

Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC)
Guidelines
(Departmental Policy last revised January, 2004)

Organization and Authority

This committee is an extension of the responsibility and authority of the Director of Graduate Studies. The Graduate Student Advisory Committee consists of four faculty members, one from each area. Each faculty member will have one vote. The Chairperson of the Department, in consultation with the Director of Graduate Studies, will select the faculty representatives. The primary responsibilities of this committee are restricted to the academic standing of the students. Problems involving unethical behavior, cheating, drugs, etc., represent problems beyond the scope of this committee, although students may appeal termination decisions arising from such problems to the committee. All decisions of the committee require a simple majority vote of the full committee; impasses will be resolved by the Director of Graduate Studies. The decisions of the committee are binding, subject only to: (1) veto by the Graduate Faculty of the Department (by a simple majority of those voting), or (2) joint veto by the Director of Graduate Studies and the Department Chairperson.

Student Evaluations

During the first two years of graduate training, or its equivalent, each student will be evaluated once a year by all faculty members within the student's area of specialization (Clinical, Behavioral and Neural Studies, Cognitive and Developmental Studies, Social). Furthermore, the student should receive written feedback reflecting the major assets and limitations of the students and any other major points relevant to the student's standing in their program. It would also be desirable for each faculty member to meet with his/her students to discuss the student's evaluations.

Student Grade Point Average

A student is automatically subject to dismissal from the program if his/her cumulative GPA falls below 3.0 after the equivalent of one year of graduate studies, (18 hours of graduate credit).

"C" Grades

A student is subject to dismissal from the program if:

- a. he/she accumulates two "C's" in his academic work within the Psychology Department. In the event that a student earns a grade of "C" in an area outside the Psychology Department (i.e., Med School, etc.) the number of "C's" should be extended to three.

- b. a “C” grade in a course, specifically required by the Department or the student’s area of specialization is not cleared the next time the course is offered. A student who receives a “C” grade in a required course must demonstrate proficiency at the “B” level by taking a bypass exam, retaking the course next semester the course is offered, or through arrangements agreed to jointly by the student and instructor who issued the grade.

Incomplete Grades

Students will automatically be prevented from registering for additional coursework under the following conditions:

- a. An “I” grade is not completed one semester after it is issued. (Summer counts as a Semester.)
- b. A “C” in a required course is not cleared up the next semester the course is offered.

As soon as any of these requirements are completed satisfactorily the students may continue registering for new work in their training programs.

Masters Research

In order to complete the steps toward the Ph.D. in a reasonable amount of time, it is important that students complete the masters degree before the start of the students third year. Departmental policy regarding financial support for students is an added reason for speedy completion of the masters degree. Students beyond their fourth year of graduate study are considered very low priority for funding through the department. Any delay past the recommended guideline allows the student less than two years to complete the major hurdles of qualifying exams and dissertation research if the student realistically expects to receive departmental financial support throughout his or her graduate career. (A delay in completion of the masters can be particularly problematic since qualifying exams may not be taken until the masters degree is completed.) Each step toward the masters must be noted in the personal file by the student.

Committee and Topic. By the end of the student’s first year, the student’s personal file should indicate the composition of the masters committee and the topic of the masters research. Otherwise, the student will be sent a letter of reprimand and warning by the chair of GSAC.

Proposal. By the end of the student’s third semester (typically Fall semester, second year), the student’s personal file should show that a proposal has been accepted by the student’s committee. Otherwise, the student and the student’s thesis advisor must meet with the GSAC to discuss the delay, if requested to do so by GSAC.

Orals. By the end of the student's fifth semester (typically Fall semester, third year), the student's personal file should show that the student has completed the thesis. If the thesis has not been completed by the start of the student's sixth semester, the student is subject to not being allowed to register for any coursework (other than master's credit) or attend or audit any classes until the thesis is completed upon review by GSAC. Students who anticipate completing their thesis by the end of the fifth semester may register in advance, but if the thesis is not completed then the classes must be dropped and the student cannot attend or audit these classes until the thesis is completed. If the student has still not completed the thesis by the start of the student's fourth year, the student is subject to being dropped from the program upon review by GSAC. "Completion" is defined as obtaining the signature of approval on the thesis by the Chair of the Committee and by the Director of Graduate Studies. The "start" and "end" of a semester are defined in all cases as the first and last day of classes, respectively.

Students entering the program with an uncompleted thesis from another university are subject to these same deadlines (e.g., the student must provide the same information in their personal file and are subject to dismissal from the Psychology Department if they fail to complete their thesis by the start of their fourth year). Each program area has the option, however, of imposing more stringent deadlines in consideration of the progress completed prior to entering the Psychology Department. The program, however, should inform applicants in advance and in writing of their particular thesis requirements.

(Note – see revised policy on last page of this handout)

It is advised that GSAC meet separately with the student and his/her advisor when both have been requested to appear before GSAC. It is also advised that if this advisor is a member of GSAC, that he or she not be involved in the GSAC decisions with respect to this student.

