirements for the Ph.D. Most of them will be determined by you and your Dissertation Guidance committee and will be described under the section of your Doctoral Plan of Study. There are just **two requirements beyond the level of Graduate Program requirements**:

- 1) You must complete PSY 815 (or equivalent). This is a departmental requirement (this is covered under the master's program).
- 2) All doctoral students must register for and successfully complete a minimum of 24 credits and **no more than 36 credits** of doctoral dissertation research (course number 999). You receive credit for those 999s when the Ph.D. is awarded. This is a University requirement. Students should carefully consider the number of research credits to take while being funded on an assistantship so as to reach the minimum and to not exceed the maximum. Your advisor can help you plan this out.

Full time status for doctoral students is defined as a minimum of 1 credit for those students who have successfully completed all comprehensive examinations and are actively engaged in dissertation research.

This section refers to a number of forms that need to be completed. Click [here](#) to access all Ph.D. Program relevant forms.

2.2.1 Doctoral Student Program Planning and Final Degree Certification

GradPlan is the web-interactive system for doctoral students to create and store their Ph.D. Degree Plans, guidance committee and course changes, comprehensive and final defense reports, and the final

University degree certification. It provides electronic circulation for checking/approvals and generates automatic emails when needed.

2.2.2 Find an Advisor and Set up Doctoral Guidance Committee and Doctoral Dissertation Committee

When you begin your Doctoral program, you will need to create a **Doctoral Guidance Committee**. The Doctoral Guidance Committee must consist of four MSU faculty members, at least three of whom are regular faculty members of the Psychology Department (in the tenure track or tenured). The chairperson of the committee must be a member of the student's Graduate Program. No more than one of the four faculty may be Emeritus, or from outside the Psychology Department. If you are pursuing an individualized, interdisciplinary plan of study that spans two of the department's programs, your Doctoral Guidance Committee must contain at least one current faculty member from each of the two programs, and the chair must come from one of them. The Doctoral Guidance Committee members work with you to develop your Plan of Study.

Once you have reached the stage of working on your dissertation, you can select committee members to take advantage of different faculty members' expertise. At that point, you will amend your Doctoral Guidance Committee membership to reflect those changes to the committee.

It is a University regulation that you cannot change committee members within 60 days before the date of the oral defense of the dissertation. Before that time, should you need to change the membership of your committee, you must file an amendment to your Plan of Study. The Doctoral Plan of Study may be amended through GradPlan.

Regulations concerning **who may serve on Doctoral Dissertation Committees** are the same as those for the Doctoral Guidance / Plan of Study Committee: composed of at least four faculty, at least three of whom are regular Department members. An adjunct or fixed term faculty member may co-chair a dissertation along with a regular member of the Department. The chair of your dissertation must come from the Graduate Program to which you were admitted (or one of the two if you are pursuing an individual, interdisciplinary plan of study). Also, the Graduate Director of Psychology has the discretion to approve or not approve a committee or to add a committee member to any Doctoral Committee.

2.2.3 Write your Plan of Study

Your **Doctoral Plan of Study** requires:

- The courses you will take that you did not already place on your Master's plan of study
- Your dissertation subject
- Your committee members
- Plans for your Comprehensive Examinations

After working with your committee chair, fill out and submit your Plan of Study (using GradPlan the web-interactive system for doctoral students). It will then be routed electronically to the graduate office and all members of your Doctoral Guidance Committee for approvals. It is not official until it has received both departmental and college approval. **The Doctoral Plan of Study must be filed and approved before the end of your second semester as a doctoral student** for you to remain eligible for registration.

This Plan of Study must satisfy the requirements of your graduate program. If you wish to pursue an individualized, interdisciplinary plan of study that spans two of the department's programs, your committee may recommend a unique set of requirements for your courses and comprehensive exam that can be approved by the Graduate Programs Director in consultation with the chairs of the two graduate programs.

2.2.4 Comprehensive Examinations

Each Graduate Program specifies the requirements for the Comprehensive Examination. Thus, the format, structure, and content are determined almost entirely by your Graduate Program and your Guidance Committee; consult **Section 6** for important information.

The College of Social Science strictly enforces a number of regulations concerning Comprehensive Exams.

- The names of the examiners should be typed on the **MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY Record of Comprehensive Examinations** form, and each examiner should sign under his or her typed name.
- The student must be enrolled for at least one credit the semester in which the exams are passed.
- The Record of Comprehensive Exam form should be submitted to the Graduate Program Administrator after all committee members have signed.

