

Developmental, Social, and Health PhD Program

Graduate Student Handbook

University of Kentucky Department of Psychology, August 2025



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Introduction

This handbook details expectations for you in the Developmental, Social, and Health program of the Department of Psychology. There are several available tracks for PhD students to pursue in their research, coursework, and program requirements, and students may choose to focus on one or more tracks (e.g., Social or Developmental or Health, or Social and Developmental, etc.). Note: students interested in the Health track should explore our interdisciplinary “Health Psychology Concentration” for PhD students (see department website).

In the Developmental, Social, Health program, students typically receive primary conceptual and methodological training in Developmental Psychology, Social Psychology, OR Health Psychology (each are “tracks” within our program). This training will reflect the expertise of your advisor (and lab) in their respective subfield (e.g., Social Psychology) and will prepare you for the academic job market in this subfield.

As some faculty in the Developmental, Social, and Health program are truly “hybrid” psychologists (equivalent expertise in Social and Developmental Psychology, for example), you may also, if you so choose, gear your training across subfields by pursuing relevant coursework, research collaborations, teaching experiences, etc. We understand that Psychology is increasingly integrative across topic areas, which is one of the features of our collaborative Developmental, Social, and Health program. As part of our program, we encourage you to complete the requirements of your training in ways that maximize your professional development, career goals, and interests.

In addition to this handbook, you are responsible for keeping apprised of important Departmental and Graduate School requirements, deadlines, and regulations. Some of this information is covered in other sources, such as the Departmental Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC) Handbook and the Graduate School Bulletin. Most importantly, the rules and requirements as stated in the Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC) Handbook remain the final authority, and any discrepancies between that source and what is written here should be resolved in favor of the GSAC Handbook.

Core Faculty

Research in our Developmental, Social, and Health program includes a range of topics and methodologies. Students will focus on one or multiple tracks of either (a) Developmental, (b) Social, or (c) Health Psychology. Students' specific track (or tracks) will be determined in consultation with their research advisor.

Within the DSH program:

Research addresses cognitive developmental psychology, such as cognitive development and education (see the work of [Dr. Sidney](#), Developmental Psychology) and motivation, self-regulation, and schooling ([Dr. Kim](#), Developmental Psychology). Research also addresses children within families, such as LGBTQ+ parent and adoptive families, child development, and parent socialization ([Dr. Farr](#), Developmental Psychology) and the role of addiction in families, child socioemotional development, and sleep health ([Dr. Keller](#), Developmental Psychology).

Research addresses developmental psychopathology, such as pathways to disruptive behavior disorders and ADHD ([Dr. Martel](#), Clinical Psychology).

Within DSH, research also addresses topics related to prejudice and bias. Research focuses on children, such as the development of stereotypes and children's experiences with gender and ethnic discrimination ([Dr. Brown](#), Developmental Psychology, Social Psychology); and adults, such as racism, prejudice, and coping with racism ([Dr. Marshburn](#), Social Psychology). Moreover, this research addresses solutions for reducing prejudice and discrimination, as well as individual differences in reactions to societal change ([Dr. Armenta](#), Social Psychology), and how stereotypes and prejudice influence the formation, longevity, and usage of first impressions ([Dr. Bray](#), Social Psychology).

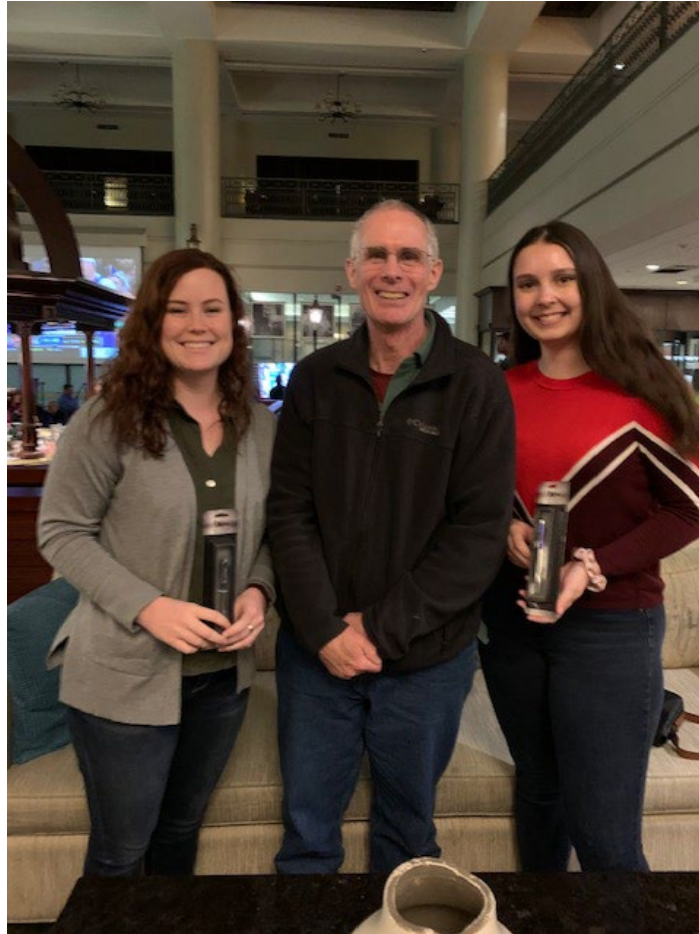
Research addresses psychology and the law, such as factors related to jury decision-making ([Dr. Golding](#), Social Psychology) and how judgements are influenced by gender, race, and ethnicity ([Dr. Jenn Hunt](#), Social Psychology).

