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## **Quick links**

**[Committee membership rules and course requirements](#), for Master's and Ph.D.**

**[Archival Graduate Handbooks](#)**

**[Forms](#) available for download, for Master's and Ph.D.**

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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. Your admission to this program is the result of a rigorous selection process. You should be proud of yourself for this achievement. The goal of your graduate training program is to turn you into a first-rate scientist, scholar, teacher, and/or practitioner.

The "**Graduate Program**" in this Department is a Ph.D. program. This is true even though those who enter our program

without a Master's degree are required to obtain one. The expectation is that you will continue after the Master's and get your Ph.D. We therefore 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**."

Terminal Master's are normally granted only in cases in which the student has completed all Master's requirements and a decision is made not to continue in our Graduate Program.

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 who is chosen every couple of years by the Graduate Program members. The Department maintains a list of Graduate Program chairs and members on the department website.

These Graduate Programs run separate graduate training programs. They are described in **Section 6** of this Handbook. You were admitted into one of these training programs and therefore you have a home Graduate Program. Each Graduate Program has developed its own set of guidelines for its training program. Links to these Graduate Program handbooks are included in this document in Section 6. These Graduate Program handbooks contain a great deal of very important information for you. Any information that is not included in this Departmental Handbook is most likely included in the Graduate Program handbook for your specific program.

The main body of this handbook describes the guidelines that are Department-wide. The University guidebook entitled "**Academic Programs**" describes policies that are – yes, you guessed it –

University-wide. All University rules must be followed and our Department has little power to override them; all Departmental policies must be followed in addition to those; and all Graduate Program guidelines and regulations must be followed in addition to those defined by the University and the Department.

## ***1.2 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**. Some University forms are also available on the **Graduate School website**). The files are in MSWord format, so you can fill them in electronically.

### **This Handbook is divided into seven main sections:**

The first section describes the regulations for the **Master's Program**. The information is organized chronologically, starting with matters you need to take care of when you first arrive on campus.

The second section describes the regulations for the **Doctoral Program**. This information is also described chronologically.

For each of these first two sections, the forms that you will need to fill out as part of our requirements are provided as links and given in the appropriate locations. For example, your **Master's Plan of Study Form** can be downloaded from this site.

The third section is about graduate school beyond the requirements.

The fourth focuses on the resources that are available to you as a graduate student in the Psychology Department at MSU.

The fifth discusses issues related to research, giving talks, and publishing papers.

The sixth section describes the regulations that are specific to the different Graduate Programs.

The seventh and final section lists university-wide materials and resources.

Please send comments, suggestions for changes, and problems with broken links to the Graduate Programs Director, Professor Kevin Ford, ([fordjk@msu.edu](mailto:fordjk@msu.edu)).

## **2 Degree Requirements, Guidelines, and Forms**

### ***2.1 Master's Program***

**Definition:** 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. You may also be admitted into the Master's program if you have a non-Psychology Master's degree.

#### **2.1.1 You've arrived at MSU**

One of your first items of business (besides minor things like finding a place to live and so on) will be to make sure you know your Personal Identification Number. This task might be the easiest of your graduate career: You were assigned your PID when you applied to MSU. Your PID is the letter "A" followed by eight digits. This piece of information is important—it's who you are, as far as the University computers are concerned.

In addition, once you have a PID you can get your **MSU NetID** as well. Your NetID allows you to do things electronically at MSU, including access email, library resources, your student record, and so on. 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 (called AFS space) which you can use to create personal web pages.

### **2.1.2 Take care of your financial support paperwork**

Most of you have been admitted with some sort of financial support. Support sources come in five main types:

- 1) Teaching assistantships eligible to join the Graduate Employees Union (TA)
- 2) Teaching assistantships not eligible to join the Graduate Employees Union (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)

When you were admitted to the program, you were told whether you would be on a fellowship or some type of assistantship.

If you have been awarded a TA, you must decide if you want to join the Graduate Employees Union (GEU). You will be given a card on which you indicate your decision at the beginning of the first semester in which you are eligible to join. DUES paying TAs (as GEU members) need only sign a GEU card ONCE (unless you wish to change to paying fees) during your graduate careers. FEES paying TAs need to sign a card ONCE A YEAR. TEs and RAs are not currently required to fill out this form. **VERY IMPORTANT: If you are a TA and do not fill out a union card, you can lose your assistantship.**

After your first year in the program, you will need to meet the following criteria to be eligible for TA support from the Department:



- Students must be making satisfactory progress in their degree program.
- Other things being equal, preference is given to students earlier in their graduate programs.
- If there are special skills needed for a particular class, preference is given to students with those skills.
- Preference is given to students who have received positive evaluations of their past TA assignments.
- The final decision about any particular assignment rests with the Chair of the Department.

The Chair of the Department determines if you meet these criteria and can waive them in extraordinary circumstances. After determining an eligible pool of applicants and the availability of resources, the Chair will then inform you about your support for the next academic year.

To avoid any unpleasant surprises, it is important for you to stay in touch with your advisor, your committee, and your Graduate Program as a whole. Make sure you know whether you are considered to be making good progress, and don't be shy about asking what sort of support you can expect to have for the upcoming academic year. Every year, your advisor and the Graduate Program to which he/she belongs should provide you with a written letter evaluating your progress in the Graduate Program.

Students must be registered for a minimum of 6 credits to be eligible for a Graduate Assistantship. Click [here](#) for more information about Graduate Assistantships.

Summer TA support is normally not provided by the Department unless the student actually teaches a summer course. Students 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. Summer stipends include a five credit tuition waiver. You are required by the University to enroll in a minimum of **3** credits to hold a summer assistantship. However, the Department recommends enrolling for 4-5 credits as there is

a tax benefit for enrolling in more than three credits. Typically, those will be research credits – PSY 890, PSY 899 or PSY 999.