- The approved written comprehensive exam must be emailed to the Department's Graduate Program Administrator.

2.2.5 Time Limits for Comprehensive Exams

The University requirement is that all **Comprehensive Exams must be passed WITHIN FIVE YEARS** from the time when a student begins the first class at MSU that appears on his or her Doctoral Plan of Study. Your Graduate Program likely has even stricter requirements for a student to be considered to be making adequate progress.

Requests for time extensions to the University requirement must be made by the chair of the student's committee and endorsed by the Graduate Programs Director. Requests should be made for a specific time period, normally no longer than one year, and must include a specific end date. When a time extension is approved for a Ph.D. candidate, **the student is required to retake the comprehensive examinations by that date.** If the student believes there is justification for not requiring a retake of the exams, he or she must request this exception in writing as part of the request for the time extension. Extensions endorsed by the Department's administration must be approved by the College of Social Science and the Graduate School.

2.2.6 Write Dissertation Proposal

Your committee provides guidance on in the content of your proposal. Once your chair determines your proposal is ready for your committee a proposal defense meeting can be scheduled. Your Guidance Committee then makes the decision to approve your dissertation proposal at your proposal defense meeting. Take a copy of the **Doctoral Level Approval of Dissertation Proposal form**, so it can be filled out at the meeting. This form, **along with an electronic file of the accepted dissertation proposal** should be filed with the Graduate Programs Administrator soon after your proposal has been accepted.

2.2.7 Write and Defend the Dissertation

Once your committee chair agrees that the dissertation is ready for defense, schedule the defense meeting. It is typical to give the dissertation document to committee members 3 weeks before the scheduled defense.

The process followed during the dissertation defense is up to the specific Graduate Program. After the defense, the committee votes on whether the dissertation is to be accepted. Often, a defense can lead to requirements to make some changes to the dissertation before final approval. Your committee chair and at least two other members of your four-person dissertation committee must give you a Pass grade in order to pass your doctoral defense. In the case of an individualized, interdisciplinary plan in which students are spanning two programs, at least one faculty member from each of these two groups (one of whom will be the chair) must pass you. If a committee member dissents, they must explain their decision on the "PhD Record of Dissertation and Oral Examination" form.

The Department of Psychology encourages all dissertation committees and doctoral students to arrange for a public presentation of the dissertation as part of, or in addition to, the oral defense. The **Ph.D. Notification of Final Oral Examination** form should be filled out to allow the presentation to be advertised. Announcements and scheduling of rooms must be made three weeks prior to the oral defense.

2.2.8 Get your Ph.D. and Graduate

The completed dissertation and all completed and signed paperwork must be received by the deadline noted by the Graduate School in order to graduate in a particular semester. At the end of your oral examination, the following forms must be completed and returned to the Graduate Program Administrator.

1. "**Record of Dissertation and Oral Examination Requirements for Doctoral Degree Candidates**". This form requires the signature of all members of your dissertation committee following your dissertation defense. After final revisions, your Committee Chair will sign the approval. When all approvals are completed, this form should be submitted to the Programs Administrator
2. "**Ph.D. Placement Report**". This is your statement on job or educational plans after receiving your degree.

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS OF DISSERTATIONS:

MSU **only accepts** electronic theses and dissertations submitted via ProQuest. The instructions for electronic submissions are available from [Theses and Dissertation Submissions page](#).

Be aware that a submission via ProQuest does not mean that the document has been ACCEPTED. The review process is interactive and final approval can take anywhere from a few hours to weeks, depending upon the extent of the necessary revisions and how diligent the author is when making the necessary revisions.

Submit an electronic copy of your dissertation to the Graduate Program Programs Administrator.

2.2.9 Time Limits for Doctoral Program

The Official University time limits are that all requirements for the Ph.D. degree must be completed within 8 years of taking the first course on your Doctoral Plan of Study. Application for extensions of the 8-year period of time toward degree must be submitted by the Department's Graduate Programs Director for approval by the Dean of the College and the Dean of the Graduate School. Upon approval of the extension, doctoral comprehensive examinations must be passed again. Each Graduate Program set its own standards to be considered to be making adequate progress.