Finally, research addresses health psychology topics, such as stress, emotion, and health processes ([Dr. Leger](#), Health Psychology); and cancer survivorship and smoking cessation ([Dr. Burris](#), Clinical Psychology).

Please also see the Psychology Department website for several additional faculty affiliated with our Developmental, Social, and Health program. There are also faculty in our program listed in our department faculty directory who are on phased retirement (e.g., Dr. Lorch).

Note: Several of the above core faculty are also affiliated with the Clinical Psychology program of the Psychology Department. To be clear, the Developmental, Social, and Health program PhD students are not pursuing training and requirements to become clinical psychologists. If you are interested in receiving clinical training, you would need to apply specifically to the Clinical Psychology program.

Prospective PhD students: please directly contact any faculty members with whom you are interested in working for more information. To apply for the Developmental, Social, and Health PhD program, please click on the "Experimental Psychology" (vs. "Clinical Psychology") option on the Graduate School application website.



DSH PhD students, Baylee Jenkins (L) and Alexis LeGrand (R) with advisor, Dr. Jonathan Golding (middle).

Coursework

Course Requirements:

- **Departmental requirements**

Statistics sequence: PSY 610 (*Psychometrics*) and PSY 611 (*Psychological Research*)

- **Program requirements**

Any three proseminars offered by the Department of Psychology, with the general expectation that Developmental (PSY 625), Social (PSY 624), and/or Health Psychology proseminars will be completed.

Additional coursework or experience – typically advanced topical or methods seminars – as recommended by advisory committees, primary advisor, and/or program coordinator.

Note: specific course choices to meet program requirements must be approved by the advisor, advisory committee, and/or program coordinator; students also pursuing a clinical psychology track have other specific requirements.

Taking Courses FAQs

- **How many credit hours are taken each semester?**

The usual course load is nine credit hours each semester, the minimum hours to be considered full-time by the Graduate School. You may not exceed ten credit hours, except with special permission from the Graduate School.

- **How many content vs. research courses are taken each semester?**

Typically, if you are a TA or RA, the nine credits hours that must be taken each semester can be split up in various ways. For example, in Year one you will likely take PSY 610 (Psychometrics; three credit hours), one proseminar or topical seminar (three credit hours) and one Research course (PSY 790; three credit hours). In other semesters, you may need to only take one content course (three credit hours) and one Research course (PSY 790; six credit hours). Your decision on how to divide your hours each semester will be made in consultation with your faculty advisor and/or if needed, your advisory committee or program coordinator. See **Sample Schedule of Student Coursework** (next page) for an example of possible coursework per semester. *Note:* Exact scheduling will vary based on course offerings and your interests.

- **What are the course designations for Research Credit Hours?**

PSY 790: *Research in Psychology*

PSY 767: *Dissertation Residency Credit*

Note: Your grade for these courses is assigned by your advisor.

| Sample Schedule of Student Coursework | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------|---|------------------|
| | | Content Courses | Research Courses |
| Year one | Fall | PSY 610; proseminar OR topical seminar* | PSY 790 |
| | Spring | PSY 611; proseminar OR topical seminar* | PSY 790 |
| Year two | Fall | proseminar and/or topical seminar* | PSY 790 |
| | Spring | proseminar and/or topical seminar* | PSY 790 |
| Year three | Fall | Topical/Allied Area course* | PSY 767 |
| | Spring | | PSY 767 |
| Year four | Fall | Topical/Allied Area course* | PSY 767 |
| | Spring | | PSY 767 |
| Year five | Fall | Topical/Allied Area course* | PSY 767 |
| | Spring | | PSY 767 |

- **What other courses are you expected/encouraged to take?**

You are expected to take any advanced topical seminars in Developmental, Social, and/or Health Psychology, and are encouraged to take any advanced statistics courses offered by the Department of Psychology. You should also plan to take coursework that aligns with developing your Allied Area, if relevant (see next page).

- **Are required courses taken in a specific time frame?**

Your required classes must be taken *prior* to your Qualifying Exam. You are required to complete 36 hours (about 9 per semester) prior to *defending* your Qualifying Exam (quals), and these can include research credits (e.g., PSY 790, 767). Following the completion of required course work, you must maintain full-time status through enrollment in PSY767 (course credit for your research experiences; you will enroll in 2 hours per semester following your quals defense).

- **How important is course work?**

Course work is a necessary but decidedly *less* important component (compared to research) of graduate work. Beginning graduate students are often unduly anxious about their performance in classes. It can be difficult to make the transition from an undergraduate perspective, where classes and GPA were all-important, to a graduate perspective, where course work is a necessary but decidedly less important component (compared to research) of your graduate work. It will be tempting for you to focus your time and energies largely on your course work, as the workload for these classes may seem at times overwhelming. We urge you not to yield to that temptation. Research should remain your top priority.



