



Social Area Graduate Student Handbook

University of Kentucky Department of Psychology, September 2018

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Introduction

This handbook details expectations for you in the Social Area of the Department of Psychology. 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.

Coursework

Course Requirements:

- PSY 624 (*Social Psychology Proseminar*)
- Any two proseminars offered by the Department of Psychology
- PSY 610 (*Psychometrics*)
- PSY 611 (*Psychological Research*)

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).

Sample Schedule of Student Coursework			
		Content Courses	Research Courses
Year one	Fall	PSY 610; PSY 624	PSY 790
	Spring	PSY 611; Proseminar*	PSY 790
Year two	Fall	Proseminar*	PSY 790
	Spring	Proseminar*	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

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. See *Sample Schedule of Student Coursework* for an example of possible coursework per semester.

*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 that your grade for these courses is assigned by your advisor.

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

You are expected to take any advanced topical seminars in Social Psychology, and are encouraged to take any advanced statistics courses offered by the Department of Psychology.

- Are required courses taken in a specific time frame?

Your required classes must be taken *prior to*, or *concurrently*, with your qualifying exam. Following the completion of required course work, you must maintain full-time status through enrollment in PSY 767.

- How important is course work?

Course work is a necessary but decidedly *less* important component (compared to research) of graduate work.

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., statistics) and/or research (e.g., research experience in another discipline or professional experience (e.g., teaching, business)). The selection of an appropriate allied area project will be made by you in consultation with your advisor. Approval of your allied area project will be made by the Social Area 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 graduate career.

Research

The area has two formalized requirements that are designed to train you in conducting research, the Master's thesis and Ph.D. Dissertation. However, it is expected that you will be involved in research each semester. Therefore, you should be in constant contact with your advisor and other faculty you are conducting research with to discuss the research you have in progress and what specific goals you wish to set for each research project.

Supervision

Supervision occurs on three levels including your primary faculty advisor, faculty advisory committees, and the entire Social Area 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 faculty within the area, but faculty from other units, and in some case from other institutions, can also 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) and involve you reviewing your progress over the past semester and formulating goals for the upcoming semester. However, you should feel free to schedule a meeting 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 social area, 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. Second, it is your responsibility to contact the Graduate Secretary in Kastle Hall, 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 Graduate Secretary in Kastle Hall at least six weeks prior to your planned defense date.** Third, it is your responsibility to reserve a room for your defense (typically in a room in Kastle Hall that has a calendar on the door). Finally, if you must remove or add a committee member you need to fill out a form available [here](#).

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 major professor) 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 (see below) 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 Graduate Secretary in Kastle Hall at least ten weeks prior to your planned defense date.**

Dissertation Advisory Committee (Following Quals)

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 their dissertation evaluated by their committee. 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.

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

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 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 to other committee members. The basic rule of thumb 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 can be found [here](#). Additionally, you should also note the Graduate School's required format for theses and dissertations is not APA style. See formatting instructions [here](#).

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. As noted above, discussions will determine how long you will have to complete preparations to take the written and oral components of the examination. This examination will contain a written component followed by an oral component. 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 Social Area expects you to defend quals by the end of the first semester of their third 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 the proseminar and other advanced seminars in social psychology. You should begin intensive preparation for quals approximately three months prior to taking them. All required classes must be taken *prior* to, or *concurrently*, with your qualifying exam.

Format. Beginning in Fall 2017, you will select one of two options for quals.

Option #One (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 Social Psychology, (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.

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 social psychology not covered in the written portion. An official evaluation of the overall quals performance occur at the end of the Orals meeting, and the Orals meeting will produce a binding and final decision from the committee based on the quality of the written answers and your

performance at the oral examination. At this time, the committee members will sign the graduate school card used to report the outcome of the exam.

Option #Two (Review Paper)

In this format, the written portion of quals consists of a review paper that bridges multiple areas of social psychological research. The review paper has 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 social psychology 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.

Beyond the review paper, you will also prepare a thorough syllabus that they could use in an undergraduate social psychology course. This will include selecting a desired textbook, developing learning objectives, implementing effective measures of assessing student progress, and including a comprehensive strategy for how to facilitate student success. You will also develop and be prepared to give two in-class lectures on topics outside of your research interests.

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 paper, similar to the peer review process. This portion of the oral exam will last no longer than 60 minutes. In the second part, you will provide a short (15 min) presentation of their social psychology syllabus and proposed in-class lectures. In the presentation, you will discuss the specific process you used to select a desired textbook, develop learning objectives, implement effective measures of assessing student progress, establish a comprehensive strategy for how to facilitate student success, and how their in-class lectures helped meet followed from their course design. This may also include a discussion of how you used scholarship related to the teaching of psychology in their course design. You will then answer questions following up on their syllabus, course design, and proposed in-class lectures. The second portion of the oral exam will last no longer than 60 minutes.