2.2.10 Academic Standards for Doctoral Program

The College of Social Science has a policy about academic standards to which we subscribe. As a doctoral student, you may only have grades below 3.0 (including N grades in the P-N grading system) in two of the courses listed on your doctoral plan of study. In addition, you must maintain an overall GPA of 3.0 to remain in your doctoral program. Three grades below 3.0 or an overall GPA below 3.0 will result in being dismissed from the program. You will receive a warning letter from the Graduate Office if your academic performance is unsatisfactory.

3 Progressing through Graduate School

3.1 *Annual Evaluations*

It is critical that you know where you stand with your advisor, your Graduate Program, and the Department as a whole. Consistent with the Graduate Rights and Responsibilities Document ([GSRR](#)), graduate students have a right to receive periodic evaluations that assess their progress, performance, and professional potential. Each graduate student in the Department will receive written feedback every year by faculty members qualified to provide such feedback (usually the student's advisor or Graduate Program Chair) regarding progress toward degree. A copy of this letter is filed with the Graduate Office.

In addition, you should always feel free to ask your advisor and your committee members how they think you're doing. This sort of informal feedback can often be extremely useful. If you have any concerns, you should have a candid conversation with your advisor and any other faculty members you trust.

If a determination is made that a graduate student's progress or performance is unsatisfactory, he/she will be notified in writing and a copy of that notice will be placed in the student's academic file. If a determination is made that a graduate student's status in the program is in jeopardy, he/she will be notified in writing and provided with specific steps that must be taken within a specific timeframe to improve one's standing. If the graduate student does not meet these requirements to the satisfaction of the Graduate Program faculty, he/she may be dismissed from the program. In lieu of dismissal, faculty may also choose to suspend a graduate student from the program until specific requirements are met.

If a graduate student disagrees with any part of the letter, or any action taken by his/her Graduate Program, the student may submit a written response to the Psychology Department Graduate Office and this response will be filed along with the evaluation letter. A graduate student may also request a meeting with the Department's Graduate Programs Director to discuss any concerns about the evaluation letter or process. Students who believe they have been wrongly suspended, terminated or placed on probation can also request that the Graduate Programs Director convene the Psychology Department Graduate Student Grievance Committee to review the case. The Grievance

Committee's recommendation is considered the final determination of the Department. Click [here](#) to read more about the Psychology Department's **Graduate Student Grievance Committee Hearing Procedures**.

3.2 Leaves of absence

Students may request a leave of absence. The request must come after consultation with your advisor. You and your advisor should prepare a memo to the Graduate Programs Director requesting the leave. This memo should address the following points:

- the beginning date of the leave
- the anticipated end date
- any conditions and/or expectations about when and under what conditions you will return
- expectations about classes
- any reassignment of assistantship duties

If the Graduate Programs Director approves your leave, the he/she will sign the memo and place it in your file.

The University and College do not formally recognize a leave of absence status. The category exists entirely at the level of the Psychology Department. Note that if you are not registered for two semesters in a row, then you must complete an application for readmission. (This is just a form; it is not the full application that you filled out for admission, and there is no fee.) Also note that your program clock keeps ticking, and so all time limits continue to be in force. You may apply for a time limits waiver by contacting the Department's Graduate Programs Administrator.

3.3 Your relationship with your advisor, committee members

Your advisor is a significant person in your life as a graduate student. Be sure you meet on a regular basis. Your advisor is your best source for information about your scholarship, and career development. Your advisor also likely knows about sources of funding you might be able to tap into, conferences that you should attend, experiences you should gain, and journals you should aim to publish.

Your committee is an extension of the advisor, in many cases. You should see your committee as a resource. The members are there to help guide you in your graduate career, along with your advisor. Put a lot of thought into choosing the faculty on your committee(s). They should be knowledgeable in key aspects of your research, accessible, and strong scholars.

3.4 Dealing with the Unexpected

- A. If your advisor/committee chair leaves the University before you are finished with your degree, you should discuss your options with the faculty in your Graduate Program. In some cases it may make sense to change advisors. In other cases, you may be able to arrange to finish your degree with your current advisor in a long-distance relationship. Please contact the Graduate Programs Director to help you work through any problems departure of your advisor may cause.
- B. If your advisor is unable to continue in that capacity, your options depend on where you are in the process. If you are close to the beginning of your program, it probably makes sense to find another advisor. If you are close to finishing, you should contact the Graduate Programs Director to explore possible arrangements.
- C. If you are unable to continue to work with your advisor because of personal difficulties in the relationship, contact the Graduate Program Director.

