

PSYCHOLOGY, PH.D.

The Department of Psychology houses a PhD program with an Area in Clinical Psychology and an Area in Experimental Psychology. Each Area has specific Subareas. In Clinical Psychology the Subareas are: Child, Health, Geropsychology and Psychology Law. In Experimental Psychology the Subareas are: Cognitive, Developmental, and Social psychology. Our Psychology program focus on developing skilled researchers and college-level teachers. The Clinical Psychology area also focuses on developing skilled practitioners. Coursework and training are in person; this is not an online program.

The basic philosophy of the Department of Psychology is to promote independent scholarship and to ensure competence in the fundamental areas of psychology and the specific subareas offered. The department trains psychologists who are scientists and scientist-practitioners and, in so doing, provides broad research training, substantive academic areas of study, teaching opportunities, and applied experience.

Admissions

The deadline for applications to the Psychology Ph.D. program is November 15. Interviews occur during January and February, and admissions offers are made by March/April of each year.

In addition to the minimum Graduate School admission requirements, to be considered for regular admission an application must include:

Documents

- Applicants must submit a personal statement under "Statement of Purpose ." in the application system. Personal statements should speak to the applicant's preparation for graduate study, writing, and quantitative skills, and, if relevant, how students have handled past challenges. We are also interested in how students' cultural, ethnic, or personal backgrounds will bring a unique and diverse perspective to the graduate program. Please also include the names of 1-3 potential faculty mentors within the program that you are applying to (i.e., Clinical or Experimental (Cognitive, Developmental or Social Psychology)) and why you want to work with the faculty member(s). To find out if faculty members are planning to take students, please visit the department directory, and use the Accepting Students filter in the left-hand sidebar. There is no required length or format for the personal statement but see guidance here on our web page.
- Three letters of recommendation are required. These should be written by professors or supervisors who are familiar with your academic ability and career aspirations. Letters should speak to applicants' writing skills, quantitative skills, ability to handle challenges, and potential to conduct high-quality empirical research. Letters must be received by December 1 to ensure full consideration. Should your letter writers have problems submitting letters through the application portal, please contact the program assistant, Mary Beth Hubbard.
- CV/Résumé.
- We also encourage applicants to submit other writing samples and syllabi from statistics or research methods courses that they have taken. These latter documents can be added under the "Portfolio" section of the graduate school application.

Our program has eliminated the GRE General Test for admission. We will NOT consider GRE scores if submitted. Applicants should not submit their GRE scores through ETS nor report their scores in the application portal or on their CVs or personal statements. If GRE scores are submitted, these scores will not be considered when the application

is reviewed. However, applicants may still consider taking the GRE because external fellowships from other institutions (i.e., outside of the University of Alabama) may require scores for future applications.

Prerequisites and Minimum Requirements

- Undergraduate coursework in general psychology, statistics, and research methods is typically required for admission. Other desirable undergraduate courses include developmental psychology, physiological psychology, social psychology, abnormal psychology, cognition, learning, sensation and perception, history and systems, mathematics, and natural science.
- The minimum GPA required for regular admission is 3.0. However, successful applicants typically exceed this minimum.

Area of focus, sub-area of focus, and the names of potential faculty mentors

- For "area of focus" in the application, select either the Clinical or Experimental area
- For "sub-area of focus" in the application select one of the following sub-areas
 - Clinical: Child, Health, Geropsychology, or Psychology & Law
 - Experimental: Cognitive, Developmental, or Social
- Once you have identified potential mentors, please also add these mentors as "contacts" when completing your graduate school application.

See the Admission Criteria section of this catalog for more information.

Curricular Requirements

Students earn the MA degree en route to the PhD, and they are required to follow Plan I.

The student's Plan of Study must be approved by the department and the Graduate School by the time the student completes 30 graduate semester hours of UA and/or transfer course work; otherwise, a hold may be placed on future registration. The minimum number of credit hours required for the PhD in psychology varies by concentration. All graduate students complete the General Psychology Core, the Research Skills Core, a master's thesis and a doctoral dissertation. In addition, clinical students complete the Clinical Core and a year-long clinical internship. Students in each of the clinical and experimental focused areas of study also complete advanced coursework in their area of study. More detailed information is available on the department website.

Code and Title	Hours
General Psychology Core	
Select three of the following: ^{1,2}	9
PY 650 Cognition and Learning	
PY 629 Biological Bases of Behavior	
PY 652 Affect & Lifespan Dev. Psych	
PY 672 Adv Social Psychology	
Research Skills Core	
PY 607 Research Methods Psych	3
PY 602 Advanced Statistics I	3
PY 603 Advanced Statistics II	3
Select one of the following:	3
PY 615 Structural Equation Modeling	

PY 614	Categorical Data Analysis	
PY 616	Multilevel Modeling	
PY 618	Statistical Consulting	
Advanced Coursework as Applicable ^{1,2}		12
PY 695	Teaching of Psychology	3
Advanced Coursework in Student's Focused Area of Study		
Clinical Core (required for clinical only)		
Thesis and Dissertation Hours		
PY 599	Thesis Research	6
PY 699	Dissertation Research	18
Total Hours		60

Footnotes

¹ Some focused areas of study require additional or specific courses.

² See details at the Psychology website or contact the Graduate Director.

Transfer Credit

Graduate School-wide Transfer Policies

Students who wish to transfer previous graduate coursework from another institution must meet briefly with the Graduate Program Assistant to initiate the approval process. Coursework to be transferred must have an equivalent in the psychology department. The student must submit syllabi of previous coursework for review by the department faculty members who currently teach the equivalent departmental courses. This process should be completed by the end of the first year of study. For the Ph.D. degree, the Graduate School allows up to 50% of the required coursework (exclusive of dissertation hours) to be transferred from another institution. Only coursework completed within a six-year period prior to beginning the UA psychology graduate program will be considered for transfer under this mechanism. In addition, Graduate School policy allows transfer of credits taken concurrently with enrollment in our department, subject to the same 50% requirement, if approved for the student's Plan of Study. The courses must be from accredited institutions and be taught by their graduate faculty. Credits will only be considered for transfer from institutions in which the student has earned a B average or better on all graduate work attempted.