Appeals Procedures

Students may appeal any decision of the GSAC. Students have the option of having a student representative from their area involved in their appeal. All students receiving official recommendations from the GSAC will be informed of the appeals procedures available to them.

Students appealing committee decisions should initially submit a written appeal outlining relevant arguments and extenuating circumstances involved in their appeal. Students are encouraged to submit appeals any time such information is relevant to committee decisions in their view.

Students may also appeal academic disputes to the Ombudsman.

The GSAC is responsible for keeping records reflecting the number of pro and con votes on all decisions as well as written appeals prepared by students.

Students' Personal Files

Each student is responsible for maintaining a personal file. This file will be kept in room 116. Each semester, the student should indicate which courses are being taken. At the end of the semester, the student should indicate the grades received in all courses and should compute both a semester grade point average and a cumulative grade point average. Degree progress and outcome of qualifying exams should be noted immediately on the Progress Checklist in the personal file. It is important that the personal file be kept up-to-date since GSAC decisions are based upon the information contained in this file.

Summary of GSAC Policies

Semester (End)	Deadline	Action if Deadline Missed
2 nd	Form thesis committee	Letter of reprimand
3 rd	Write thesis proposal	Meet with GSAC
5 th	Complete thesis	No registration
6 th	Complete thesis	Dismissal
Any semester	Two or more "C's"	Dismissal
	Cumulative GPA below 3.0	Dismissal
	"I" grade after one semester	No registration
	"C" grade after next semester course is offered in required course	No registration

Departmental Course Requirements

The Department of Psychology identifies certain categories of requirements for all of its graduate students, categories which have been approved by the faculty as a whole. These categories include: (a) psychological foundations—history and systems of psychology, statistics, and research design; (b) breadth in the discipline of psychology—these vary by program area, but are specified as a departmental requirement of two psychology proseminars outside the graduate student's area excluding psychological foundations (the breadth requirement for students in the Cognitive and Developmental Studies area may be satisfied by taking two proseminars outside that area or by taking three Cognitive and Developmental Studies proseminars and one proseminar outside that area); and (c) courses which have been identified by program areas as required for students specializing in those programs. Approval and final authority for all three categories of requirements rest with the departmental faculty.

While the model underlying these kinds of requirements is one of proseminar courses taught at the University of Kentucky, the Department desires to recognize alternative, equivalent procedures for satisfying the requirements outlined above. These alternatives are: (a) credit for prior graduate work; (b) content area examinations; and (c) course bypass examinations.

Credit for Previous Work. An applicant to the Graduate Program of the Department of Psychology or an enrolled graduate student in the Department of Psychology may petition for exemption from proseminars in any of the three categories of requirements, offering as a basis for this exemption work previously done in a recognized graduate program at another institution or in another program at the University of Kentucky. This petition for exemption should be presented to the graduate program in which the student intends to enroll or is enrolled. The graduate program area in consultation with the student should come to a recommendation to be made to the proper Departmental committee for judgment as to whether the course (s) would satisfy the indicated requirements.

The departmental committee with jurisdiction over the decision to recognize previous graduate work as meeting a requirement is the Graduate Student Advisory Committee in the case of students already enrolled in the Department. In the case of students who are accepted by but not yet enrolled in the Department the decision rests with the Admissions and Award Committee. In all cases a majority of voting members on the committee will determine the result. Appeals will be resolved by the joint decision of the Director of Graduate Studies and Chairperson of the Department. Further appeals may be carried to the Departmental faculty.

If the area in question is one of program specialization, the decision as to whether the student has met a requirement by previous work is entirely in the hands of the program area.

It is the intent of this route for satisfying departmental requirements that the student has studied an area in psychology in some depth while not necessarily covering the specific content of one of our graduate proseminars. While a matter of judgment, proper depth for a subarea will be comparable to or greater than that provided in department proseminars. Thus, a student who has had a general course with a broad but necessarily superficial coverage of a number of areas of psychology likely will not be able to justifiably claim sufficient depth in any subarea to meet breadth or foundations requirements.

In the case of previous course or courses not represented by any proseminar in our graduate program, the appropriate departmental committee will consult with graduate program areas for a reasonable determination as to whether or not the area specified in the petition satisfactorily meets the foundations or breadth requirements in part or whole. For example, a student may wish to submit previous work done in a graduate level proseminar or seminar in anthropological psychology. While the Department of Psychology does not have an equivalent proseminar, it might be argued that such a graduate level experience provides sufficient coverage to meet the intent of the breadth requirements of the Department. The student may petition to satisfy some or all of the breadth requirements by such previous courses.

It is the responsibility of the petitioner to provide the graduate program area adequate material upon which to base the judgment about exemptions. This material would normally include any text used in the course, any syllabus, test materials, papers written by the student for the course, notes taken during the course, papers written by other students forming the basis of course discussion, and the like. It is the responsibility of the petitioner to organize this material and present it to the Director of the graduate program area in which the student is enrolled or to which he or she is applying.