### **Department Policies Regarding Graduate Assistantships:**

1. Satisfactory academic progress and demonstrated ability to perform the specific graduate assistantship assignments are the major criteria for assigning initial and continuing support to students. A student receiving an assistantship must be enrolled for a minimum number of credits that depend upon the terms of the assistantship. For Master's students, the minimum enrollment with a half-time assistantship is 6 credits and the maximum is 12 credits. For doctoral students, the minimum enrollment with a half-time assistantship is 3 and the maximum is 12. Although a maximum of 12 credits can be taken as either a Master's or Doctoral student, the maximum covered on your assistantship is 9 credits. You will also want to take advantage of taking the maximum number of credits covered while on an assistantship to ensure you enroll in enough research credits across time (PSY 890, PSY 899 or PSY 999). However, it is university policy that students can take **no more than 36 credits** of doctoral dissertation research (PSY 999) credits. Please pay attention to this over time. If you have any questions about this, we suggest that you check with the Graduate Office (240E Psychology) when you receive your appointment to be certain you do not enroll for fewer credits than necessary or more than allowed.

2. The Psychology Department can offer a maximum of eight (8) semesters of Teaching Assistant (TA) support for its graduate students. This does not include any semesters in which a student is supported as a Research Assistant (RA). Any TA support in excess of this maximum must be approved by the Department Chair. Graduate student support of any sort is not guaranteed and is dependent on the availability of funds and the performance of the graduate student. This policy does put financial pressure on students who take more than 4 years to complete their work. Students and faculty, on the students' behalf, are urged to seek funds to help relieve the increased financial pressure.

Teaching Assistantships serve three important functions in our graduate program:

- they help you learn about effective university-level teaching,
- they assist the undergraduate mission of the Department, and
- they are a source of financial support.

We believe that the training benefit of the TA diminishes with each successive experience and is of minimal benefit after 8 semesters. Our graduate program is structured such that students making satisfactory academic progress toward the completion of their Ph.D. work should normally have most, if not all, of their graduate work completed with four years of TA assistance plus any additional RA support that many students receive.

3. Graduate assistantships are compensated at three levels by University regulation. The minimum requirements for appointment are:

Level 1 -- graduate student, Bachelor's degree and less than one year's experience as a graduate assistant

Level 2 -- graduate student, Master's degree (30 credits or equivalent) and/or two semesters' experience as a graduate assistant

Level 3 -- graduate student, Master's degree (or equivalent) and six semesters' experience as a Teaching Assistant (Note: Experience as a RA or as a TE does not count towards the experience total for Level 3).

4. Accepting TA support carries the obligation to meet your responsibilities. Please do not schedule vacations or trips during the semester you are employed. If you have to be away during the semester, you must give reasonable advanced notice to your supervisor (usually the course instructor) so that appropriate coverage can be arranged.

5. International students must demonstrate adequate English Language proficiency by meeting University minimum requirements to be assigned as a TA in the Psychology Department. These requirements are described in the Academic Programs document.

6. Graduate TAs are evaluated, in writing, at the end of each semester they are employed as a TA. This evaluation is completed by the instructor of the class. If you are teaching your own section of a class you will be evaluated by the Chairperson of your Graduate Program.

### **2.1.3 Register for courses**

It is important to talk to your advisor and the other faculty and grad students in your Graduate Program about the best courses to take for your Master's. Your Plan of Study is the formal document describing the courses etc. that you plan to take as part of your Master's Program. This section focuses on a few procedural matters.

First, go to <http://www.msu.edu/current/index.html> and click on "Courses and Schedules" to see what is being offered and by whom. Enrollment in courses is done either over the web or by telephone.

Second, some courses have prerequisites or other sorts of restrictions placed on them that will make it impossible for you to enroll electronically. To **get an override**, contact the relevant faculty member and ask him/her to email the Graduate Secretary. The email message should give your name and PID, the course and semester for which the override is requested, and it should state that the faculty member permits you to enroll. This email message must come from the faculty member, not from the student who wants the override.

Third, all students will receive a billing statement from the University verifying enrollment schedule and tuition

expenses. Tuition waivers, student loans, and graduate office scholarships will be reflected on the billing statement. If there is an amount due, be sure to submit payment by the due date or your enrollment will be canceled. You will have to initiate the enrollment procedure again and be subject to a late enrollment fee. The billing receipt is to be returned to the appropriate office even if there is no amount due.

More information about enrollment and registration procedures can be found at <http://www.esp.msu.edu/>.

**To obtain a Master's degree you must complete a minimum of 30 credit hours of coursework and research credits.**

There are two types of Master's programs in the Department: "Plan A" and "Plan B". Graduate students in a Plan A Master's program write a formal Master's thesis. All graduate students pursuing a Plan A Master's must have a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 8 credits of PSY 899 (Thesis Research), and no more than 3 credits of 890 (Special Problems). Graduate students in a Plan B Master's program cannot sign up for PSY 899, and must have a minimum of PSY 890 credits as decided by their programs.

The Department requires that all students take (and pass) PSY 815, "Quantitative Research Design and Analysis in Psychology", or its equivalent. Most Graduate Programs require a second quantitative course as well at the Master's level.

Finally, another restriction you should be aware of is that no more than 6 of your 30 credits may come from courses at the 400 level.

The rest of your credits will be made up of courses that are recommended to you by your advisor and committee, and/or that are required by your Graduate Program.

**DF-Deferred grades:** The required work must be completed and a grade reported within 6 months with the option of a single six-month extension. If the required work is not completed

within the time limit, the DF will become U-Unfinished and will be changed to DF/U under the numerical and Pass-No Grade (P-N) grading systems, and to DF/NC under the Credit-No Credit (CR-NC) system. This rule does not apply to graduate thesis or dissertation work.

#### **2.1.4 Find your / an advisor**

During the summer before you arrive on campus, you will be 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. These courses have been chosen by your advisor, so 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.

Other students opt not to stay with their Temporary Advisor, but choose someone else once they are on campus. You can talk to the other graduate students to get ideas. Try to work with an advisor who has scientific interests that are close to yours. Try to work with someone who is not overwhelmed with other commitments and will therefore give you the time you need.

You should make sure you have a formal meeting with your advisor within a month of your arrival on campus. During this meeting, you should (1) discuss courses you should take in your first year, (2) talk about who will be on your guidance committee, and (3) begin to explore research ideas.