DSH students in Dr. Rachel Farr's Developmental Proseminar in Fall 2019 learn about neuroscience through hands-on learning (with human brain and spinal cord specimens) during guest lecture from Dr. Mark Prendergast, Fall 2019 (L. to R: Mark Prendergast, Kyle Rawn, Casey Vázquez, Andrea Pals, Brandon Reinkensmeyer).

Allied Area

You are expected to develop an Allied Area to gain expertise in some area outside of your main research specialty (i.e., breadth in one's graduate study). The Allied Area is designed to be highly flexible and will vary widely across interests and career goals. Thus, this requirement can be satisfied by course work (e.g., conceptual courses reflecting a secondary “track,” advanced methods and/or statistics; typically, about 3 relevant classes), research (e.g., research experience in another discipline, area, and/or lab), or professional experience (e.g., teaching, business/internship).

The selection of an appropriate Allied Area project will be made by you in consultation with your advisor, advisory committee, and/or program coordinator. Approval of your Allied Area project will be made by the Developmental, Social, and Health program faculty at the time that graduate student evaluation forms are submitted (i.e., end of Spring semester). Students are encouraged to discuss potential Allied Areas with their advisor early in their training. **This requirement should be completed prior to scheduling the Qualifying Exam.**

Research

The program has two formalized requirements that are specifically designed to train you in conducting research: (1) the Master's thesis and (2) the Ph.D. Dissertation. Note that the Qualifying Exam is another requirement that may also involve training in conducting research – see more details later in this handbook. Along with these requirements, it is expected that you are involved in research each semester, as it from your lab experience with your primary advisor that you will receive critical content, methodological, and statistical training. We also strongly encourage you get involved with another lab outside of your primary one (and this may in fact serve as your Allied Area if you so choose). Therefore, you should be in constant contact with your advisor and other faculty with whom you are conducting research to discuss progress and goals (both individual and project).

Early each semester, either before classes start or during the first week, you should meet with your advisor. During this meeting you will discuss the research you have in progress and what goals you wish to set for the upcoming semester. These goals should be fairly specific. It has been our experience that regular, frequent meetings only help to keep students on track with research; they do not impede research progress. Thus, we urge you to set up a regular meeting time with your advisor. More frequent meetings (e.g., weekly or biweekly) are especially important for beginning students, but advanced students need regular contact with their advisors as well.

Student Supervision

Supervision occurs on three levels including your primary faculty advisor, faculty advisory committees, and the entire program faculty. You will choose (or be assigned) a primary advisor or mentor upon entering the program. In consultation with your mentor, you will form the various committees listed below. These committees are primarily composed of

program faculty, but faculty from other units, and in some cases other institutions, can serve. There is usually considerable overlap in the composition of these committees, but you have the prerogative of selecting different faculty for subsequent committees. It is expected that these committees will meet at least once each academic year. Often these meetings are held at the end of the semester (though they do not have to be at that time) and involve a review of your progress over the past semester and formulating goals for the upcoming semester. You should feel free, however, to schedule a meeting with your advisor, your advisory committee, the program coordinator, and/or program faculty to discuss any issue at any time. Please note that it is your responsibility to schedule any meeting.

There are **three advisory committees** you will form and interact with:

Master's Advisory Committee (Year One)

By the end of your first year, a Master's Advisory Committee is formed. The primary responsibility of this committee is to guide completion of the Master's thesis by evaluating your Master proposal, advising on your academic progress, and conducting the oral defense of your Master's Thesis. The Master's Advisory Committee consists of your mentor and two additional graduate faculty, at least one from the Developmental, Social, and Health program, and at least one with full Graduate Faculty status. It is best if this committee meets in person (at least the initial meeting) to discuss thesis issues.

There are a number of things you need to keep in mind as you move closer to completing your Master's. First, you will need to contact each committee member to determine how long before the defense they would like to receive your final draft (generally two weeks ahead of time is customary). Second, it is your responsibility to contact the Department Manager Graduate Coordinator (currently **Tamra Nowitzki**), who will then contact the Graduate School, and have the documentation prepared that will be signed following your meeting (i.e., the "card" that indicates whether you passed your defense). ***You must contact the Department Manager Graduate Coordinator at least six weeks prior to your planned defense date.*** Third, it is your responsibility to reserve a room for your defense (typically one in Kastle Hall that has a calendar on the door, such as 206-A, 207-J, or 216). Finally, if you must remove or add a committee member, please see the Department Manager Graduate Coordinator for the form to complete.

Qualification Examination Advisory Committee (Year Three)

During the year following successful defense of the Master's thesis, you must form a committee that will supervise the qualifying examination (quals) and (typically) dissertation. This Qualification Examination Advisory Committee will consist of a core group of faculty, including your mentor and at least three other faculty members (two from the graduate program and one outside member). **All core members must be members of the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kentucky and three (including the committee chair, i.e., your advisor) must possess full Graduate Faculty status.** The purpose of the committee is to guide the preparation (e.g., reading lists) and completion of your qualifying examination, including both written and oral components. It is best if this committee meets in person (at least the initial meeting) to

discuss quals issues. A decision about quals format (described in more detail under the Qualifying Exam heading) should take place about six months prior to the defense date.