Any student who has been accepted by the Department or who is currently enrolled may apply for exemption from proseminars on the basis of previous work. Under normal circumstances petitions from applicants to the department (not yet accepted) will not be reviewed. Under the exceptional circumstances when such a petition is evaluated, the Chairperson of the Admissions and Awards Committee will notify in writing the student's program area prior to May 1, so that a decision might be made before May 15.

Content area examinations. Content area examinations for subdisciplines of psychology represented on the departmental faculty may be requested by graduate students enrolled in the program as an alternative to the proseminars. To request a content area examination a student should consult with his or her graduate program area, after which a request should be made to the program area responsible for the subdiscipline in question if the exam is to meet a breadth requirement, or to the Director of Graduate Studies in the case of a foundations requirement. That program area of the Director of Graduate Studies would then designate two or more faculty to be responsible for preparing a content area examination. The petitioner should feel free to consult with those faculty concerning coverage and related matters associated with the examination. The faculty designated will be responsible for the construction, administration, and grading of the exam. They will communicate the results of the examination to the student, to the graduate program area, and to the Director of Graduate Studies.

The exam will be graded by letter grade on the scale of grades presently used in graduate courses. As is the case with other required courses, a student is expected to earn a grade of "B" or better on the examination. Grades of less than a "B" require the student to re-take the examination or satisfy the requirement by an alternative route. Failing to earn a grade of "B" or better on re-taking a content area examination is equivalent to a failure to meet the requirement. A student who fails a content area examination may elect to take the proseminar in that area or take the bypass exam in lieu of repeating the content area examination.

Content area examinations requested by a student will be negotiated as to time of administration and subject matter with faculty responsible for the administration of those exams. In no case should a student anticipate taking such an exam between May 1 and August 15. Furthermore, considerable notice should be given by the student of his or her intent to take an exam if a decision to enroll or not in a given graduate course depends on the consequences of that examination. Normally content area examinations would be expected to be given the week prior to the beginning of each semester, but may be

administered at other times when mutually agreeable to the petitioner and faculty persons involved.

It should be carefully noted that intent of the content area examination is not to test over specific coverage of a graduate proseminar. These exams apply rather to a subdiscipline and not to the possibly idiosyncratic character of a single course.

Bypass examinations. University regulations provide any student the opportunity to request a bypass examination in any University course. (The University catalogues refer to these exams as Special Departmental Examinations.) Any student wishing to take a bypass examination in a proseminar course should obtain the appropriate forms from the departmental office. The procedure then entails getting the signature of the instructor of the course and the Chairperson of the Department, arranging a time to take the exam, and having the instructor who administers the exam notify the Registrar of the outcome of the exam along with a grade.

G.S.A.C. Guidelines

	Suggested	Deadline	Action
<u>Year 1</u>			
By end of Fall Semester			
By end of Spring Semester	Thesis Committee	Thesis Committee	Letter of reprimand
<u>Year 2</u>			
By end of Fall Semester	Thesis Proposal	Thesis Proposal	Meet with G.S.A.C.
By end of Spring Semester	Thesis Orals		
<u>Year 3</u>			
By end of Fall Semester	Qualifying exams	Thesis orals	No registration
By end of Spring Semester	Dissertation proposal	Thesis orals	Dismissal
<u>Year 4</u>			
By end of Spring Semester			
By end of Fall Semester	Dissertation orals		
<u>Any Time</u>			
		"T" grade after one semester	No registration
		2 or more "C's"	Dismissal
		C.G.P.A. <3.0	Dismissal

PROCEDURES FOR EVALUATING THESES
COMPLETED AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS
IN LIEU OF THESIS COMPLETED IN PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT AT UK
11/10/2003

Students admitted to the graduate training programs in Clinical or Experimental Psychology who have completed an empirical thesis on an appropriate topic at another institution may have the requirement for completion of a master's thesis in the department waived through the following process:

1. The student should notify, in writing, his or her assigned academic advisor as well as the head of the appropriate area that he or she desires to have the requirement for completion of a thesis in the graduate program in psychology waived.
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. Students matriculating in the department who have not yet defended the thesis at the outside institution have one year from the start of classes in the graduate program at U.K. to exercise this option.
3. The thesis will be reviewed by the student's assigned academic advisor as well as one other faculty member chosen in consultation with the area head. These two reviewers will render an opinion, in writing, to the head of the area regarding the acceptability of the outside thesis as a substitute for completion of a thesis at U.K. In the event of a disagreement between the two readers, the area head will appoint a third reader as a "tie-breaker".
4. If the readers of the thesis judge the thesis acceptable as a substitute for one completed in the graduate program at U.K., the area head will write a letter to this effect to the Director of Graduate Studies as well as the Chair of the Graduate Student Advisory Committee with a copy placed in the student's file.
5. If the readers determine that the thesis is not acceptable as a substitute for a thesis completed at U.K., the area head must also notify the DGS and Chair of GSAC to this effect. In the case of this outcome, the student may be held to the usual deadlines for completion of a thesis at the discretion of GSAC. GSAC will notify the student of its decision in this regard in a timely fashion.
6. Students who submit a thesis as a substitute but have it rejected by the readers may appeal the decision to GSAC, which will have final discretion in the matter.