Approval of a thesis or dissertation completed elsewhere

The Ph.D. program in psychology requires the completion of a master's thesis. If a student has completed a master's thesis or dissertation within the last six years at another institution, s/he may submit it for approval and satisfaction of the thesis requirement. A committee of three faculty members will review the document for content and rigor to determine whether it is similar to what is expected in our program. This committee shall include the student's program director (clinical or experimental), the Director of Graduate Studies, and one other faculty member to be chosen by the first two. Students coming in from another field other than psychology may submit their thesis or dissertation (when applicable) for review; however, for approval, the content must be viewed as within the expected range of psychology theses or dissertations. If a student's document is approved, the thesis requirement for the Ph.D. degree is satisfied. However, the student will not receive thesis credits and will not earn a master's degree in psychology at UA.

Doctoral Plan of Study Requirement

The Doctoral Plan of Study must be filed with the Graduate School no later than the semester during which the student will complete 30

semester hours of UA and/or transfer credit toward the doctoral degree.

If it is not filed, a hold will be placed on the student's registration for the following semester. Completion of this form will be initiated by the Graduate Program Assistant, who will contact students about it. Students should not complete this form on their own. UA Graduate School

Comprehensive Exams

The dissertation preliminary examination consists of the completion of the full dissertation proposal (the "preliminary document") and an oral examination. The student is eligible to take the preliminary examination following completion of the master's thesis and the research skill requirement.

Practicum Experience and Internship Requirements

Practicum and Internships Requirements apply to graduate students in the Clinical Psychology Ph.D. program.

Practicum Experience

Students shall have a copy of Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct and the Psychology Clinic Manual for study and discussion in various seminars and classes. Students are required to abide by the APA Ethical Principles, and they must sign a statement affirming that they have read and will abide by the Standards (see Appendix L). A copy of this signed statement will be kept in the student's clinical program file.

During Year 1, students receive an orientation to the clinic to acquaint them with current clinic and program policies on such issues as record keeping, confidentiality, and room assignments. Training for intakes starts during the spring of Year 1 in Principles of Psychotherapy (PoP) and continues through Summer 1 in PoP Lab. Intake duty begins fall, Year 2, and students serve as the intake person on call on a rotating basis continuing through Summer 2.

Beginning in the fall (Year 2), clinical students take one full year of Basic Practicum in the Psychology Clinic. Students are assigned cases for assessment and intervention and are supervised by clinical faculty each term. The direct contact hour goal for Basic Practicum is approximately 100 hours for the 3-semester sequence. Four to five active clients per week are needed to achieve this level of contact. As appropriate for the needs of the client, students are expected to arrange for termination or transfer of their clients by the end of the summer semester or to continue as the primary therapist into the fall term.

Supervision in the psychotherapy practicum typically involves an individual weekly meeting with one's supervisor(s) and a small group supervision meeting. This latter meeting is helpful for planning for the Spring Case Conference presentation. Instructors vary in their style, emphasizing problem-solving, case formulation, coverage of specific techniques, and discussion of therapeutic issues (e.g., ethics, termination, resistance, specific treatment questions). Most assign didactic materials.

Individual supervision typically involves at least one hour per week during the fall and spring semesters and includes reviewing case files, direct observation (i.e., listening to audio or video recordings or live observation), and additional methods deemed most appropriate by the supervisor. As per APA accreditation guidelines, direct observation via audio, video, or live observation is required at least once per student per evaluation period. For supervisors using audio and video recordings for direct observation, students are expected to regularly record their

sessions. Case review and notetaking is expected of the student prior to supervision.

Although our program does not typically use telesupervision, such an approach may be needed in certain circumstances (e.g., COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021). See appendix K for our program's telesupervision policy.

Students will also present at a Clinical Case Conference during the spring semester. Faculty and other practicum students attend these conferences. Attendance is required for practicum students, supervisors, and designated clinical faculty. Others are invited to attend. A schedule is distributed during the spring semester. Guidelines for case conferences are contained in the Psychology Clinic Manual.

In addition to Basic Practicum, students take an additional 3 or more semester hours of advanced practicum usually within a concentration (specialty) area or an approved practicum in the Clinic. A variety of off-campus placements are also available to clinical students. See Appendix F for additional practicum information.

Clinical Placements

Advanced students (usually 3rd year and beyond) may be afforded an opportunity to work part-time in a clinical setting for remuneration. These paid clinical placements are not meant to provide all or most of the required clinical training. However, they give students an opportunity to receive financial aid while performing some duties of clinical relevance. Students will also be provided access to training facilities as unpaid workers. In some cases, these paid and unpaid clinical placements may also serve as meeting advanced practicum requirements. A partial listing of sources is included in Appendix E. Students taking paid and unpaid placements must register for at least one hour of advanced clinical placement (PY 641), including the summer terms if the placement is 12 months. Students interested in multiple placements/practica MUST discuss this with the DCT and/or Associate DCT. If approved, the DCT and/or Associate DCT will determine the appropriate course registration, and documentation will be placed in the student's program file.

Placement negotiations are made only through the DCT. Placement decisions are made by the DCT, through consultation with the sponsoring agency and the coordinator of the student's specialty area. It is the norm that clinical placements are for a one-year (or 9-month) period. This guideline is in the best training interest of the student, because it maximizes student exposure to a broad range of clinical experiences. Also, limiting placements to one year terms maximizes the number of students provided the opportunity to be placed at particular agencies.

ANY clinical work engaged in by a graduate student, paid or unpaid, must be approved by the DCT and/or Associate DCT and must be supervised by a licensed psychologist. A description of the activities, including a memorandum from the supervisor detailing the supervision arrangement, shall be provided by the student to the DCT and/or Associate DCT for the student's file. This includes any volunteer or paid work done that might be construed as "psychological" in nature. The host agency is expected to provide a professionally sound training setting for the student, which includes adherence to the Standards for Providers of Psychological Services. Students should expect to receive feedback from their supervisors on a regular basis. End of term (fall, spring, summer) feedback is solicited by the Department and becomes a part of the student's clinical program file (see example in Appendix G).