Similar issues as described above for your Master's thesis pertain to your quals. The only caveat for quals is that ***you must contact the Department Manager Graduate Coordinator at least ten weeks prior to your planned defense date.***

Dissertation Advisory Committee (Following Quals, Years 4-5)

Following successful qualifying exams, a Dissertation Advisory Committee is formed to supervise academic progress during the remainder of your tenure, including the development, completion, and evaluation of your Ph.D. dissertation. You will develop a formal dissertation proposal, which will be evaluated by this committee. Upon approval, you will complete the proposed research and provide an oral defense of your dissertation evaluated by your committee (which also will include an outside member assigned by the graduate school for the purposes of your defense). You should determine the composition of your Dissertation Advisory Committee in collaboration with your primary advisor (who must serve as chair or co-chair). Typically, this committee includes the same faculty as that for your quals, but this is not required.

Similar issues as described above for your Master's thesis and quals pertain to your dissertation. As with your quals, ***you must contact the Department Manager Graduate Coordinator at least ten weeks prior to your planned defense date.***

Graduate Student Advisory Committee

In addition to the three committees convened by the student (and their mentor(s)), all graduate student work is supervised by the Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC). The GSAC is comprised of three faculty members, one from each program area, appointed by the Department Chair in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies. The primary purpose of the GSAC is academic oversight of students who have yet to complete their Master's. The GSAC may meet with students who are not making sufficient progress towards their proposal, completion, and defense of the Master's project. See additional information about the role of GSAC in students' academic progress in the *Transferring Degree/Credits from Other Institutions* section, below. More information about GSAC can also be found in the GSAC manual, here: <https://psychology.as.uky.edu/psych-grad-forms>.



Current and Former DSH PhD students at Southern Society of Philosophy and Psychology
 L to R: Jillian Silva-Jones (mentor: Lauren Whitehurst), Kevin McAweeney (mentor: Rachel Farr), Shelby Wynn
 (mentor: Chris Marshburn), Dr. Sharla Biefeld (mentor: Christia Brown), Derek Kahng (mentor: Christia Brown).

Thesis & Dissertation

Project Ideas

We anticipate that in most cases the idea for the Master's thesis should develop from the primary advisor's research. For dissertations, the expectation is that the project should be largely independent, designed primarily by you with little or less input from faculty. The goal for the master's thesis and dissertation and all other research projects is to end up with a publishable product in a peer-reviewed journal.

Writing, Deadlines, & Meetings

It is expected that your Master's thesis should be completed and defended by the end of the second year. You should plan to do this in the Spring semester (and should not expect faculty to be available in the summer).

Your advisor, of course, will comment on all drafts carefully and let you know when it is ready to circulate (whether via email and/or hard copy – check with your committee members about their preferences) to other committee members. The basic expectation is to allow faculty members two weeks to look over any product. You should consult with

your committee members at the very beginning to discuss what level of involvement they desire in the process and then respecting their wishes.

Complete instructions, deadlines and requirements for the preparation of theses and dissertations are found on the Graduate School's website. Please note that the Graduate School's required format for theses and dissertations is not APA style.

Qualifying Examination

You must pass quals to be promoted to doctoral candidacy. The exam is intended to be a demonstration that you have developed a broad, defensible perspective on your area of study. The specific content of the examination will be determined in discussions between the student and the advisory committee; three broad options for the examination are described below. For all students, this examination will contain a written and then oral component. As noted above, discussions will also determine how long you will have to complete preparations to take the written and oral components. At the appropriate time, you will schedule the oral defense with the Graduate School (described above). The oral defense will lead to a "Pass" or "Fail" evaluation.

If you fail the initial oral defense, the Ph.D. Qualification Examination Advisory Committee determines the conditions to be met before another examination may be given. The minimum time between examinations is four months. A second examination must be taken within one year after the first examination. A third examination is not permitted—you will be terminated from the program. If you choose to retake the exam, the composition of the entire committee must remain the same.

Regarding deadlines for quals, the Graduate School states that quals must be taken within five years of entry into the program. However, the Developmental, Social, and Health program expects you to defend quals by the end of the first semester of your fourth year of training, if you did not transfer from another institution. If you transferred from another institution, you must discuss the timeframe for taking quals with your Qualification Exam Advisory Committee. However, if you have transferred it is expected that you take quals by the end of your first or second year of training at UK.

Preparation for quals. Your preparation for quals begins as soon as you enter the program and take proseminars and other advanced seminars in Developmental Psychology, Social Psychology, and/or Health Psychology. You should begin intensive preparation for quals approximately three to six months prior to taking them (and as noted above, it is strongly recommended that students have an initial meeting – a quals "proposal" – with their committee six months in advance of the defense to discuss and decide on the quals format, etc.). All required classes must be taken *prior* to, or *concurrently*, with your qualifying exam.