3.5 Your Departmental Files

The Graduate Office keeps two files for you throughout your graduate school career. Your **Academic File** contains each of the forms you submit to note the achievement of important milestones in your training. For example, this file will include your Master's Plan of Study Form, the forms at the end of your Master's program, your Doctoral Plan of Study, your Comprehensive Exam Report, the form approving your Dissertation Proposal and the Dissertation and Oral Examination Form. Any form that you submit to the Graduate office will be placed in your Academic File. Copies of your annual evaluation letters and written responses from you (if you provide them) will also go into this file. You have the right to review the material in your Academic File. To do so, simply make a request to the Graduate Programs Administrator.

The second file is your **Personnel File** which contains the records of your employment. Appointment forms and evaluations of your performance are stored in your Personnel File. You also have the right to review this file. To do so, make a request to the Graduate Office Administrator. According to the GEU contract this request must be in writing, and you are limited to three viewings a year.

4 Resources available to you

4.1 Funds for travel and research

Some funds are typically available each year to support student research and travel to present this research at conferences.

4.1.1 Funds for travel

A student presenting either a talk or a poster at a conference can request travel expenses from their committee chair and from the department. In addition, once during your graduate career at MSU, you may apply for a travel grant from the MSU Graduate School (typically around \$400.00). In order to access these funds the Department must also contribute. You can access the [form](#) from the **Graduate School's website**.

Another option is that you can apply to the Department for a Graduate Office Fellowship. The Department tries to make these funds available for each student annually (typically around \$600). To apply for these funds, submit a request to the Psychology Graduate Programs Administrator along with the conference information (conference title, dates and location) and proof of presentation. Presentation proof can be either the program listing your contribution or the presentation acceptance email from the conference. If you cannot provide proof of presentation, a short one or two sentence confirmation of your involvement in a conference program from your major Professor will also suffice. If you have support for travel from other sources, please do not apply for these awards as well.

The Council of Graduate Students (COGS) has limited funds available to defray travel expenses. Click [here](#) for more information.

4.1.2 Funds for research

The Department sometimes has funds available for students to support their thesis and dissertation research. The amount available may vary year to year, but up to \$500 per request is possible (once per year per student). To apply for this money, you need to submit a brief budget to Graduate Programs Administrator.

In addition to whatever funds you obtain from your advisor and the Department, the Graduate School offers **Graduate Student Research Enhancement Awards**. Like their travel support, this award is only made once during your graduate career. These funds are provided to support activities that enhance graduate students' research projects, and categories covered include travel to participate in workshops, data collection, short courses, and extramural laboratory rotations. Under special circumstances, funding requests to purchase supplies and materials relevant to student's research will also be considered. The award may not be used to purchase equipment. The awards are intended to match / supplement funds provided by advisors and departments. Therefore, you should begin this process by requesting some funds from your advisor. You can then request funds from the department and finish by submitting the form requesting the bulk of funds from the Graduate School. There is no deadline for submitting requests, and decisions will be made within 3 weeks of the Graduate School receiving the application. Students must be registered the semester that the funds are awarded. More information on this award (including the application form) as well as other awards and fellowships available from the Graduate School can be located [here](#).

4.2 Internal Funding Opportunities

In addition to the Graduate School Travel Grant and Departmental funds to support research and travel, there are a number of other resources that you might consider:

- A. Dissertation Completion award: you must be enrolled in one credit that may incur out of state tuition. This award is for students in their last semester who have not been assigned or funded as a TA, RA, TE or on

Fellowship. You must be in the position to defend dissertation that semester to be eligible. See the link [here](#).