### 2.1.5 Set up Master's Guidance committee

Your Master's Guidance Committee has several functions. They help you with your Master's Plan of Study and also supervise your Master's research. You only have one Master's committee, although it is sometimes referred to as the Master's Plan of Study committee or the Master's thesis committee. Whatever you call it, the University only recognizes the Master's Guidance committee.

You have an advisor, so you have one committee member for your Master's Guidance Committee. Normally, the advisor is also the committee chair. In general, your Chair will come from your Graduate Program.

How many members do you need? The minimum is three, including your advisor. Here are the restrictions on committee membership:

- Chair of your Guidance Committee must be a Psychology Department faculty member within your graduate program
- 2 of the 3 must be regular members of the Psychology Department
- Only 1 of the 3 committee members may be either Emeritus or a regular faculty member from outside the Psychology Department

#### **Definitions:**

**Regular faculty member:** someone who has a tenure-track or tenured appointment at MSU.

**Emeritus faculty:** Faculty who have retired from the University but maintain a courtesy appointment.

You may have more than 3 members if you wish, in which case you are permitted to have more than 1 adjunct member, more than 1 Emeritus member, and so on. However, the regular

committee members must out-number the others. Your committee is reviewed and approved by the department's Graduate Program Director. In rare cases, the Graduate Programs Director can add one appropriate member to a guidance committee.

Keep in mind that your Guidance Committee is there to look out for your academic and training interests. Their input will also help you design a scientifically sound project that has a reasonable likelihood of working out. Therefore, you should ask people to serve on your committee who have useful expertise and who will be available to meet with you and give you advice.

Once you choose your committee, you should not make changes lightly. Inevitably, there will be difficult (and sometimes, emotional) times in the research process. These times are typical and expectable and do not lead to changes in committee membership. However, should it become necessary for you to change the membership of your committee, you must file "The Master's Plan of Study Amendment Form" with the Graduate Office (room 240E). This form is available to download from the [forms page](#).

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.

### **2.1.6 Write your Plan of Study**

#### **Master's Plan of Study Form**

Your Plan of Study is an extremely important document, so make sure you put a lot of thought into preparing it. Work on it with your advisor and, possibly, your committee members as well. 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

You must make sure you put down the appropriate numbers of PSY 890 and PSY 899 credits, because *the College of Social Sciences and the Graduate School will hold you to them*. In other words, all and only the credits on the Plan of Study form count towards your PSY 890 and PSY 899 grades.

You submit your plan of study to the Graduate Programs Director for your departmental file. The plan of study must be signed by all members of your Plan of Study committee and is not official until it has received departmental approval. **The Plan of Study must be filed before the end of your second semester as a graduate student for you to remain eligible for fall registration.**

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.

### **2.1.7 Write Master's Proposal**

Your Master's Proposal is a formal description of your Master's research. It will be somewhat different for Plan A and Plan B students. For students in a Plan A program, the proposal describes the project you will conduct for your Master's thesis. It normally includes an Introduction, Methods, Analyses, and Hypotheses/Predictions sections for each of the experiments / studies you will be conducting; and complete References. Put a lot of thought into your proposal; it will be the core of your Master's thesis write-up, so the more work you do now, the less you'll have to do later. Also, be explicit, clear, and complete, so your Guidance Committee can really understand what you want to do and can then give you proper advice. For students in a Plan

B program, the requirements for the proposal are laid out in the Graduate Program Requirements and Guidelines documents. You can reach these documents and read the requirements specific to your Graduate Program by following the [appropriate links at the end of this handbook](#).

The timeline for you to defend your proposal is contained in your Graduate Program Requirements and Guidelines document.

Your Master's proposal defense will probably be your first formal meeting, so it's worthwhile setting up good habits from the beginning. Here are **tips for setting up committee meetings**:

- Decide when you want your meeting to be held—approximately! Make sure the dates you're thinking of are several weeks in the future.
- Contact your committee members with possible dates and times, and make sure you've booked an appropriate room.
- Make sure you give your document to your committee at least two weeks prior to the date of the defense! This is extremely important: Committee members are busy people and they need lead time.
- Give your committee members a flawless (from your point of view) draft. No typos, no spelling mistakes, no grammatical errors, all arguments air-tight, and so on.

Be particularly careful when **setting up meetings for the summer**. Most faculty are on 9-month appointments, so they are under no obligation to meet during the other 3 months. Most will be cooperative, but many faculty travel for pleasure and for research during the summer, and they often leave for extended periods. 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, have them fill out either the [Plan A Master's Proposal Approval Form](#) or the [Plan B Master's Project Approval Form](#) . This form **and**

**an electronic (i.e., disk or computer file) copy of your proposal** needs to be filed with the Department's Graduate Office as soon as possible after your proposal is accepted.

### **2.1.8 Write and Defend Master's research**

There will come a point in the Master's Program when you and your advisor decide your master's project is complete. You will then write up the study according to the guidelines that are appropriate given your area of work. As stated above, set up a defense meeting, giving committee members appropriate lead time. The format for Plan B projects is described in the **Graduate Program Requirements and Guidelines**. For Plan A students, the **guidelines concerning formatting of the thesis** are on the web.

**All Master's degree candidates must be enrolled during the semester in which they orally defend their thesis or research project.** Although you must be enrolled, it is not necessary that you be enrolled in PSY 890 or PSY 899.

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 890 or PSY 899 credits. Usually, you will have some revisions to do, no matter what grade is assigned. Plan A students should bring a copy of the **Report on MA Level Achievements Form for Plan A Master's students** form to the meeting. If you have done a Plan B Master's you should bring a copy of the **Master's Plan B Completion Form** to the meeting. Once completed and signed by your committee, each of these forms should be returned to the Graduate Programs Administrator in the department's Graduate Office.

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.

### 2.1.9 Get Master's degree

**All Master's degree candidates must be enrolled during the semester in which they orally defend their thesis or research project.** It is not necessary that you be enrolled in PSY 890 or PSY 899 credits per se. 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** students **MUST** submit their thesis electronically to The Graduate School via ProQuest. The instructions for electronic submissions are available from <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>. 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.