Format. You will typically select one of three options for quals. (You will work with your qualifying exam committee to ensure that, *before you formally begin quals*, everyone is in agreement about the exact components, requirements, and timeline for your quals. Finalized

decisions related to the options below are up to the discretion of your committee.) These options are intended for you to demonstrate your scholarly competencies in your developing area(s) of expertise while also maximizing professional development. These options also reflect coordination with program and graduate school requirements as well as facilitation of your creation of products (a paper or grant proposal) that will contribute to your success. For each option, an official evaluation of the overall quals performance occurs at the end of the Orals meeting. At this time, the committee members will sign the graduate school card used to report the outcome of the exam. As such, the Orals meeting produces a binding and final decision from the Advisory Committee based on the quality of the written portion and your performance at the oral examination.

Option #1 (Review or Theoretical Paper)

In this format, the written portion of quals consists of a review or theoretical paper that bridges multiple areas of Developmental, Social, and/or Health psychological research, depending on your track(s). This could be the areas of research that you expect will be helpful as you fully develop your dissertation proposal following your quals.

Completion of this paper involves three main objectives. First, it will use your budding program of research as a foundation to enable them to gain a deeper understanding of their research area. Second, it will emphasize the importance of synthesizing multiple areas of Developmental, Social, and/or Health psychology, depending on your track(s), by connecting your research interests within the broader literature. Third, it will enable you to gain valuable and practical experience writing a paper that is intended for publication in a major scientific outlet (e.g., *American Psychologist*, *Psychological Bulletin*). The exact format of the paper will be determined by your primary advisor and committee (a step that could be completed during the proposal step of the Qualifying Exam).

The oral portion of the exam will consist of two parts. In the first part, you will provide a short (15 min) presentation on your review paper. You will then answer questions following up on your review or theoretical paper, similar to the peer review process. You will also be asked any questions that more broadly address content areas relevant to your track(s) within the Developmental, Social, and/or Health program that were not covered in your paper.

Option #2 (Grant Proposal)

This option involves the preparation of a major grant proposal with the intent to submit for a grant cycle deadline following the successful defense of your quals. Commonly, this takes the format of a National Science Foundation F series application (an NRSA fellowship), but the format of this option for your quals is not exclusive to this mechanism. You should discuss the exact grant mechanism you will pursue for this option with your primary advisor and/or committee (or program coordinator) as needed. The goal of completing a grant application is to gain worthwhile and practical experience in submitting a major grant proposal as well as to design the study or studies that are likely to form the basis of your dissertation research (whether or not the grant is

ultimately funded). For your quals defense, you should plan to focus on the research strategy (i.e., research proposal) and training components of the grant application, but it is expected that you also prepare all required elements so that your committee can provide more comprehensive review and feedback of your collective application materials.

In preparing your application, it is strongly recommended that you plan to defend at least several months in advance of the actual grant cycle deadline so that you will have time to effectively incorporate feedback you receive at your quals defense. In addition, be sure to contact and work with the Department Grants Coordinator (**Kim Reeder**), and submit an A&S ticket notifying the grant office of the planned submission, well in advance of the grant deadline in order to successfully submit your completed application when the time comes.

The oral portion of the exam will consist of questions about your grant application, focused on your research proposal and training plan, as well as any questions that more broadly address content areas relevant to your track(s) within the Developmental, Social, and/or Health program that were not covered in your application.

Option #3 (Question/Answer)

In this format, the written portion of quals consists of questions provided by each committee member. These questions will be given or emailed to you by your committee chair, typically on a Monday. Questions will be (a) general and capture the breadth of Developmental Psychology, Social Psychology, and/or Health Psychology, with a focus on your specific track (i.e., Developmental), if relevant, (b) somewhat more specific to your general area of research, perhaps tapping into your Allied Area, and (c) tailored toward a grant proposal topic or dissertation topic. You will have five days to respond to the questions. You will email your committee chair your complete responses at the end of the week. You will not receive feedback on your responses until the oral defense. As noted above, the exact number of questions and any other particular details related to the timeline and content for the written portion are determined in conjunction with your individual qualifying exam committee.

The oral portion of the exam will consist of questions following up on your responses in the written portion as well as questions addressing content areas in Developmental, Social, and/or Health psychology – depending on your track(s) – that were not covered in the written portion.

Combined Exam and Dissertation Proposal. For many students, the topics addressed in their qualifying exam are directly related to their proposed dissertation work. In this case, it is permissible to have a single meeting in which the student both defends their qualifying exam and seeks approval for their dissertation proposal. The student must declare their intention to do so prior to the quals defense/dissertation proposal meeting and the committee should agree upon the structure, format, and products for and during the combined meeting.

Importantly, the student must pass the qualifying exam for the committee to consider the dissertation proposal. At the conclusion of the meeting, the committee will evaluate the qualifying exam defense separately from the dissertation proposal. Thus, it is possible for a student to pass the qualifying exam but be asked to modify their dissertation proposal and discuss their plans with the committee again before proceeding with the dissertation. If a student does not pass the qualifying exam, the committee will not make a determination about dissertation proposal.