- B. MSU Emergency Fund: Up to **\$2,000** to support a range of things including medical bills. No specific deadline; decisions are made within three days. See the link [here](#).
- C. Graduate Student Research Enhancement Award: up to **\$1000** to travel to a workshop or assist in data collection; not typically used to purchase supplies. One time request with no deadline; decisions made in three weeks. See the link [here](#).
- D. COGS Conference Grant: **\$300** to attend an academic conference. It is very easy to get. One time request with decisions made in each semester. See the link [here](#).
- E. Future Academic Scholars in Teaching Fellowship Program: **\$2,000** from the graduate school. A full-year program with bi-weekly meetings to learn cutting-edge teaching methods. You must conduct a research project related to teaching. Deadlines to submit an application are at the end of the academic year. See the link [here](#).
- F. Residential College in the Arts and Humanities Graduate Fellowship Program: **\$7,500**. A full-year program with bi-weekly meetings to discuss topics related to teaching, learning, and engagement; conduct a project related to teaching. Deadlines to submit an application are at the end of the academic year. See the link [here](#).
- G. The Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP) Scholar Award: **\$2,500**. Given by a student organization that aims to promote diversity in higher education. Selection Criteria: Demonstrated commitment to AGEP goals, and participation in the MSU AGEP Learning Community and Community activities. See the link [here](#).
- H. Psychology Department Teaching Assistant Award: **\$200** fellowship given each year to a student who demonstrates excellent performance in their work as a teaching assistant. Students are nominated by faculty members.
- I. Joseph L. White Outstanding Student Multicultural Research Award: **\$500** award and certificate presented to a graduate student at the annual Multicultural Psychology Distinguished lecture for outstanding

research on multicultural issues defined broadly. Student applications are usually due near the beginning of the spring semester.

<http://psychology.psy.msu.edu/cmpr/OutstandingStudentMulticulturalResearchAward.aspx>

- J. Graduate Student Multicultural Research Grant: **\$300** award and certificate presented to a graduate student for proposed innovative and promising research in the area of multicultural psychology defined broadly. Student applications are usually due mid-October and awarded in mid-November.

<http://psychology.psy.msu.edu/cmpr/ResearchGrant.aspx>

- K. See <http://staff.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/3gradinf.htm> and <http://grad.msu.edu/funding/> for a more comprehensive list of both internal and external funding opportunities.

4.3 External Funding Opportunities

Students are encouraged to apply to sources outside of MSU for funds to support themselves in the graduate program and to support their research. Being able to list these awards on your vita is impressive to potential employers. Often this external support provides more money than you would get from being a TA.

Before applying, you should work with your advisor/committee chair. You should contact Graduate Office as there may be out-of-state tuition waivers and health insurance coverage opportunities available, and because there may be a limited number of submissions possible from a single department. Your external grant may well be configured differently (e.g., more stipend but fewer benefits) than the typical TA package. If this is the case, you may have to use some of your excess stipend or discretionary funds to cover the missing benefits.

Receipt of externally funded fellowships by students who have written their own grant applications and worth at least \$25,000 (direct costs) makes the students eligible for in-state tuition rate. The in-state tuition rate applies only to the semesters during which the student is supported by the fellowship. This policy applies only to grants funded through a competitive process by a US institution/agency/foundation. Funds obtained through non-competitive processes (e.g., need-based fellowships) or from international sources do not qualify the students for in-state tuition rates. For more information contact The Graduate Programs Administrator.

The National Science Foundation offers Graduate Fellowships. **This part** of the NSF website contains all their information about support for graduate students. The National Institutes of Health also welcomes applications from graduate students, see **Individual Predoctoral National Research Service Awards (NRSAs) for M.D./Ph.D. Fellowships**.

The **Graduate School's website** contains important information about funding opportunities.

4.4 Professional Development Resources

4.4.1 Online Teaching Workshops

Both faculty and graduate students can access nine online modules on improving your classroom teaching. The Graduate School purchased access for 3 years from Epigeum, a spin-off company from Imperial College of London. These are high-quality interactive modules on a variety of topics related to teaching and learning. For more information and to access the modules visit <https://grad.msu.edu/tap>.

4.4.2 The Graduate School

The Graduate School offers a number of career and professional development resources for students across all phases of the doctoral program. These include workshops on teaching that you may find valuable if you plan on teaching a course over the summer semester. For more information, go to <https://grad.msu.edu/teaching>.

4.5 Personal and Well-being Resources

The Psychology Department is committed to supporting the holistic development of each graduate student. Below are a number of resources available at MSU. Please also feel free to contact the Graduate Program Director if you need any additional resources or referrals.

The Counseling Center provides confidential individual and group counseling to all registered students. Click [here](#) for more information.

Staying fit and exercising can decrease stress and increase well-being. MSU's Recreational Sports and Fitness Services offers students, faculty and staff the opportunity to participate in many Intramural Sports and activities on a competitive and recreational level. All skill levels are

welcome and there are three different facilities on campus. Click [here](#) for more information.

The LGBT Resource Center leads university-wide initiatives that enhance campus climate and support services for MSU students who identify as lesbian, bisexual, gay, or transgender. Click [here](#) for more information.

The Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities is available to help ensure full access and support to students with disabilities. Click [here](#) for more information.

5 Responsible Conduct of Research and Scholarship

MSU requires that all graduate students and postdocs complete training in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). A minimum of five hours of formal training is required for each such person. Trainings shall be updated annually (minimum of 3 hours) throughout the student's or postdoctoral researcher's appointment on research projects. Please review the Psychology Department's [Institutional Policy for Training and Oversight in the Responsible and Ethical Conduct of Research](#) for specific information about meeting these requirements.

5.1 *Academic Integrity*

The related enterprises of scholarship and research are built upon honesty and integrity. Without these, we could not progress or even survive as a field of inquiry. When you become a graduate student in Psychology, you make an implicit promise to your classmates, your faculty, and your profession to conduct yourself in a scrupulously honest and upright way. If you fail to keep this promise, the consequences to yourself and everyone you work with are very serious. The same standards apply to faculty conducting research.

Academic integrity stands for many things. Obviously, it means you don't cheat on tests and exams, you don't plagiarize your papers, and you don't falsify your data or misrepresent your research findings. These

are the points we can all agree on. Failure to follow these guidelines leads to dire consequences for those involved. However, academic integrity refers to much more. Academic integrity is more than just a set of rules - it is a way of life, a state of mind. It means that we must always think about the consequences of our choices, for ourselves, our Department, and our University. Academic dishonesty is not simply a personal failure. It is a failure of the mentoring system and a failure of the evaluation system.

As a field, Psychology has a Code of Ethics that we are governed by. Please familiarize yourself with this code. The University also has a statement on *Integrity of Scholarship and Grades* in [MSU Spartan Life](#). These are important starting points for your continual exploration of this topic. It is appropriate for you to have ongoing discussions with your advisor about integrity issues as they become relevant. Many situations are ambiguous. Actions can often be interpreted in several ways. Many behaviors can generate disagreements among well-meaning people. Often the only way to resolve these ambiguities is conversation and discussion with colleagues.

If you have questions about ethical concerns, start by initiating conversation with your advisor. If this is not possible, there are other resources in the Department and in the University to help you resolve these issues. The Chair and Graduate Programs Director of the Psychology Department are good places to start or continue these conversations. They invite you to come to them with problems you cannot resolve with your advisor.

Ethical Violations. We expect you (and the faculty) to adhere to the high ethical principles of our profession and University as you conduct your research, scholarship, and professional activities. If you violate these principles, you will face sanctions proportional to the gravity of your infraction. Disciplinary action for ethical violations can include dismissal from your graduate program. Because of the foundational importance of ethical comportment, violators may not get a second chance. It is critically important for you to be aware of the ethical landscape as you travel through your graduate program. We encourage you to read the documents referenced above and to engage your faculty and fellow students in discussions of ethics in Psychology, *before* problems arise. It is often in these discussions that you will learn to avoid ethical problems.

If you are accused of inappropriate behavior, the University has established a structure and process for reviewing and adjudicating alleged violations. Depending on the nature of the concern, the first step in this

process may be informal and begin with the two parties trying to resolve the problem in an appropriate way. If this fails, you should go to the Graduate Director of the Department and enlist his/her help in resolving the problem. Click [here](#) to read more about the Psychology Department's **Graduate Student Grievance Committee Hearing Procedures**. To read more about the University's judicial structure see *Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University*, Sections 2.4.7 and 4.5.4. Additional description can also be found in Article 5 of the *Graduate Student's Rights and Responsibilities*.

Note: These same procedures can be used to resolve conflicts between faculty and graduate students that do not involve issues of academic integrity. The [Office of the Ombudsman](#) is also available to you to help you resolve conflicts with faculty or University administrators.

5.2 American Psychological Association Guidelines

The American Psychological Association's Publication Manual can be purchased from the APA directly, from Amazon and other online booksellers, and from most university bookstores. Be careful to make sure the information refers to the most recent edition of the Manual.

According to the APA Publication Guide, authorship should be consistent with the level of contribution for the concepts, research model, hypotheses, research design, analysis and interpretation, and discussion. Therefore, authorship encompasses not just the actual writing but also making substantial scientific contributions to a study as a whole. " The Guide also recommends that collaborators discuss early on who the authors will be, and in what order they will be listed. Do not make someone an author without consulting him or her; authorship is a responsibility as well as a right, and so people should assent to such a role.