**Plan B** students can submit an electronic copy of their project to the Graduate Office. Plan A students submit a bound copy to the Department Graduate Office (240E Psychology). Additional bound copies are optional. You should check with your committee chairperson to see if he/she expects to receive a bound copy. The departmental copy of your bound thesis will be placed with other recent theses and dissertations in the Department's library of theses and dissertations (room 230, Psychology Building).

### **EXIT SURVEYS:**

A short online exit survey for all students graduating with a Plan A or Plan B masters or with a Doctoral degree was introduced May 9<sup>th</sup> of 2011. Only students who have applied for graduation will have access to the survey. The survey asks questions about educational experiences in MSU graduate programs, as well as about immediate professional plans. The Graduate School uses data from this survey when reviewing graduate programs and to guide decisions about services and initiatives for graduate students.

The identity of all respondents will be kept confidential and only aggregate (group) information will be made available to faculty and administrators. The students will receive an e-mail message from the dean of the graduate school with a link to the survey. However, students do not need to wait for that e-mail message to complete the survey after applying for graduation. It takes about 5-10 minutes to complete the online survey. Below are the instructions for completing the survey and they are also available from <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>

#### **Instructions for students:**

- Access the following website:
- Doctoral

Students: <https://www.egr.msu.edu/doctoral/survey/>

- Master's

Students: <https://www.egr.msu.edu/masters/survey/>

- Enter your MSU NetID (Login Name) and Password

- Complete all the items on the survey. When finished, click **Submit**.

### **2.1.10 Admission to the Ph.D. program**

Your Master's Guidance committee reviews all of your work and makes a recommendation to your Graduate Program on your admission to the Ph.D. program. Your Graduate Program chair signs off on the Master's completion forms to make a recommendation on your admission to the Ph.D. program to the Graduate Programs Director of the department.

Keep in mind that admission to the Ph.D. program is not automatic. Students are not recommended for the Ph.D. for a variety of reasons. The written feedback you have received from your advisor and Graduate Program as well as your general conversations with your committee should serve to keep you well-informed about your progress in the program.

Occasionally, a student will be admitted into the Doctoral program with Provisional status. Provisional status is offered to students of promise who have some remediable inadequacy of qualification. A student who is admitted to provisional status will be eligible for change to regular status when specific written conditions for transfer to regular status have been met.

### **2.1.11 Time limits**

There are two types of time limits: extremely highly recommended, and official.

**Extremely Highly Recommended:** You should complete all requirements for the Master's degree within two years of the start of your Master's program, and three at the very latest.

**Official University Time Limits** : All requirements for the degree must be completed within 6 years of taking the first course on your Master's Plan of Study.

### **2.1.12 Academic Standards for Master's Program**

The College of Social Sciences has a policy about grades that we subscribe to. For the Master's program, you must maintain at least a 3.0 grade point average for all classes on your Master's Plan of Study. In addition, you can only earn two 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 program; this policy does not apply to courses below the 400 level unless the courses are required for your program. You will receive a warning letter from the Graduate Office if your academic performance is unsatisfactory.

## **2.2 Ph.D. Program**

**Definition:** You are considered to be in the **Ph.D. program** if you were admitted to the Graduate Program in the Department of Psychology and you have a Master's Degree (from MSU or some other institution) that is accepted by the Graduate Program that admitted you.

**2.2.1 Arrive at MSU (get PID etc.) Click [HERE](#) to See 2.1.1**

**2.2.2 Take care of financial support - Click [HERE](#) to See 2.1.2**

**2.2.3 Register for courses**

It is important to talk to your advisor and the other faculty and grad students in your Graduate Program about the best courses

to take for your Ph.D. Your Plan of Study (see below) is the formal document describing the courses etc. that you plan to take as part of your Ph.D. program. This section focuses on a few procedural matters.

First, go to the **Schedule of Courses** to see what is being offered and by whom. Enrollment in courses is done online.

Second, some courses have prerequisites or other sorts of restrictions placed on them that will make it impossible for you to enroll electronically. To **get an override**, contact the relevant faculty member and ask him/her to email the Graduate Secretary. The email message should give your name and PID, the course and semester for which the override is requested, and it should state that the faculty member permits you to enroll. This email message must come from the faculty member, not from the student who wants the override.

Third, all students will receive a billing statement from the University verifying enrollment schedule and tuition expenses. Tuition waivers, student loans, and graduate office scholarships will be reflected on the billing statement (stu info). If there is an amount due, be sure to submit payment by the due date or your enrollment will be canceled. You will have to initiate the enrollment procedure again and be subject to a late enrollment fee. The billing receipt is to be returned to the appropriate office even if there is no amount due. However, it will also indicate the minimum amount due if the student chooses the deferred payment option.

More information about enrollment and registration procedures can be found at <https://webenroll.msu.edu/Enrl/FAQ.asp>.

There are few specific course requirements for the Ph.D. Most of them will be determined by you and your committee and will be described in 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.

2) All doctoral student 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.

Some students who begin their Graduate Program at the Master's level in our Department find that they have completed all their coursework before beginning the Doctoral Program. Those students would only have to take PSY 999 credits, but keep in mind that you must sign up for 6 credits every semester to maintain official full-time student status (exception below). Students should generally plan to take the maximum number of research credits paid for while being funded on an assistantship so they don't end up having to pay tuition for 999 credits to reach the 24 credit minimum. However, be careful not to go over the 36 credit maximum.

Full time status for doctoral students is defined as a minimum of 1 credit for those students who:

- 1) Have successfully completed all comprehensive examinations and are actively engaged in dissertation research; or
- 2) Are doing department-approved off-campus fieldwork related to preparation of their dissertation.

**DF-Deferred grades:** The required work must be completed and a grade reported within 6 months with the option of a single six-month extension. If the required work is not completed within the time limit, the DF will become U-Unfinished and will be changed to DF/U under the numerical and Pass-No Grade (P-N) grading systems, and to DF/NC under the Credit-No Credit (CR-NC) system. This rule does not apply to graduate thesis or dissertation work.

#### **2.2.4 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. This guide will step you through how to use GradPlan.

**[GradPlan Student Guide - PDF version \(updated 12/12/2012\)](#)**

### **2.2.5 Find an Advisor and Set up Doctoral Guidance Committee and Doctoral Dissertation Committee**

The existence of these two committees is one of the most confusing things about our Graduate Program.