Teaching

You are expected to gain teaching experience, generally consisting of being a Teaching Assistant (TA) or instructor. Given that you are being paid to perform these functions, it is very important that you take your teaching responsibilities very seriously. This is especially true if you are a TA and under the direct supervision of a faculty member. As a TA, it is critical that you discuss the expectations of your faculty supervisor.

At some point, you will be faced with the decision of whether or not to take full responsibility for a course. If your career goals include obtaining an academic position, teaching a course would be good preparation, and it could also enhance your credentials. However, the time investment required in teaching a course is always greater than you anticipate, and if you decide to teach a course you must be careful not to neglect your research as a consequence.

You are also encouraged to take courses and attend workshops pertinent to teaching, especially if teaching is a part of one's primary career goal. A formal "teaching specialty" may be pursued, which can serve as an Allied Area for interested students. It will consist of coursework pertinent to college teaching, a systematic assignment of teaching assistantships, and in some cases a teaching internship at the University of Kentucky or one of several liberal arts colleges in the area. You may even consider working toward a Graduate Certificate in College Teaching and Learning offered by the Graduate School (information is available about this certificate on their website).

Transferring Degree/Credits from Other Institutions

If you are admitted to the Developmental, Social, and Health training program and have completed an empirical thesis on an appropriate topic at another institution, you may have the option to waive the requirement for completion of a Master's thesis in the Psychology Department through the following process:

1. You should notify, in writing, your assigned academic advisor and the program coordinator.
2. In order to be eligible for this consideration, the thesis must have been formally accepted as completed at the outside institution, and written documentation to this effect must be provided. If you have matriculated in the department but have not yet defended your

thesis at the outside institution, you have one year from the start of classes in the graduate program at UK to exercise this option.

3. The thesis will be reviewed by your advisor as well as one other faculty member chosen in consultation with the program coordinator. These two reviewers will render an opinion, in writing, to the program coordinator regarding the acceptability of the outside thesis as a substitute for completion of a thesis at UK. In the event of a disagreement between the two readers, the program coordinator will appoint a third reader as a “tiebreaker.”
4. If the readers of the thesis judge the thesis acceptable as a substitute for one completed in the graduate program at UK, the program coordinator will write a letter to this effect to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) as well as the Chair of the Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC) with a copy placed in your file.
5. If the readers determine that the thesis is not acceptable as a substitute for a thesis completed at UK, the program coordinator must also notify the DGS and Chair of GSAC to this effect. In the case of this outcome, you may be held to the usual deadlines for completion of a thesis at the discretion of GSAC. GSAC will notify you of its decision in this regard in a timely fashion.
6. If you submit a thesis as a substitute but have it rejected by the readers you may appeal the decision to GSAC, which will have final discretion in the matter.
7. In addition to the Master’s thesis, it is possible that if you have prior graduate work at another institution to waive some of these requirements by obtaining special permission from GSAC or by taking appropriate by-pass exams. Arrangements for such exams must be made with the instructor of the specific course well in advance of the expected test date. With regard to the former, if you enter UK with an awarded Master’s degree from another institution, you can satisfy up to 18 of the 36 credit hours that graduate students are required to complete (i.e., the pre-qualifying requirement). Your supervisor must prepare a detailed letter (typically including course syllabi) justifying the eligibility of your specific courses that can transfer towards these 18 credit hours. The letter is then submitted to the DGS for approval. Please note, however, that we have found that transfer students nonetheless benefit from repeating the department statistics sequence and the proseminar(s) associated with your track(s) within the Developmental, Social, and Health program.

Recommended Timetable of Progress

Master’s Thesis

The end of the 4th semester in the program is the goal for completed your Master’s thesis. If the thesis is not completed by the start of classes in your 6th semester, you may have to meet with Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC) and could be subject to program dismissal (according to GSAC regulations).

In general, most graduate students who enter the program without any previous graduate school experience defend their PhD in five years. Is it possible to finish in four years? The simple answer is “Yes”, but it is unlikely that you will have a competitive vita.

| Sample Timetable of Student Progress | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Year one | <i>Fall</i> | Research (expected every semester) |
| | <i>Spring</i> | Form Master’s Advisory Committee |
| Year two | <i>Fall</i> | Propose Master’s thesis |
| | <i>Spring</i> | Defend Master’s thesis; form Qualification Examination Advisory Committee |
| Year three | <i>Fall</i> | Propose Qualifying Exam |
| | <i>Spring</i> | Pass Qualifying Examination |
| Year four | <i>Fall</i> | Form Dissertation Advisory Committee |
| | <i>Spring</i> | Propose Dissertation |
| Year five | <i>Fall</i> | Dissertation research; apply to jobs / postdocs |
| | <i>Spring</i> | Defend Dissertation |

All degree requirements for the doctorate must be completed within five years following the semester or summer session in which the candidate successfully completes the qualifying examination, but extensions up to an additional 5 years may be requested for a total of 10 years. All requests should be initiated by the DGS and accompanied by a letter of support from your advisor. Extensions up to one year may be approved by the Senior Associate Dean of the Graduate School. Requests for extensions longer than one year must be considered by Graduate Council. Again, all requests should be initiated by the DGS and must include a recommendation of whether retaking the Qualifying Examination is a requirement of the extension. Failure to complete all degree requirements within 10 years of initially taking the Qualifying Examination will also result in the termination of degree candidacy. All pre- and post-qualifying residency requirements must again be met if you subsequently seek readmission to the doctoral program. To request a formal leave of absence, please contact the DGS and/or the Area Coordinator.