Paid clinical practica do not usually carry a tuition grant as part of the contract. Because of this, the DCT has negotiated a higher salary rate in order to help defray the cost of the tuition the student will have to pay.

Internships

A full-year pre-doctoral clinical internship is required of all students. Unless an exceptional case can be presented, students must intern at APA-accredited training sites (see Appendix M for more details). Although application during the fourth or fifth year is typical, students are eligible to begin applying to internship sites in their third year of residency assuming all core courses will have been completed by the end of that year. Students must have passed the preliminary doctoral examination by October 1 of the year they apply for internship. Furthermore, students must have their initial mini-proposal meeting 8 weeks prior to the October 1st deadline.

Students eligible for internship meet with the DCT and the Associate DCT to receive information about the application process. Extensive information about internship sites is available from the APPIC website: <http://www.appic.org>.

A list of recent internship sites is located on our program website. The Department solicits feedback from internship programs at 6 months and at the end of training. The internship training director typically provides a detailed letter regarding the intern's progress, strengths, and weaknesses. A copy of this evaluation is maintained in the student's clinical file.

Students MUST have completed the internship before the University will confer the degree. The Graduate School will provide a "Completion of Degree" if needed in order for the student to be eligible for a post-doc or employment before the degree is conferred.

**The department also requires that the student submit a CD containing appropriately labeled dissertation raw data and final dissertation prior to being cleared by the department for graduation. The student must present a bound copy of the dissertation to his or her dissertation chair(s) unless the chair(s) inform the student that a bound copy is not required.

Admissions to Candidacy Requirements

The Admission to Candidacy form will be initiated by the graduate program assistant after the successful writing of the dissertation prospectus and oral presentation meeting. The Plan of Study will be attached.

Once a student has begun to enroll in dissertation hours (PY699) and/or has met the requirements for admission to candidacy, s/he must be enrolled continuously, for 3 credit hours or more each fall and spring semester, until the final dissertation is submitted to the Graduate School. Registration during the summer term (3-hour minimum) is expected if the student is using university and/or faculty resources. If the final dissertation is submitted to the Graduate School in the same semester in which it is defended, no further dissertation hours are necessary, including the semester in which the student graduates. However, if the dissertation is submitted to the Graduate School after the semester ends, the student must register for either 1 or 3 additional dissertation hours in the following semester, depending on when the document is submitted. This includes registering for summer term if graduation will be in August. For questions about this, please contact the Graduate Program Assistant.

Continuous Enrollment Policy

See Graduate School policies

The Department does not admit part-time students. The typical load is considered to be 12 hours. A 9-hour maximum is sometimes imposed on students with certain graduate fellowships, particularly graduate research fellowships (i.e., thesis and dissertation fellowships). Although it is most wise to remain in full-time residence (i.e., maintain a residence in

Tuscaloosa, be on the University campus at least several times per week, have regular, face-to-face contact with the dissertation chair) until after successfully defending the dissertation, students must remain in full-time residence until after successful completion of their preliminary exam.

Enrollment for dissertation credit must be continuous once the dissertation project is begun. This means that once a student has passed his/her prelims, he/she must register for a minimum of 3 dissertation hours during subsequent fall and spring semesters, including the internship year until the dissertation has been successfully defended and submitted to the Graduate School. See the Graduate Catalog policy on "Final Semester Dissertation Minimum Registration..." to determine dissertation research hour registration requirements once the dissertation has been submitted to the Graduate School. An exception regarding registration in the final semester is granted to those students on internship whose dissertation has been approved by the Graduate School prior to the final semester. Specific guidelines for the number of hours in relation to the amount of anticipated work are detailed in the Graduate Catalog.

Dissertation Requirements

The dissertation is the culmination of the doctoral program in psychology. The dissertation serves two major purposes. First, it is an educational experience that demonstrates the ability to address a major scholarly problem relevant to the field of psychology using research methods appropriate to the field. Second, the dissertation is a piece of original research that makes a contribution to existing knowledge. The quality of the dissertation should be equivalent to a study judged acceptable for publication in an APA, APS, or other journal widely recognized for its publication standards. The subject matter is limited only by the availability of faculty competent to direct the project. Ordinarily, dissertation studies fall into the categories of experimental research, correlational research, or a combination of experimental and correlational research. Dissertations that are research reviews, theoretical papers, or historical papers may also be acceptable, provided that the dissertation committee approves the student's specific plan.

Forming the Dissertation Committee

The doctoral student should form the dissertation committee and begin the development of the doctoral project as early as possible after completing the Master's thesis, or by the spring semester of the third year of graduate study, whichever occurs later (this may be earlier for students coming in with a master's degree). The dissertation committee will be composed of at least five members. The student shall select the dissertation director (chair); two committee members from the Psychology Department; and one committee member from outside the Psychology Department. The outside committee member is usually a full, associate, or temporary graduate faculty member in a department at the university. However, the student may choose someone from inside or outside the university who is not currently a graduate faculty member, under two conditions. First, that person must have a terminal degree in his/her field. Second, s/he must be appointed to the temporary graduate faculty before the mini-proposal meeting. Temporary graduate faculty appointments are made only twice a year, in October and March, so plan accordingly. The Director of Graduate Studies will provide information to the student's outside member about the various meetings and lengths of meetings that are expected.

When the student has agreements from these individuals to serve on his/her committee, s/he should inform the Director of Graduate Studies of these members and the topic, and request the final committee member.

The final committee member will be selected by the Director of Graduate Studies on the basis of expertise that complements the project and balance of faculty workloads.

The dissertation committee can be expanded beyond five members with the addition of faculty from other departments, additional psychology department faculty, or postdoctoral fellows. To avoid potential conflict of interest, faculty who are married generally should not serve as members of the same dissertation committee. However, it is acceptable for married faculty to co-chair a dissertation committee if they are engaging in collaborative research related to the dissertation topic. (There can be only one chair; the other may be a co-chair.) In this case, it is recommended (though not required) that the student add a sixth committee member from within the department.