When you first begin your Doctoral program, you will create a **Doctoral Guidance Committee**. The Doctoral Guidance Committee must consist of four MSU faculty, at least three of whom are regular members of the Psychology Department. 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.

The Doctoral Guidance Committee is an extremely important group. They work with you to develop your Plan of Study (that's why it's sometimes referred to as your Plan of Study committee), and they sign off on it. They are also the committee that designs, administers, and evaluates your comprehensive exams. They have a say in all aspects of your doctoral program, including your research area and any internship placements required by your program.

Our Department uses the term "**Dissertation Committee**" to refer to the committee that supervises the dissertation itself and signs off on the proposal and final product. Often, the Dissertation Committee is made up of the same people as the

original Guidance Committee. But some students in some Graduate Programs prefer to change their committee makeup, in part to take advantage of different faculty members' expertise. Thus, the Dissertation Committee might be the same as the original Guidance Committee, or it might be different. If the Dissertation Committee is different, you must amend your Doctoral Plan of Study.

The regulations concerning **who may serve on Doctoral Dissertation Committees** are essentially the same as those for the Doctoral Guidance / Plan of Study Committee: It must be composed of at least four faculty, at least three of whom are regular Department members. No more than one of the four may be adjunct in Psychology. An adjunct 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. Also, the Graduate Associate Chair of the Psychology Department has the discretion to add a committee member to any Doctoral Committee.

Keep in mind that the University uses only the term "Doctoral Guidance Committee." The name "Doctoral Dissertation Committee" is purely internal terminology; the University continues to view this committee as your Doctoral Guidance Committee.

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

### **2.2.6 Write your Plan of Study**

Your **Doctoral Plan of Study** is an extremely important document, so make sure you put a lot of thought into preparing

it. Work on it with your advisor and, possibly, your committee members as well. The Plan of Study contains information about:

- The courses you will take that you did not already take for the Master's degree
- The number of PSY 999 (dissertation) credits you will sign up for (do not put any credits from PSY 899 (Master's thesis) on your Doctoral Plan of Study)
- Your dissertation subject
- Your committee members
- Your plans for your Comprehensive Examinations

Once you fill out and submit your Plan of Study it will be routed electronically to the graduate office and all members of your doctoral Guidance committee for approvals and 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.

If you have any committee member or course changes during the program, the Doctoral Plan of Study may be amended through GradPlan.

### **2.2.7 Comprehensive Examinations**

One of the main items on your agenda as a Doctoral student is to pass your comprehensive exams. The goal of these exams is to allow you to demonstrate both the breadth and depth of your knowledge of psychology. The format, structure, and content are determined almost entirely by your Graduate Program and your Guidance Committee, so 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.
- Copies of all written comprehensive exams must be turned into the Department's Graduate Office. The University requires the Department to keep written comprehensive exams on file for at least three years. The Psychology Department will accept electronic (i.e., disk or computer file) copies of these exams.

### **2.2.8 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 than this.
- **Requests for time extensions**
- Requests for time extensions must be made by the chair of the student's committee and endorsed by the Graduate Associate Chair.
- Requests should be made for a specific time period, normally no longer than one year. Make the request for an extension through (specific semester, year).
- In the rare case where a request is being made for an extension for more than one year, a specific time frame for the completion of all remaining requirements should be attached.
- When a time extension is approved for a Ph.D. candidate, **the student is required to retake the comprehensive examinations**. 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.

- All requests approved at the College level will be forwarded to the Graduate School for approval.

You must pass your Comprehensive Exams before you can schedule your meeting to defend your dissertation.

### **2.2.9 Write Dissertation Proposal**

You're now at perhaps the most important stage in your graduate career: You're ready to write your dissertation! The first step is to write a dissertation proposal. It normally includes an Introduction, Methods, Analyses, and Hypotheses / Predictions sections for each of the experiments / studies you will be conducting; and complete References. Put a lot of thought into your proposal; it will be the core of your dissertation write-up, so the more work you do now, the less you'll have to do later. Also, be explicit, clear, and complete, so your Guidance Committee can really understand what you want to do and can then give you proper advice. The ultimate goal is for you to prepare a dissertation proposal that leads eventually to an article that will be published in one of the major scientific journals in your field.

Your Guidance Committee approves 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 (i.e., disk or computer file) copy of the accepted dissertation proposal** should be filed with the Graduate Secretary as soon as possible after your proposal has been accepted.

Students in the Clinical Graduate Program must have an approved dissertation proposal on file before they may apply for predoctoral internships.

## 2.2.10 Write and Defend the Dissertation

The Department of Psychology strongly 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. In cases where a public presentation is not made, a public invitation to attend the oral examination will be made. Announcements and scheduling of rooms must be made three weeks prior to the oral defense. When scheduling rooms for the oral defense, be sure adequate seating is available to accommodate public attendance.

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. If a committee member dissents, they must explain their decision on the "PhD Record of Dissertation and Oral Examination" form.

## 2.2.11 Get your Ph.D. and graduate

To graduate in a particular semester, Ph.D. students should have a copy of their dissertation ready for their committee by the middle of the semester. Time is needed to allow for possible revisions before the oral defense. The completed dissertation and all completed and signed paperwork must be received by the Graduate School before the last day of the semester for the degree to be granted that semester.

At the end of your oral examination, the following forms must be completed and returned to the office of the Graduate Programs Director (240E Psychology):

1. "**Action on Dissertation at Final Oral Examination**". This form requires the signature of the chairperson of your dissertation committee.

2. "**Record of Dissertation and Oral Examination, Requirements for Doctoral Degree Candidates**". This form requires the signature of all members of your dissertation committee, including the Dean's representative. (NOTE: This form will be submitted through GradPlan in the future)

3. "**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 <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>.

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.

Submit an electronic copy of your dissertation to the Department, Chair and Committee members.