In special circumstances, students who have completed their qualifying exam and have the support of their advisory committee may request remote completion of the PhD. Please contact the Area Coordinator for more information.

Annual Evaluation of Progress

You will be evaluated by program faculty at the end of each academic year. You will submit a statement of your accomplishments during the year (you will generally receive a reminder of this requirement and the process for this from the program coordinator towards the end of the Spring semester). Your accomplishments will be evaluated against your statement of goals discussed with your advisor at the beginning of the academic year. In addition, any other information relevant to an evaluation of your professional progress will be considered (e.g., performance in teaching assignments, class participation, Brown Bag and Departmental Colloquia attendance, etc.). The content of the discussion will be communicated to you in a letter soon after the end of the Spring semester. This letter will be signed by your advisor, the program coordinator, and the DGS. You are encouraged to meet with the program coordinator and your advisor after receiving this letter.

Note that in cases where the advisory committee rates either quality of performance or rate of progress to be inadequate, the program faculty may place you on academic probation. When placed on probation, the program faculty will recommend a course of action that will allow you to set goals for improvement. You will receive a letter from the program coordinator that outlines the nature of the problem leading to probation and the goals you must achieve to end the probation period. A timetable for reaching these goals will be included in the letter. If you are on probation, you will also meet with your mentor and the program coordinator to discuss the nature of the problem and the work needed for improvement. Probation periods will not normally extend beyond one year.

Note that your progress evaluation could bear on your funding in years 4+ of the graduate training program. Department priorities for student funding are: 1) students in their first three years of graduate school, 2) students within five years and making good progress towards a degree, 3) students within five years, and 4) all other students.

Graduate Student Awards

Each year, the DSH program awards one student with the Developmental Area Outstanding Graduate Student Award and one student with the Gunto-Berger Outstanding Social Psychology Graduate Student Award. The Gunto-Berger award is named in honor of Sam Gunto, a former Social Psychology graduate student who tragically passed away just prior to receiving his PhD, and in recognition of Dr. Phil Berger who has been a long-time advocate for the Social Area and continues to give financial support for this award.

Eligibility. Traditionally, the Developmental Award goes to a student on the developmental track and the Social Award goes to a student on the social track. Given the interdisciplinary nature of our program and research, students can self-identify as a social and/or developmental psychologist and apply accordingly. That is, any student can apply for either award.

Review. Each year in April, the DSH program coordinator will solicit applications from graduate students. Applications will consist of a list of publications, presentations, grants applied/received, awards, teaching accomplishments and significant service in the prior 12 months (i.e., since the

previous April) of graduate study. Once applications have been submitted, a faculty committee including at least one developmental psychologist and one social psychologist is convened by the program coordinator. The program coordinator will make an effort to avoid appointing the primary mentors for nominees to the awards committee. This committee reviews all applications for both awards and determine the awardees based on the accomplishments of each student with regard to research, teaching, and service as well as other notable accomplishments. The winner of the awards are announced at the annual Psychology Day end-of-semester event.

Program and Departmental Activities

Program Activities

Active program participation by all students and faculty is of considerable importance. We believe that your graduate experience will be enhanced by taking advantage of all the scholarly opportunities that are available.

Professional Development Seminar. Our program has a weekly “Professional Development Seminar” (PDS) meeting that is vital to your PhD training. These meetings provide critical opportunities to discuss research (e.g., presentations related to content, methodology, and statistics) and professional issues (e.g., teaching, job applications, reviewing for journals). You are required to attend these meetings, and present during PDS or lead a discussion during this meeting at least once a year (as important opportunities for practicing public speaking about your scholarship). The duration, format, and content of your presentation may vary. However, your required contribution must focus on your own research. Any additional contributions to PDS can focus on any aspect of scholarly work and/or professional development.

Graduate Student Recruitment Events. In the Spring, we will hold at least one recruitment day for incoming graduate applicants which may include both social and academic events. Current graduate students are encouraged to attend these events and assist with student recruitment.

Departmental Activities

In addition to these program-level events, we expect you to (a) attend departmental colloquia, (b) take part in departmental and program social gatherings and activities, and (c) consider serving as a graduate student representative to faculty meetings and relevant departmental committees.

Program and Departmental Leadership and Service

Our program has several opportunities for leadership and service, and we encourage graduate students to serve in at least one leadership and/or service position during their graduate training. Not only does this provide needed service to the area, but serving in a leadership position also provides many opportunities for professional development.