The dissertation committee can be expanded beyond five members with the addition of faculty from other departments, additional psychology department faculty, or postdoctoral fellows. To avoid potential conflict of interest, faculty who are married generally should not serve as members of the same dissertation committee. However, it is acceptable for married faculty to co-chair a dissertation committee if they are engaging in collaborative research related to the dissertation topic. In this case, it is recommended (though not required) that the student add a sixth committee member from within the department.

It should be noted that only Full members of the graduate faculty may chair dissertation committees. Associate members and Temporary members of the graduate faculty may co-chair a dissertation, but the Chair must be a full time member. Full members of the graduate faculty who retire may maintain their status as Full members for three years following retirement. Thereafter, they may be appointed as a Temporary graduate faculty member and, at their discretion, continue to serve on thesis/dissertation committees with no restructuring of these committees necessary (although a committee member who is a Full member of the Graduate Faculty shall be designated as Chair, and the retired member may serve as Co-Chair). If a committee member resigns from UA s/he also may be appointed as a Temporary graduate faculty member and at his/her discretion, continue to serve on the committee as a co-chair. A full faculty member must be assigned as committee Chair. If an "outside" member of a committee becomes a department faculty member, s/he may continue to serve on the committee, but a new outside member must be appointed. When a committee member who retires or resigns elects not to continue to serve on a dissertation committee, s/he shall be replaced through an appointment made by the Director of Graduate Studies in consultation with the student. Once the dissertation committee is formed, a committee member cannot be replaced simply because of difficulty scheduling meetings or because the committee member elects not to meet during the summer.

Proposal

The proposal consists of a written document and an oral proposal meeting. The student is eligible to complete the proposal following the successful completion and submission of the master's thesis and successful completion of the research skill requirement.

Proposal document. Following formation of the committee, the student shall prepare a written prospectus or "mini-proposal" and present it orally to their committee. The purpose of the prospectus is to inform the committee members of a possible plan for the dissertation. The prospectus document must be no longer than 20 pages in the current APA editorial style. A reference list should be included in addition to the text. Appendices are neither required nor expected, but if they are included, they must be included within the 20-page limit. The student shall distribute the prospectus document to committee members at least

5 working days prior to meeting with the committee (working days are days on which UA offices are open), in electronic form and upload it to UA Box (contact the Graduate Program Assistant for assistance). The student should contact the Department Office Assistant to schedule a meeting room if being held in person.

Proposal meeting. One or more 1-hour meetings will be held to discuss the feasibility of the project and make suggestions for improvement. It is the responsibility of the student to schedule the meeting(s) at a time that is suitable to all committee members. These meetings may be scheduled during the summer if all committee members agree to meet during the summer. However, it is the prerogative of faculty members to decline to meet during the summer and thus students are encouraged to schedule the meeting during the fall or spring semester. The clinical program has specific rules on the timing of the prospectus and preliminary examination (see [Clinical Training Manual](#)).

Proposal meeting(s) are working meetings, after which, the committee will determine if the student is admitted to candidacy. The student will give an informal 5-10 minute presentation of his/her proposal followed by open discussion. The number of these meetings will be based on the student's and committee's perceived need for them. Providing food/drinks at proposal meetings is prohibited. After the dissertation proposal meeting, the student should complete the Appointment/Change of Doctoral Dissertation Committee Form, accessible here.

Preliminary Examination

The preliminary examination consists of the completion of the full written dissertation proposal (the "preliminary document") and an oral examination. The student is eligible to take the preliminary examination following the successful completion of the dissertation proposal.

Preliminary document. Once the dissertation proposal has been approved by the committee, the student shall prepare the full dissertation proposal (the "preliminary document") using a title page in the format shown at the end of this section of the [Graduate Student Handbook](#). There is no page limit on the preliminary document, but it is expected to be developed substantially beyond the mini-proposal. The writing and copy editing of the document is the responsibility of the student alone. Although committee members are not expected to review portions of the full proposal during its writing, they may be asked their advice at any time on matters related to the dissertation. The dissertation chair has the option of reviewing the completed full proposal before it is distributed to the entire committee. The dissertation chair may point out to the student areas in the proposal that need additional work; however, the intent of such a review is not to provide the student with faculty-written substitutes or additions to the proposal text. When available or as suggested by the dissertation committee in advance, results of pilot studies should be reported in the preliminary document.

The student should notify the Department Administrative Assistant, the Graduate Program Assistant, and the Director of Graduate Studies of the date of the Dissertation Preliminary Examination and the name of the Committee Chair. If the student already has a folder in UA Box Document Upload Thesis and Dissertation, s/he should upload the document to that folder. Otherwise, the Department Administrative will create a folder for the student in UA Box Document Upload Thesis and Dissertation and send an invitation to the student to upload the document there. The same applies for the committee chair and the folder for rubrics. The student should contact the Department Office Assistant to schedule a room for the meeting if being held in person.

Preliminary examination meeting. The student should arrange a 2-hour meeting of his/her dissertation committee for the preliminary examination. The meeting may be scheduled during the fall, spring, or

summer semester. However, it is the prerogative of faculty members to decline to meet during the summer and thus students are encouraged to schedule the meeting during the fall or spring semester. It is the responsibility of the student to find a 2-hour meeting time that is suitable to all committee members, and to communicate the start and end time of the meeting to each committee member (both at the time the meeting is set and a week prior to the meeting). It is advisable to begin scheduling several weeks in advance of the desired meeting date.

The student should upload the document to UA Box at least ten working days prior to the meeting (working days are days on which UA offices are open). Also, at this time, raw data and variable labels should be uploaded to UA Box Upload Thesis and Dissertation. The document and the links to the fillable Rubrics should be emailed to the committee members, and the following information emailed to the Graduate Program Assistant and the Department Administrative Assistant:

- Date of Defense
- Title of Document
- Name and email address of Committee Chair
- Name and email address of Co-chair (if there is one)
- Name and email address of external committee member
- Name(s) and email address(es) of other committee member(s)

During the first week after distribution of the preliminary document, committee members are encouraged to look over the document. If a committee member should decide that the preliminary document is of such low quality that the formal examination is not warranted, s/he will notify the Director of Graduate Studies and student's dissertation chair. In such instances, the committee will be convened without the student to decide whether or not the examination should be held. If the majority decision is against holding the examination, this will be viewed as failing the preliminary examination. Should there be no objection received within one week of the distribution of the dissertation proposal, the examination shall proceed as scheduled.