### **EXIT SURVEYS:**

A short online exit survey for all students graduating with a Plan A or Plan B masters or with a Doctoral degree was introduced May 9<sup>th</sup> of 2011. Only students who have applied for graduation will have access to the survey. The survey asks questions about educational experiences in MSU graduate programs, as well as



about immediate professional plans. The Graduate School uses data from this survey when reviewing graduate programs and to guide decisions about services and initiatives for graduate students.

The identity of all respondents will be kept confidential and only aggregate (group) information will be made available to faculty and administrators. The students will receive an e-mail message from the dean of the graduate school with a link to the survey. However, students do not need to wait for that e-mail message to complete the survey after applying for graduation. It takes about 5-10 minutes to complete the online survey. Below are the instructions for completing the survey and they are also available from <http://grad.msu.edu/etd/>

**Instructions for students:**

- Access the following website:
- Doctoral

Students: <https://www.egr.msu.edu/doctoral/survey/>

- Master's

Students: <https://www.egr.msu.edu/masters/survey/>

- Enter your MSU NetID (Login Name) and Password
- Complete all the items on the survey. When finished, click **Submit**.

**2.2.12 Time limits for Doctoral Program**

There are two types of time limits: extremely highly recommended, and official.

**Extremely Highly Recommended:** You should complete all requirements for the Ph.D. within two years of starting the Doctoral Program, and three at the latest.

**Official University Time Limits:** 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 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.

### **2.2.13 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 Graduate Studies Beyond the Requirements**

This section is about not just meeting requirements but also doing the things that will make you successful. In addition to what is described here, take a look at [Psychgrad.Org](http://Psychgrad.Org): it's a wonderful site for information about how to succeed in graduate school.

### ***3.1 What does it mean to be a graduate student?***

A Graduate Student is someone who is educated and trained as the new generation of scientists, scholars, and practitioners. It is no exaggeration to say that our fields move forward to the extent that you are trained well. Therefore, you should think about the requirements of your program as means to an end. The end is for

you to become the best scientist, teacher, practitioner, and overall scholar. The means are things like theses, research projects, comprehensive exams, committees, assistantship tasks, and so on. Keep focused on your fundamental goals, and try not to get sidetracked by minor problems and distractions!

From the perspective of this fundamental goal it is important to think about graduate school beyond the requirements. This section highlights some of these other issues.

### ***3.2 Annual Evaluations - How do I know if I'm making good progress?***

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 to 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) regarding progress toward degree, what is expected in the short run (i.e., the next year), and what is expected in the long run (i.e., the years that remain in the student's graduate career). A copy of this letter is filed with the Graduate Office. 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 his/her standing. If the graduate student does not meet these requirements to the satisfaction of the majority of the Graduate Program faculty, he/she will 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.

The different Graduate Programs perform evaluations on different schedules, so graduate students are encouraged to check with their advisor about the schedule for these letters. 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 Graduate Programs Director of the Department (who also serves as the Director of the Graduate Program) to discuss any problems with the evaluation letter or process. Students who believe they have been wrongly suspended, terminated or placed on probation can also request that the Associate Chair 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**.

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. And certainly if you have any concerns, you should make sure to have a candid conversation with your advisor, and any other faculty members you trust.

Another way to assess how you're doing is to look at the more senior graduate students in your program, especially the ones who are generally thought of as successful (one usually knows who those people are). Consider what they do and what milestones they've reached, and then think about your own progress. This standard is obviously not flawless, but it's one possibly relevant piece of information.

Perhaps the most important indicator of your progress is whether you are in a position to get a good job after graduate school—however you define "good." For an academic position, for

instance, you'll likely find that you need 2-5 publications in journals that are respected in your field, a few conference presentations, and strong letters of recommendation from your advisor and at least a couple of other people who know your work. Those of you being trained in more practice-oriented fields will need to demonstrate competence in important practice areas. You should consult with your advisor and others in your Graduate Program to learn what the appropriate amount of experience is given your area of work. More generally, ask your advisor and other people whose opinion you respect what a strong vita looks like in your particular field, and then aim to develop such a vita while you're in grad school.

### **3.3 Leaves of absence**

Students may take a leave if they need to.

We **HIGHLY** recommend that you consult with your advisor and your committee before beginning the leave. You and your advisor should prepare a memo to the Graduate Programs Director requesting the leave. This memo should address the following points in writing:

- the beginning date of the leave
- any conditions and/or expectations about when and under what conditions you will return
- expectations about classes
- any reassignment of assistantship duties
- whether you will resume ongoing research projects or begin new ones upon your return.

In general, be as detailed and explicit as possible. Once you and your advisor have prepared the memo, sign it and bring it to the Graduate office. (Again, keep a copy for your records.) If the department approves your leave, the Graduate Program Director will sign it too and then the memo will be put 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. There are a couple of University rules you need to be aware of, however. 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.) Second, your program clock keeps ticking, and so all time limits continue to be in force. You may apply for a time limits waiver, and under the circumstances it is likely to be granted. These are points that should be addressed in the memo referred to above: the number of semesters you expect to be gone, the conditions for readmission if you are gone more than two semesters, and your mutual understanding about extensions of time limits.

### ***3.4 Attending colloquia and other seminars and presentations***

It is important that you become a broadly educated scholar in Psychology. Therefore, you should attend talks, presentations, colloquia, and so on, even if they are outside your area. The [department website](#) lists upcoming events for all Graduate Programs and for the Department as a whole.

You also should attend any job talks—presentations given by people who are interviewing for faculty or postdoctoral positions in the Department. You can learn a great deal about how to prepare (or how not to prepare) a job talk yourself. You might find the information useful should you ultimately be required to give such a presentation yourself for some position that you have applied for. It's a particularly good idea to attend the job talk together with your advisor and then have a one-on-one discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the presentation.

Your Graduate Program may also hold regular meetings (often called "brown bag" meetings) to present and discuss research and other professional matters. Attendance at these meetings is critically important for your training and the vitality of the

Graduate Program. Make sure you understand any Graduate Program policies about attendance at brown bag presentations.