An official evaluation of the overall quals performance occurs at the end of the Orals meeting, and the Orals meeting will produce a binding and final decision from the Advisory Committee based on the quality of the written portion and your performance at the oral examination. At this time, the committee members will sign the graduate school card used to report the outcome of the exam.

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 function, 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 course work 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. More information about this certificate [here](#).

Transferring Degree/Credits from Other Institutions

If you are admitted to the graduate training programs in Experimental Psychology and have completed an empirical thesis on an appropriate topic at another institution, you may have the requirement for completion of a master's thesis in the department waived through the following process:

1. You should notify, in writing, your assigned academic advisor as well as the coordinator of the appropriate area that they desire 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. If you have matriculated in the department but have not yet defended you, you thesis at the outside institution 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 Director of the Experimental Program. These two reviewers will render an opinion, in writing, to the coordinator of the area 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 area coordinator 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 UK, the Director of the Experimental Program 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 the your file.
5. If the readers determine that the thesis is not acceptable as a substitute for a thesis completed at U.K., the Director of the Experimental Program. 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 Director of Graduate Studies for approval. Please note that we have found, however, that transfer students nonetheless benefit from repeating the statistics sequence and the Social Proseminar (PSY 624).

Recommended Timetable of Progress

Master’s Thesis

The end of the fourth semester in the program is the goal for the completion of the Master’s thesis. According to GSAC regulations, if the thesis is not completed by the start of classes in the sixth semester in the program, you may have to meet with GSAC and could be subject to dismissal from the program.

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
	<i>Spring</i>	Form Master’s Advisory Committee
Year two	<i>Fall</i>	Propose Master’s thesis & begin research
	<i>Spring</i>	Defend Master’s thesis; form Qualification Examination Advisory Committee
Year three	<i>Fall</i>	Pass Qualifying Examination
	<i>Spring</i>	Research
Year four	<i>Fall</i>	Research
	<i>Spring</i>	Form Dissertation Advisory Committee. Dissertation Proposed
Year five	<i>Fall</i>	Dissertation research; start job search/post doc search
	<i>Spring</i>	Defend Dissertation

Note: 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 five years may be requested for a total of ten years. All requests should be initiated by the Director of Graduate Studies 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. All requests should be initiated by the Director of Graduate Studies and must include a recommendation on whether or not a retake of the qualifying examination should be a requirement of the extension. Failure to complete all degree requirements within ten 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 seeks readmission to the doctoral program.

Annual Evaluation of Progress

You will be evaluated by Social Area faculty at the end of each academic year. You will submit a statement of their accomplishments during the year and those 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, 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, Social Area Coordinator, and Director of the Experimental. You are encouraged to meet with the Social Area Coordinator and your advisor following receipt of this letter.

Note that in cases where the advisory committee rates either quality of performance or rate of progress to be inadequate, the Social Area faculty may place you on academic probation. When placed on probation, the Social Area faculty will recommend a course of action that will allow you to set goals for improvement. You will receive a letter from the Social Area 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 Social Area Coordinator to discuss the nature of the problem and the work needed for improvement. Probation periods will not normally extend beyond one year.

Gunto-Berger Outstanding Social Psychology Graduate Student Award

Each year the Social Area awards one student with the Gunto-Berger Outstanding Social Psychology Graduate Student Award. This 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. Graduate students who wish to be considered for this award fill out an application by April 1. The Social Area faculty review the applications, and then vote on a winner based on the accomplishments of each student with regard to research (70%), teaching (20%), and service (10%). The winner of the award is announced at the annual Psychology Day end-of-semester event in late April. In addition to having their name engraved on a plaque in Kastle Hall, the winner receives a framed certificate and monetary award.

Brown Bag & Area/Departmental Activities

In a small area like ours, active 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. For example, The Social Area has a weekly “Brown Bag” meeting to discuss research, teaching, and professional issues. A graduate student coordinates the planning and running of these meeting in consultation with the Social Area Coordinator. This coordination including arranging the schedule, contacting potential attendees, and helping to coordinate the visits of external speakers. You are required to attend these meetings, and present during Brown Bag or lead a discussion during this meeting at least once a year. However, students are strongly encouraged to present more than once in order to take advantage of this opportunity to present in public. The duration, format, and content of your presentation may vary.

Finally, we expect you to (a) attend departmental colloquia, (b) take part in departmental social gatherings and activities, and (c) consider serving as a graduate student representative to faculty meetings and departmental committees (e.g., faculty search committees, teaching-related committees).

Closing Thoughts

We hope this supplement has been helpful to you. Our goals are to inspire you to reach your highest potential and to fulfill our responsibility as faculty by giving you the best training possible. We believe this can best be accomplished by creating high expectations and setting high standards. As always, we welcome your feedback on any of the issues described herein, and we are open to suggestions and innovations.

Our primary goal in the graduate program is to prepare students for teaching or research careers. We set high standards for our students, but 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.