5.3 Rules concerning the use of human subjects

All research with human beings must be reviewed and approved by the Social Science/Behavioral/Education Institutional Review Board (SIRB) at Michigan State University. This applies to all Master's and Doctoral research projects, as well as other research you may be involved with. For complete details about the application procedure, please see the website for [SIRB](#).

5.4 Rules concerning the use of vertebrate animals

All research with non-human vertebrate animals must be reviewed and approved by the All University Committee on Animal Use and Care. For complete details about the application procedure, please see the website for [IACUC](#), the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.

5.5 Rules concerning the use of hazardous materials

If your research involves the use of any radioactive, biological, or chemical material that can be hazardous, you must comply with the University regulations governing this area. Please consult with the [web page](#) for the Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) for more details.

5.6 MSU Psychology Department Guidelines for the Use of Online Social Networking Sites

The Michigan State University Psychology Department recognizes that online social networking has become an increasingly important means of facilitating communication. While social networking has provided unique opportunities to interact, it has also created a forum for potential ethical or professional issues. As professionals bound by social contracts and professional obligations, psychology graduate students must be cognizant of the public nature of social networking forums and the permanent nature of postings therein. Even though these sites offer terrific potential to bolster communication with friends and colleagues, they are also a forum for lapses of professionalism and professional behavior that may be freely visible by many people, despite the impression of privacy these sites portray. As a result, the Psychology Department has drafted the following guidelines to aid students in the safe and responsible navigation of these sites. Students should follow these guidelines whether participating in social networks personally or professionally, or whether they are using personal technology or technological resources owned or operated by Michigan State University.

A social networking site is a space on the internet where users can create a profile and connect that profile to others (whether it be individuals or entities) to establish a personal or professional network. Examples include, but are not limited, to "Facebook," "Twitter," "InstaGram," and "Tumblr."

A weblog (blog) is a website, usually in the form of an online journal, maintained by an individual or group, with regular commentary on any

number of subjects which may incorporate text, audio, video clips, and any other types of media.

The permanence and written nature of online postings cause them to be subject to higher levels of scrutiny than many other forms of communication. Therefore, the postings within social networking sites are subject to the same standards of professionalism as any other personal or professional interaction, and will be treated as if made in a public forum.

The use of social networking sites or weblogs can also have legal ramifications. Comments made regarding the care of clients, research participants, or research animals, or that portray you or a colleague in an unprofessional manner, may be used in court as evidence of a variety of claims (including libel, slander, defamation of character, negligence, and others) or in other disciplinary proceedings. Libel, slander, and other forms of defamation refer, generally, to the communication (written, oral, tangible, etc.) of a false statement about a person that injures their reputation. Other potential consequences include the revocation of a clinical internship or research assistantship, or sanctions by a professional licensing board.

Also, the statements and photos posted within these sites are potentially viewable by program directors or future employers. It is not uncommon for internship directors or potential employers to search for the social networking profiles of potential interns or employees, and to use the discovered information in making selection decisions.

In addition, cyber stalking and other inappropriate postings can be considered forms of harassment or hate crimes. Relationships online with other students are governed by MSU's sexual harassment policies.

The lines between public and private as well as personal and professional are often blurred in online social networks. By identifying yourself as an MSU Psychology graduate student, you may influence perceptions about the department by those who have access to your social network profile or weblog. All content associated with you should be consistent with your position at the university and with the Psychology Department's values and professional standards. See the University Policies and Ombudsperson's website for further information about this important issue.

5.8 *Traveling Abroad*

If you travel abroad to conduct any of your research please:

- 1) Check with the MSU Travel Clinic! They will let you know of any health risks or immunizations. The Travel Clinic also provides information about safety issues around the world.
<http://travelclinic.msu.edu>
- 2) Apply for assistance with travel funding via the Graduate School. If the Graduate School provides funding, they will also provide a MEDEX emergency card.

6 Graduate Program Requirements and Guidelines

To maintain the modularity of this Handbook, the sections for each Graduate Program are contained in the links below.

6.1 Behavioral Neuroscience

6.2 Cognition and Cognitive Neuroscience

6.3 Clinical

6.4 Ecological / Community

6.5 Organizational

6.6 Social / Personality

7 University-wide materials and resources

[Academic Calendar](#)

[Descriptions of Courses](#)

[Graduate School](#)

[Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)