### ***3.5 Projects beyond the requirements***

Your master's thesis and dissertation are certainly two important research products that provide you with important credentials. However, a successful graduate student should consider them only a small part of the process in developing himself or herself academically and professionally. It is critical that you are involved on a variety of projects, varying the type and extent of your involvement on each so you get the most out of each experience. For research projects, consider not just studies on which you take the lead, but also studies on which you serve as a second-author or as some other type of supporting role. Being involved in a wide variety of projects not only expands your knowledge and skills in many directions, but it also increases the chances of having a number of quality publications and presentations by the time you're ready to apply for jobs. At the same time, don't spread yourself too thin that you can't be meaningfully involved in any project. In sum, make sure you're involved in research beyond just what is required for the degrees.

Section 3.4 above highlights the importance of attending talks and colloquia. It is important that you gain some experience giving oral presentations yourself. All of the Graduate Programs have regular brown bags and colloquium series, and those can provide you with a forum in which to practice your speaking skills, present research, and get feedback from your fellow students and from the faculty, and so on.

### ***3.6 Your relationship with your advisor, committee members***

Your advisor is the most significant person in your life as a graduate student. Make sure the two of you have a cordial relationship based on mutual respect. Be sure you meet on some regular basis, perhaps one that the two of you formalize when you develop your Plans of Study. Your advisor is your best source

for information about your science, and he or she is best able to advise you about what you need to do to be competitive in your relevant job market. Your advisor also likely knows about sources of funding you might be able to tap into, conferences etc. that you should attend, experiences you should gain, and journals you should aim to publish in.

Your committee is an extension of the advisor, in many cases. You should see your committee as a resource. They are there to help guide you in your graduate career, along with your advisor. Put a lot of thought into choosing the people for your committees. They should be knowledgeable in your field, reasonably accessible, and good scholars.

### ***3.7 Keeping a vita***

It is a good idea to start keeping a vita from your very first day in Graduate School. Then you can just add to it as you begin to accumulate accomplishments and honors (i.e., frequently!). Talk to your advisor about the right format for your vita—conventions vary somewhat from field to field. Many faculty viti are posted on the web. You can access them through the [faculty web page](#).

### ***3.8 The Graduate Employees Union (GEU)***

If you are a teaching assistant, you are eligible to join the [Graduate Employee Union](#). The current contract between the GEU and the University lays out the rights and responsibilities you have as a member of this union. Please make yourself familiar with this document.

If you are not a member of the GEU, your rights and responsibilities as a graduate student are contained in the document "[Graduate Student's Rights and Responsibilities](#)."

### ***3.9 Dealing with the Unexpected***



- A. If your advisor leaves the University before you are finished with your degree, you should discuss your options for finishing your degree requirements with your advisor. 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 the untimely departure of your advisor may cause.
- B. If your advisor should die or otherwise becomes unable to continue as your advisor, 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 simply 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 Programs Director for help and information.
- D. In any of the scenarios listed above, you will have to file an amendment to your Plan of Study indicating the change you are making. This form is available from the [forms download](#) page.

### ***3.10 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, your 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 Office Administrator.

The second file is your **Personnel File** which contains the records of your employment. Appointment forms and evaluations of your performance as a Teaching Assistant are stored in your Personnel File. You also have the right to review this file. Again, simply 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 Email and the web***

As **described earlier**, the University provided you with an email account and access to AFS space. The latter can be used for creation of personal web pages etc.

### ***4.2 Funds for travel and research***

There are funds to support student research and travel to present this research at conferences.

#### **4.2.1 Funds for travel**

Whenever possible, a student who is presenting either a talk or a poster at a conference should attempt to get their travel expenses covered by outside money. Once during your graduate career at MSU, you may apply for a \$400 travel grant from the MSU Graduate School. In order to access these funds the Department must kick in \$250. Therefore, you could receive \$650 in total. It makes sense, then, to save this request for your most

expensive trip. Although this larger award is usually made only once, occasionally a student receives a second such award. You can get the [form](#) from the [Graduate School's website](#).

If you are unable to secure this or other funding, you can apply to the Department for a Graduate Office Fellowship. The Department tries to make these funds available for each student annually at approximately \$600. To apply for these funds, submit a request to the Psychology Graduate Office (Julie Detwiler) 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.

#### **4.2.2 Funds for research**

In addition to whatever funds you obtain from your advisor and Graduate Program, the Graduate School also 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 (generally \$250) 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 at <http://grad.msu.edu/funding.htm>.

In addition to funding available from the Graduate School, the Department tries to make funds available for students to support their thesis and dissertation research. The amount available may vary year to year but the department tries to provide up to \$500 for each request. To apply for this money, you need to submit a brief budget to Julie Detwiler in the Graduate Office. There is no deadline for these awards.

### ***4.3 Financial Support (assistantships, stipends, fellowships)***

See Sections [2.1.2](#) and [2.2.2](#).

### ***4.4 Internal Funding Opportunities***

Graduate School Travel Grant: \$400 from the graduate school with \$250 from the psychology department for a total of at least **\$650**. Technically a one-time request but students have received it more than once. It's best to save for an international conference. <http://grad.msu.edu/forms/docs/studenttravel.pdf>

Graduate Office fellowship: ~**\$600** at least once per year (sometimes twice) from the psychology department to present at a conference. This year the funding is \$600. See section 4.2.1 for more information.

Dissertation completion award: **\$6000**, but you must be enrolled in one class (\$630). For students in their last semester who have reason not be TAs or RAs (e.g., due to interviews). You must defend dissertation that semester. <http://grad.msu.edu/fellowships/dissertation.aspx>

Dean Scholar award: First year PhD students who have made "strong preparation for and aspiration towards a career in research." **\$5000** for first summer, **\$6500** for summers two and three, pending "good" progress.

MSU Emergency Fund: Up to **\$2,000** to support a whole range of things including medical bills, new computer, etc. No specific deadline and decisions are made within three days. <http://grad.msu.edu/fellowships/docs/emergency.pdf>

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. <http://grad.msu.edu/forms/docs/researchaward.pdf>

COGS Conference Grant: **\$300** to attend an academic conference. It is very easy to get. One time request with decisions made in each semester. <http://cogs.msu.edu/funding.html>

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. <http://grad.msu.edu/fast/>

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. <http://rcah.msu.edu/people/graduate-fellows>

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. <http://grad.msu.edu/agep/>

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.