The preliminary oral examination is conducted by the entire committee. It does not begin until all committee members arrive. Every effort should be made to communicate the start and end time of the meeting well ahead of time so that all committee members will be present for the entire meeting. However, from time to time an emergency arises and a committee member is unable to attend the meeting at the last minute, or must leave the meeting before it is completed. In case of such an emergency, the action to be taken depends on whether the student's committee has 5 or more than 5 committee members.

1. If there are more than 5 members on the student's committee, there is no need to replace the committee member or to take any special action. The 5 remaining members only will cast a vote. For the record, the dissertation chair should communicate with the Director of Graduate Studies about the circumstances under which a committee member was absent for all or part of the meeting and notify the Graduate Program Assistant, so the person will not be included on the Candidacy form when initiated.
2. If there are only the required 5 members on the student's committee, then some action must be taken.
 - If due to an emergency, a committee is unable to attend the meeting at the last minute, and the meeting cannot be rescheduled, the Director of Graduate Studies and the committee chair should appoint an emergency replacement such that there are at least 5 committee members present including the emergency replacement. The Committee Chair should notify the

Graduate Program Assistant (Mary Beth Hubbard, the Department Administrative Assistant (Cindy Apperson) of the change.

- If an emergency causes a committee member to leave the meeting early, the committee must decide whether to (a) reconvene with the full committee to complete the meeting or (b) complete the meeting without the departing committee member and allow him/her to vote. If option (b) is chosen, the committee may decide that the departing committee member will vote before leaving or will vote afterwards, after having been briefed on the content of the remainder of the meeting. The committee's decision may depend on how much of the meeting has been completed before the committee member had to leave, the overall strength of the student's defense, etc. The dissertation chair should communicate with the Director of Graduate Studies about the circumstances of the emergency and the decision of the committee on how to proceed.

Although unusual, it is the prerogative of any additional graduate faculty member in the Department of Psychology to read the dissertation proposal and then to participate and vote in the preliminary examination. It is also the prerogative of the student to invite other graduate students in the Department of Psychology to attend. At the beginning of the preliminary examination, the student is allowed a period of 15-20 minutes to formally present the proposal. During the presentation, committee members should avoid interrupting the student, except for questions of clarification. The student is then examined orally on the document and related topics. The intent is not to examine the student on general areas of psychology unrelated to the dissertation topic; however, it is to be expected that some of the committee members' questions will develop from the student's answers.

Upon completion of the preliminary examination, the student will leave the meeting and the committee will hold a nonbinding, pass-fail vote via the chat or poll feature on Zoom to serve as a starting point for discussion of the student's performance. All committee members, including the dissertation chair, have a vote. After discussion, the committee members shall cast their formal votes via the chat or poll feature on Zoom, jointly considering the suggested criteria (listed at the end of this section of the Graduate Student Handbook) for the written document and the oral presentation. If there are fewer than 2 negative votes, the student passes; if there are 2 or more negative votes, the student fails. The student will then re-enter the meeting to hear the outcome of the vote. If the outcome is "pass," it is not unusual for the committee to make some recommendations for the project and/or the final dissertation document. After a "pass" vote, the committee chair should notify the Graduate Program Assistant and the Department Administrative Assistant.

The student is permitted two attempts at passing the preliminary examination. If a second attempt is necessary, the original committee shall remain intact for the second attempt with one exception: Should the topic of the proposal change substantially, the original committee may elect to disband with a unanimous vote. A new committee would then be formed. However, it should be noted that, once assigned to a student's committee, a faculty member cannot be removed involuntarily, even in cases where the dissertation topic has been changed.

The dissertation chair should collect electronic Oral Exam and Written Document rubrics and upload them to UA Box folder Rubric and Committee Acceptance Form with Vote Upload within 48 hours of the examination. The dissertation chair should notify the Graduate Program Assistant and the Department Administrative Assistant that the student

passed the preliminary exam. The Graduate Program Assistant will initiate the Admission to Candidacy form for committee members to sign.

Conduct of the Dissertation

1. **Use of substitute dissertation researchers.** Normally, the student is expected to collect his or her own data. Any deviation from this policy should be for reasons beyond the convenience of the student and must be approved by the dissertation committee. In considering the use of substitute researchers, the committee should keep in mind that the collection of data is an integral educational component of the dissertation process. In addition, the committee should consider issues such as experimenter bias, ethics, sensitization of participants, and may be well advised in order to strengthen the methodological integrity of the project. Should that be the case, the student should make certain that the substitute receives carefully detailed training and close supervision during the conduct of the project.
2. **Altered topics.** Should the student substantially alter the dissertation topic following the successful completion of the preliminary examination, another full dissertation proposal must be developed and distributed to committee members. In addition, the written proposal must be presented in an oral examination. Although the examination is no longer considered a preliminary examination, the same voting procedures will be followed. In the event of a failure, the student must retake the examination until it is passed.

Final Oral Examination

Two weeks prior to the final defense, students should complete the Public Notice of Dissertation Defense form.

Dissertation document. The copy of the completed dissertation document that is presented by the student to committee members should be final for and electronically distributed. Students should consult the Graduate School website <http://graduate.ua.edu/etd/manual/index.html> for information on required sections, style, and formatting.