Professional Development Seminar Student Coordinators: A team of at least two

graduate students (one junior and one senior) will coordinate the planning and running of these meetings in consultation with the PDS faculty coordinator(s) (as well as the program coordinator, if relevant). This coordination includes arranging the schedule, contacting potential attendees, and helping to coordinate the visits of external speakers. This role is generally a two-year position and rotates such that one position is available every year. Graduate students are encouraged to self-nominate for both leadership positions by contacting the PDS faculty coordinator(s) and/or the DSH program coordinator.

Graduate Recruitment Coordinators: A team of two graduate students (one junior and one senior student) will plan and run graduate student recruitment weekend in consultation with the program coordinator. This role includes coordinating with applicants as well as current graduate students. This role is generally a two-year position. Graduate students are encouraged to self-nominate for both leadership positions by contacting the DSH program coordinator.

As needed, the program coordinator will work with the program faculty to identify students for these positions. Efforts will be made to have representation across developmental, social, and health tracks of our program, as well as to ensure all students in our program have an opportunity to serve in these roles.

Peer Mentorship: Beginning in 2024, every incoming graduate student in the DSH program will be assigned a peer mentor within DSH but outside of their advisor's lab group. More senior graduate students are encouraged to serve as peer mentors. This is an opportunity to help ease the transition into graduate school for an incoming student and develop one's own mentorship skills. As new students are accepted into the program, graduate student and faculty program leaders will solicit volunteers for peer mentorship.

DSH Graduate Student Representative. Each year, two graduate students from each program (DSH, clinical, cognitive neuroscience) serve as graduate student representatives in the departmental faculty meeting. Importantly, the graduate student representatives serve as liaisons between the graduate students in their program and the faculty at large. Grad reps have the opportunity to bring questions and concerns to the departmental executive committee members (e.g., the chair and associate chair). They are also charged with summarizing and reporting information from the faculty meetings to the graduate students in their area. Responsibilities include attending the monthly faculty meeting, communicating with graduate students in the program, and meeting with the associate chair as needed. Note that some faculty meetings are closed to graduate students (e.g., those concerning faculty promotion and tenure decisions). Grad reps are selected through a nomination process and self-nomination is permitted. Outgoing grad reps will select new grad reps, in consultation with other DSH graduate students.

Inclusive Excellence Committee. Graduate students are welcome to join Psychology's Inclusive Excellence (PIE) committee. Members of PIE participate in topic discussions and can volunteer to serve on a subcommittee. Committee meetings are publicized over the departmental listservs and any student can join any meeting. Please see the PIE website for more details: <https://psychology.as.uky.edu/inclusive-excellence>

Reporting a Grievance

A student who has a grievance, such as unfair treatment or unethical behavior by one or more members of the department (i.e., faculty members, students, and other departmental staff) has several avenues for addressing their concerns. If a student has a concern about their treatment by a specific faculty member (e.g., their advisor), we encourage that they address the issue directly with that faculty member as a first step. However, we acknowledge that is not always possible. The next step is to contact the DSH program coordinator for guidance. Some grievances can be settled by in-program or in-department mediation, and some grievances are better suited for formal reporting.

If a grievance requires formal reporting, the student should discuss the matter with the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). If the DGS is not impartial, the student may discuss the matter with the Department Chair or Associate Chair. If, after this discussion, the student wishes to pursue a formal grievance, the student should submit a written document describing the grievance. The DGS (or Chair) will then appoint three impartial members of the faculty to review the grievance and make recommendations to the DGS. The DGS will then make a decision based on all available information and communicate this decision in writing to all concerned parties. A student who is dissatisfied with the results of these procedures may pursue the grievance procedures of the Office of the Academic Ombud, as described in the University Bulletin. Finally, a student always has the option to go directly to the Academic Ombud. See more information here: <https://ombud.uky.edu/>

We want to make sure you know how to proceed if you have a concern with respect to treatment based on personal status (such as race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.).

Examples of concerns students may have include: a student could feel disrespected due to some personal or social characteristic, such as race, gender, or sexual orientation; a student could feel that language is being used that is disrespectful or hurtful; a student could feel unfairly treated by faculty or supervisors due to personal characteristics; a student could feel that a non-tolerant environment exists in the department or in a lab. Of course, there are other possibilities.

Steps to be taken in response to such concerns will vary on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature of the situation. As with other concerns, the intent of the program is to provide successful remediation, should concerns exist about the behavior of a student or faculty member. With respect to students, possible steps include a single, one-time meeting with the student, formation of an Oversight Committee, or formation of a Probation Committee, both of which require specific remediation-based actions.

Depending on the circumstances, it is possible that students may have the opportunity, or be asked to, take a leave of absence from the program or leave the program altogether (this is rare).

Closing Thoughts

We hope this handbook is helpful to you. Our goals are to inspire you to reach your highest potential and to fulfill our responsibility as faculty in giving you the best training possible. We seek to prepare you for research or teaching careers. We believe these goals can be best accomplished through high expectations and standards, and we also have complete confidence in your ability to meet these standards. We believe that our expectations reflect what is necessary to succeed in today's competitive job market. We welcome feedback on any of the issues described herein and are open to suggestions and innovations.



Dr. Kay Simon, May 2021 DSH program graduate, with advisor, Dr. Rachel Farr (L to R: Rachel Farr, Kay Simon).