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.msu.edu/cmpr/OutstandingStudentMulticulturalResearchAward.aspx>

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.msu.edu/cmpr/ResearchGrant.aspx>

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.

#### ***4.5 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. Applying for and winning these awards provides many benefits for you. Being able to list these awards on your vita is impressive to potential employers. You get experience in the grant award process – experience that will pay many benefits in your career. And you get financial support that does not come with teaching responsibilities. Often this external support provides more money than you would get from being a TA. However, occasionally these outside grants and fellowships do not completely match what you would have received with a departmentally offered Teaching Assistantship. Before applying, you should work with your mentor to come up with a plan to cover any funds that will be needed in addition to your fellowship. You should also contact Graduate Office as there may be out-of-state tuition waivers and health insurance coverage opportunities available. 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) now 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 Julie Detwiler ([detwiler@msu.edu](mailto:detwiler@msu.edu)) in 240E Psychology Building.

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 welcome applications from graduate students. These are called **Individual Predoctoral National Research Service Awards (NRSAs) for M.D./Ph.D. Fellowships**.

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

## ***4.6 Professional Development Resources***

### **4.6.1 Graduate Student Orientation**

Every fall the department offers a Graduate Student Orientation which is mandatory for incoming graduate students and voluntary for returning students who may just want additional information about their rights and responsibilities. The Graduate Program Director (Associate Chair) will notify students of the time and place for this orientation each year.

### **4.6.2 Teaching of Psychology Course**

Students are to enroll in PSY 890: Teaching of Psychology before teaching for the first time. This course provides grounding in the key elements of effective instruction for classroom learning. The course is a practical presentation of the processes and issues involved in the teaching of Psychology. The course consists of six formal sessions on a variety of topics. The topics range from specific teaching tasks (e.g., how to create a syllabus) to more general teaching issues such as teaching ethics. While the course is mandatory for students planning to teach their own course, it is highly recommended to all Psychology graduate students.

### **Online Workshops About Teaching:**

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 <http://www.epigeum.com/>. 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 <http://tap.msu.edu/teche/>.

#### **4.6.3 The Graduate School**

The Graduate School offers a number of career and professional development resources for students across all phases of the doctoral program. For more information, go to <http://grad.msu.edu/cpd.htm>.

### ***4.7 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. <http://www.counseling.msu.edu/node/357>

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: <http://recsports.msu.edu/facilities/IM%20Sports%20West.html>

The LBGT Resource Center leads university-wide initiatives that enhance campus climate and support services for MSU students who identify as lesbian, bisexual, gay, or transgender: <http://lbgtrc.msu.edu/>

The Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (see [www.rcpd.msu.edu](http://www.rcpd.msu.edu)) is available to help ensure full access and support to students with disabilities.

## **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.

***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. It is a failure that tarnishes us all.

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 Associate Chair of the Psychology Department are good places to start or continue these conversations. They invite you to come to them with problems you can't resolve with your advisor.

**Ethical Violations.** We expect you 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 bed-rock 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 judicial structure and process for hearing and adjudicating alleged violations. The first step in this process is informal and should begin with the two parties trying to resolve the problem in an appropriate way. If this fails, you should go to the Associate Chairperson 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*.

***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 APA Publication Manual**

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. The entire contents are not available electronically. However, you can sometimes find helpful information about specific APA style questions on the web. Just be careful to make sure the information refers to the most recent edition of the Manual. We are currently using the **fifth edition**.

### ***5.3 Guidelines for authorship and other forms of credit***

According to the APA Publication Guide, “authorship is reserved for persons who make primary contribution to and hold primary responsibility for the data, concepts, and interpretation of results for a published work. Authorship encompasses not just the actual writing but also making substantial scientific contributions to a study” (p. 4).

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.

### ***5.4 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](#).

### ***5.5 Rules concerning the use of vertebrate animals (who aren't human)***

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.

### ***5.6 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.

## ***5.7 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.

### ***5.7.1 Potential Consequences of Online Unprofessional Behavior***

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.

### ***5.7.2 Best Practice Guidelines for Online Social Networking***

1. 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.

2. Unprofessional postings by others on your page may reflect very poorly on you. Please monitor others' postings on your profile and strive to ensure that the content would not be viewed as unprofessional. It may be useful to block postings from individuals who post unprofessional content.

3. Help monitor your peers by alerting colleagues to unprofessional or potentially offensive comments made online to avoid future indiscretions and refer them to this document.

4. Due to continuous changes in these sites you should closely monitor the privacy settings of your social network accounts to optimize their privacy and security. Restrict your settings so that only individuals you have authorized to access your profile can see your information. Also, you should not share or post any identification numbers or demographic information online.

5. Others may post photos of you, and may "tag" you in each of the photos. It is your responsibility to make sure that these photos are appropriate and are not professionally compromising. As a general rule it is wise to "untag" yourself from any photos, and to refrain from tagging others unless you have explicit permission from them to do so. Privacy or account settings may allow you to prevent photos from being "tagged" with your information, or may prevent others from seeing your tags.

6. Online discussions of specific clients or research participants should be strictly avoided, even if all identifying information is excluded. It is possible that someone could recognize the person to whom you are referring based upon the context.

7. Under no circumstances should photos of clients, research participants, or research animals be posted online. Remember,



even if you have permission, such photos may be downloadable and forwarded by others. Once you post, the actions of others could lead to legal or professional consequences for you personally.

8. Do not have interactions with clients on social networking sites. This provides an opportunity for a dual relationship, which may damage the therapist-client relationship and may have legal consequences.

9. Do not infringe upon another's copyrighted or trademarked materials. If you post content, photos, or other media, you are acknowledging that you own or have the right to use these items.

10. Refrain from accessing social networking sites while in class, at work, or in clinical-work areas.

[adapted from the MSU College of Osteopathic Medicine's Social Networking Guidelines; Aug, 2013]

## ***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](#)**  
**[Academic Programs](#)**  
**[Descriptions of Courses](#)**  
**[Graduate School](#)**  
**[Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities](#)**  
**[Human Research Protection Program](#)**  
**[All University Committee on Animal Use and Care](#)**  
**[MSU Graduate Employees Union](#)**