The student should notify the Department Administrative Assistant, the Graduate Program Assistant, and the Director of Graduate Studies of the date of the Dissertation Examination and the name of the Committee Chair. If the student already has a folder in UA Box Document Upload Thesis and Dissertation, s/he should upload the document to that folder. Otherwise, the Department Administrative Assistant will create a folder for the student in UA Box Document Upload Thesis and Dissertation and send an invitation to the student to upload the document there. The same applies for the committee chair and the folder for rubrics. At the time the student uploads the document to UA Box Document Upload Thesis and Dissertation, raw data and variable labels should be uploaded to UA Box. Contact the Department Office Assistant to schedule a room for the meeting if it is held in person.

The dissertation must be emailed to committee members at least 10 working days in advance of the final oral examination meeting (working days are days on which UA offices are open). At the time the document is emailed to the committee members, the student should also email links to the fillable Rubrics to the committee members, and email the following information to the Graduate Program Assistant and the Department Administrative Assistant:

- Date of Defense
- Title of Document
- Name and email address of Committee Chair
- Name and email address of Co-chair (if there is one)

- Name and email address of external committee member
- Name(s) and email address(es) of other committee member(s)

Final oral examination meeting. The student should arrange a 2-hour meeting of his/her dissertation committee for the final oral examination. The meeting may be scheduled during the fall, spring, or summer semester. However, it is the prerogative of faculty members to decline to meet during the summer and thus students are encouraged to schedule the meeting during the fall or spring semester. It is the responsibility of the student to find a 2-hour meeting time that is suitable to all committee members. It is advisable to begin scheduling several weeks in advance of the desired meeting date. More information about paperwork needed for thesis and dissertation meetings is included in **Appendix B** and on the department website.

During the first week after distribution of the dissertation document, committee members are encouraged to look over the document. If a committee member should decide that the document is of such low quality that the formal examination is not warranted, s/he will notify the Director of Graduate Studies and the student's dissertation chair. In such instances, the committee will be convened without the student to decide whether or not the examination should be held. If the majority decision is against holding the examination, this will be viewed as failing the final oral examination, and the student will be expected to make improvements and schedule another final oral examination. Should there be no objection received within a week of the distribution of the dissertation, the examination shall proceed as scheduled.

The final oral examination is conducted by the entire committee. It does not begin until all committee members arrive. Every effort should be made to communicate the start and end time of the meeting well ahead of time so that all committee members will be present for the entire meeting. However, from time to time an emergency arises and a committee member is unable to attend the meeting at the last minute, or must leave the meeting before it is completed. In case of such an emergency, the action to be taken depends on whether the student's committee has 5 or more than 5 committee members.

1. If there are more than 5 members on the student's committee, there is no need to replace the committee member or to take any special action. The 5 remaining members only will cast a vote and sign the student's Committee Acceptance Form. For the record, the dissertation chair should communicate with the Director of Graduate Studies about the circumstances under which a committee member was absent for all or part of the meeting and notify the Graduate Program Assistant of the change so the missing member will not be included on the Committee Acceptance form.
2. If there are only the required 5 members on the student's committee then some action must be taken.
 - If due to an emergency a committee member is unable to attend the meeting at the last minute, and the meeting can not be rescheduled, the Director of Graduate Studies and the committee chair should appoint an emergency replacement such that there are at least 5 committee members present including the emergency replacement. If an emergency replacement is appointed, s/he should be directed to the link for the oral exam rubric. The student should file an Appointment/Change of Doctoral Dissertation Committee to reflect the change.
 - If an emergency causes a committee member to leave the meeting early, the committee must decide whether to (a) reconvene with the full committee to complete the meeting or (b) complete the meeting without the departing committee member and allow him/her to vote. If option (b) is chosen, the

committee may decide that the departing committee member will vote before leaving or will vote afterwards, after having been briefed on the content of the remainder of the meeting. The committee's decision may depend on how much of the meeting has been completed before the committee member had to leave, the overall strength of the student's defense, etc. The dissertation chair should communicate with the Director of Graduate Studies about the circumstances of the emergency and the decision of the committee on how to proceed.

Although unusual, it is the prerogative of any additional graduate faculty member in psychology to read the dissertation proposal and then to participate and vote in the preliminary examination. It is also the prerogative of the student to invite other psychology graduate students to attend. At the beginning of the examination, the student is allowed a period of 15-20 minutes to formally present the results of the dissertation project. During the presentation, committee members should avoid interrupting the student except for questions of clarification. The student is then examined orally on the document.

Upon completion of the final oral examination, the student will leave the meeting and the committee will hold a nonbinding, pass-fail vote via the chat or poll feature on Zoom to serve as a starting point for discussion of the student's performance. All participating committee members, including the chairperson, have a vote. After discussion, a formal vote via the chat or poll feature on Zoom is taken, considering jointly the written document (with emphases on the results and discussion sections) and the oral presentation of the student. The committee members will also provide Oral Exam Rubric ratings on each of the criteria listed at the end of this section of the Graduate Handbook. If there are fewer than 2 negative votes, the student passes; if there are 2 or more negative votes, the student fails. After the formal vote, the student will reenter the meeting to hear the outcome of the vote. If the student passes, it is not unusual for the committee to require some changes to the document before it is submitted to the Graduate School. Three attempts at passing are permitted including the first attempt.

Following the final oral defense, the dissertation chair will notify Graduate Program Assistant and Department Administrative Assistant of the final vote. Also, the dissertation chair should collect electronic Oral Exam and Written Document rubrics and upload them to UA Box folder Rubric and Committee Acceptance Form with Vote Upload within 48 hours of the examination.

The student is then responsible for making revisions to the document as suggested by the committee and preparing the document for electronic submission to the Graduate School. Once again, students should consult the Graduate School website for information on required sections, style, and formatting (<http://graduate.ua.edu/etd/manual/index.html>). Completed dissertations must be submitted to the Graduate School in electronic format. More information on electronic theses and dissertation (ETDs) can be found at <http://graduate.ua.edu/etd/index.html>. Once the student has completed revisions and the committee chair has approved those revisions, the student should submit the completed dissertation to the Graduate School in electronic format through ProQuest. S/he should then notify the Graduate Programs Assistant that the document has been submitted; the Graduate Programs Assistant will then initiate the ETD Committee Acceptance form. The signature of the student and committee chair on this form indicates the document is ready to be published in terms of content, form, and style (which includes copy-editing). The copy-editing can be done by the thesis chair or by a professional copy editor.

Note that the Graduate School and the department no longer require bound copies of the completed dissertation.

Electronic Copies of the Dissertation

- **Electronic departmental copy.** The student should also submit an electronic copy of the final corrected dissertation text to the Graduate Program Assistant. This should be in MSWord in a single file, with all formatting intact, submitted on a CD (in the future we hope to be able to accept emailed or uploaded copies). It may also be a good idea to include a PDF version in addition to the MSWord version.
- **Electronic departmental copy of the raw data.** The student should also submit the raw data that were analyzed for the results section of the dissertation. The raw data should be in spreadsheet form such as SPSS or Excel, and should include data labels. They should be submitted to the Graduate Program Assistant on a CD until further notice.
- **Certification of completion of internship.** For students in the clinical program, the Psychology Department requires a letter from the internship supervisor certifying that the student has successfully completed the APA approved internship in good standing. Because the internship is a requirement of the Ph.D. degree, we need this letter to sign off on graduation. At the end of the internship the student should arrange for this letter to be sent to the Director of Clinical Psychology or the Graduate Program Assistant.

Time Limits for Degree Completion Requirements

Each fall, students who are nearing their time limit for completion of the Ph.D. will be notified of this in writing. One copy of this notification is placed in the student's file and another is sent to the Graduate School. Students who are nearing their time limit are encouraged to discuss their plans with the Director of Graduate Studies.

The time limit for completion of a doctoral degree in the Department of Psychology is 9 years after entry for students who enter without a master's degree. This is a Graduate School time limit and includes the internship year for clinical students. After 9 years, the Graduate School automatically drops the student from the program. If this happens, the student may reapply for the program and, if admitted, will have another 9-year period in which to complete the PhD. However, only coursework that was completed within the 6 years before reentry will be counted toward the PhD. Thus, coursework from the first three years of study must be retaken. Further, the student must adhere to the program requirements that are in effect at the time of reentry. Finally, students should be advised that there is no guarantee of being readmitted, and in fact, readmission may be unlikely.

In unusual and compelling cases that are beyond the student's control, the Graduate School allows a student to request a one-time, one-semester extension beyond the 9-year limit. If approved, revalidating of outdated UA or transfer coursework is not required as long as this coursework has been approved previously in the student's Plan of Study (though the Dean of the college can request that a student repeat an outdated course that is especially integral to the student's course of study). If a student who has been granted a one-semester extension does not complete the degree in that semester, s/he will be automatically dropped from the program and must reapply for admission. For more information on Graduate School policy, see the [Graduate Catalog](#) (section 4.11.3) and the policy statement <http://graduate.ua.edu/admin/policy/doctimelimits.html>.

To apply for a one-time, one-semester extension, the student should prepare a written request including (a) a description of the compelling circumstances that caused the delay in degree progress, (b) a description of the current status of the dissertation, and (c) a timeline showing each important remaining step in the completion of the dissertation. This request is submitted to the student's program director (clinical or experimental) for consideration by the program faculty. The program director forwards the program faculty's recommendation to the Director of Graduate Studies, who forwards it to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, who forwards it to the Dean of the Graduate School. The request should be made during the second semester of the 8th year of study. If the one-semester extension is granted, the student must meet deadlines for graduation in the extension semester. For example, if the extension is for fall semester, the student must meet deadlines for December graduation. The last step and date in the timeline should reflect this.

Other considerations. Students should be aware that time spent during an authorized leave of absence or during an internship program counts toward the time limit (i.e., the clock does not stop).

Program-specific Time Limits

In addition to the Graduate School and departmental time limits for completion of the doctoral degree, the experimental program has specific milestone-related time limits. Note that different time limits may apply depending on whether or not you have entered with a Masters' degree.

The experimental program has two very important deadlines that must be met to continue in the program:

1. **Third-year deadline: Master's thesis defense.** Students must pass their master's thesis defense by the last day of the spring final exam period of their third year in the Experimental Psychology graduate program. If a student fails to do so, s/he will not be allowed to continue on to the Ph.D. The student will be allowed a maximum of one additional year to complete the thesis and the M.A. degree. However, the student will no longer be in good standing and will not be eligible for funding during the additional year.
 - **Third-year deadline: Dissertation Proposal Defense (aka Preliminary Oral Examination).** Students entering with an approved master's thesis must pass their dissertation proposal defense by the last day of the spring final exam period of their third academic year in the Psychology graduate program. Failure to do so will result in immediate dismissal from the program. This deadline was added to the manual in August 2018 and therefore applies only to students who matriculate in or after the 2018-2019 school year.
2. **Fifth-year deadline: Dissertation Proposal Defense (aka Preliminary Oral Examination).** Students must pass their dissertation preliminary defense by the last day of the spring final exam period of their fifth academic year in the Psychology graduate program. Failure to do so will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

Note: These deadlines are considered as extremely late deadlines. It is expected that all students will finish thesis and dissertation deadlines well before these up or out deadlines. Students should not expect exceptions for failing to meet up or out deadlines. Students experiencing rare extenuating circumstances (e.g., factors that interrupt the research process for month(s) such as major health issues, pandemic or natural disaster) may request an extension in writing to their advisor and the Director of Experimental Programs to be voted on by the Experimental Faculty. The reason for the request and a detailed timeline should be included in the request. The "Up or Out" rule will be enforced at

the end of the approved new timeline if the student has not passed the required defense.

Student Progress Requirement

Non-academic failure occurs when a student is dismissed from the program for reasons to do with his or her ethical or professional conduct rather than academic performance. Examples include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, falsifying data, lying or cheating, acting maliciously against others, developing personal relationships with clients, and in general violating the APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct. <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>

At the end of each year of graduate study, all students are evaluated by the program faculty (Experimental or Clinical). In addition, a student may be evaluated at any time of year if a problem is perceived by the faculty. At the time of the evaluation, both academic and nonacademic factors are considered. One of six possible preliminary recommendations may result from this evaluation:

1. **Continue** - the student is encouraged to continue in the program for another year.
2. **Continue with Warning** - the student is encouraged to continue in the program for another year, but is apprised, in writing, of problems perceived by the faculty and advised concerning their remediation.
3. **Continue with Remediation Plan (without Probation)** - the student is permitted to continue in the program pursuant to his or her successfully completing a specific written plan of remediation prescribed by the faculty.
4. **Continue with Remediation Plan (with Probation)** - the student is permitted to continue in the program pursuant to his or her successfully completing a specific written plan of remediation prescribed by the faculty. The situation is serious enough to warrant probation status, which will necessitate self-identification on clinical internship applications.
5. **Dismissal due to Failed Remediation Plan** - the student is dismissed from the program because the remediation plan noted in (c) or (d) has not been successfully completed (see text below).
6. **Dismissal without Remediation Plan** - the student is dismissed from the program without a remediation plan for pronounced violations of ethical and professional conduct standards or for persistent patterns of conduct that are judged to be resistant to remediation.

If the outcome of the evaluation is other than (a) Continue, the following steps will be taken:

- **Communication of the problem to the student.** The director of the student's program (Clinical or Experimental) will, with input from the program faculty, compose a committee to gather information and document the problem. This committee may be composed of 3 persons, 2 program faculty and 1 person from outside the program. However, the composition of the committee is at the discretion of the program director. Faculty (or staff) members providing significant information relevant to the student's evaluation will provide such information as completely as possible, specifying the sources of the information. During the information gathering phase, the student shall be afforded an opportunity to consult with the faculty member(s) involved and to provide information to the committee. Once the committee has gathered information and documented the problem, it will present its recommendation to the program faculty at a meeting in which a quorum of program faculty is present. At that meeting, a majority vote by the program faculty will indicate approval of the committee's recommendation. Then, the committee

will present a statement to the student in writing that will include the exact recommendation (Recommendation b, c, d, e, or f) and supporting information.

If the recommendation involves a remediation plan (Recommendations c or d), the details of the remediation plan will also be presented to the student in written form at this time. Remediation plans will be explicit with stated criteria for judging their success or failure as well as a timeline. Criticisms and remediation plans will be signed by the student (if he or she agrees), the student's program director (Clinical or Experimental), the Director of Graduate Studies, and the student's advisor. Then they will be placed in the student's file.

- **Appeal of problem statement and/or remediation plan.** If the student does not agree with the criticisms or the plan for remediation, he or she will be given a maximum of four weeks to prepare a request for reconsideration. The student may select any consenting representative (including another student) to appear with or instead of her or him at a reconsideration hearing before the program faculty who will subsequently vote to affirm or modify the documents in question. If the majority vote is to affirm the documents in question, this will be documented and one copy will be given to the student and one copy will be placed in the student's file. If the majority vote is to modify the documents in question, the modifications will be documented and presented to the student in writing. The modified criticisms and/or remediation plan will be signed by the student (if he or she agrees), the student's program director (Clinical or Experimental), the Director of Graduate Studies, and the student's advisor, then placed in the student's file.
- **Evaluation of the remediation plan.** If a remediation plan was put into place, the student's progress toward meeting the specified criteria will be reviewed according to the timeline described in the remediation plan. The initial review will be done by the committee that was originally chosen by the program director to document the problem and write the remediation plan. The review will require gathering of information from the student, faculty, and any other persons involved in the remediation plan. This committee will present a recommendation to the program faculty (Clinical or Experimental) at a meeting in which a quorum of program faculty is present. At that meeting, a majority vote by the program faculty will indicate approval of the committee's recommendation. The Department Chair will not vote. This final decision shall take place within one month of the period specified for remediation. The decision will be documented with supporting details and a copy will be given to the student and a copy will be placed in the student's file.
- **Appeal of a dismissal decision.** If a decision was made to dismiss the student from the program, the student may make a formal appeal. This should be done according to the University of Alabama's University-wide Academic Grievance Procedures, described in the faculty handbook and available online at <http://facultyhandbook.ua.edu/>.

Academic Misconduct Information

The Department of Psychology will not tolerate academic misconduct. Procedures for reporting and resolving such cases are described in The University of Alabama Faculty Handbook and the University of Alabama Student Handbook. Should the Dean or Academic Affairs Officer find the student guilty of academic misconduct, the faculty may review the student's record. If they deem it appropriate, the faculty may dismiss the student from his/her program of study in the Department of Psychology. Procedures for filing a student complaint

regarding an academic action taken by instructional or administrative personnel are detailed in the [Faculty Handbook](#) (Appendix D).

Graduate School information on Academic Misconduct.

Withdrawals and Leave of Absence Information

If a temporary health-related or personal circumstance poses a significant barrier to a student's progress, the student may request a leave of absence for a designated period of time. To request a leave of absence, the student should write a letter to the program director (clinical or experimental) requesting the leave of absence. The letter should be signed and dated and should provide a detailed explanation of the circumstances and why they will pose a barrier to his/her degree progress. It should also specify the beginning and ending dates of the requested leave period. The program faculty (clinical or experimental) will then meet to consider the leave and will make a recommendation. The program director will forward this recommendation to the Director of Graduate Studies in the form of a memo, along with a copy of the student's letter for final approval. *If the student cannot return at the end of the time period designated in the leave of absence request, they must request another leave of absence. If the student does not return and does not request another leave of absence, they will be dropped from the program.* The time a student spends on leave still counts toward the student's degree time limit (i.e., the clock does not stop). To be given full consideration for funding following their return to the program, students on leave are required to notify the department of their decision to return at least one semester prior to re-enrollment in coursework.

Students should be aware that time spent during an authorized leave of absence or during an internship program counts toward the time limit (i.e., the clock does not stop).

Graduate School Information on Withdrawals and Leave of Absence.

Academic Grievance Information

Graduate School information on Academic Grievances.

Grades and Academic Standing

Graduate School information on Grades and Academic Standing.

Graduate School Deadlines Information

Information on Graduate School Deadlines.

Application for Graduation Information

Information the Application for Graduation.