**PSYCHOLOGY MASTERS PROGRAM**

**BEHAVIOR AND BRAIN SCIENCES**

GRADUATE STUDENT MANUAL

Department of Psychology

University of South Alabama

Mobile, Alabama 36688

Fall 2013

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**Introduction**

This manual has been compiled to answer questions concerning the master’s program in psychology for new graduate students. The basic format of the program and requirements that need to be met to complete a Master of Science degree in psychology are detailed. It is hoped that this manual will help to eliminate confusion and that, in addition to the current *Graduate Bulletin*, it will be a valuable tool for you in planning your graduate course of studies.

This manual is subject to change as departmental and graduate school policies change and should not be considered a binding contract, but rather a helpful guide. Any changes or additions to this manual or to the policies discussed in it will be made with the best interests of the students and the program in mind. Changes will be communicated to you as soon as possible.

**Ethical Principles**

The Psychology Department supports the adherence to ethical principles in the conduct of any professional activity, including research with human and animal participants and the provision of psychological services. As a student working toward a Master of Science degree in psychology, you will be asked to abide by these principles as well. Three booklets available from the American Psychological Association include statements concerning ethics. These are *Ethical Standards of Psychologists, Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants*, and *Standards for Providers of Psychological Services*.

**Advising**

Behavior and Brain Sciences students will be assigned a specific faculty mentor to guide you in choosing appropriate courses to meet your objectives, research activities, and in selection of a thesis topic. Your mentor will also help with advising and career issues and concerns. As you meet the other faculty, you should feel free to discuss with them issues related to your progress in the program. It is important to maintain close contact with your mentor, consulting him or her frequently concerning your progress.

**Psychology Graduate Committee**

Each year a committee of Psychology faculty members is selected to oversee and administer the Graduate Program in Psychology. The Psychology Graduate Coordinator chairs this committee. Any problems, special requests, or other concerns that you have should be submitted to the Graduate Coordinator or the Graduate Student Representative for consideration by the Graduate Committee. Please submit your concerns or requests in writing.

**Problems**

If there are any curriculum‑related problems (i.e., availability of courses, course waivers, or approval of transfer credits) that arise during the course of your studies, you should first consult with your faculty mentor. If you cannot resolve the problem to your satisfaction at that level, you may then go through the following channels: (1) Graduate Coordinator, (2) Graduate Committee, (3) Department Chairperson, (4) Director of Graduate Studies for Arts and Sciences, and (5) Graduate Dean. If possible, problems should be dealt with at the departmental level. In no case should you go outside of the department with your concerns without first trying to resolve the problem within the department.

A graduate student who has an academic appeal (i.e., grade appeal) should consult with the faculty member concerned and the department chairperson to seek an acceptable solution to the problem. If no agreement can be reached, an administrative appeal procedure is available. Information concerning this procedure may be obtained from the Office of the Graduate Dean. Please be advised that, if you wish to appeal a grade, the formal appeal procedure must be initiated within the first four weeks of the semester following that in which the course was taken, except summer.

**Academic Policies and Procedures**

Course Hours Requirement

Behavior and Brain Sciences students must complete a minimum of 36 semester hours with a *minimum grade of B* in each course (and a minimum GPA of 3.0) to obtain the Masters of Science degree in Psychology. There are 11 hours of required core courses for all Master’s students in Psychology as shown below.

All degree requirements must be completed within sevenyears from the date of matriculation as a graduate student. If a student has not completed her or his degree requirements at the end of the seven years, the student will have to reapply for admission to the program. If the student is re-accepted, he or she will have to re-start their program upon re-admission.

Core Courses (Research Methodology):

PSY 500 Proseminar in Psychology 2 hours

PSY 501 Research Design and Statistics I 3 hours

PSY 502 Research Design and Statistics II 3 hours

PSY 510 Physiological Psychology 3 hours

Total Core Course Hours Required 11 hours

Behavior and Brain Sciences Track Requirements

In addition to the core courses, all Behavior and Brain Sciences track students must complete the three-course experimental sequence. Students in the Behavior and Brain Sciences track are expected to enroll in the Experimental course series for three semesters (taking at least one course each semester). The courses for 2013-2014 are Cognition (PSY 516), Lifespan Development (PSY 524), and Social/Personality (PSY 522).

The student enrolled in the Behavior and Brain Sciences Track will be assigned to a faculty mentor upon acceptance to the program. A plan for a course of study should be drafted and submitted in writing to the Psychology Graduate Coordinator for approval prior to the end of the student’s first semester in the master’s program. Courses will be selected in consultation with the faculty mentor and will usually include general courses in experimental psychology, special interest areas, and one or more directed studies courses (PSY 594) in addition to the core curriculum. The form for your plan of study is included in the Appendix.

The Behavior and Brain Sciences student is expected to be involved in research from his/her first semester in the program. The student is expected to complete a first-year research project by the end of the second semester (or summer term at the latest). The culmination of the master’s program is the completion and oral defense of a master’s thesis. A minimum of 6 semester hours or equivalent of PSY 599 with a minimum grade of B is required to satisfy track requirements. Students may complete a maximum of 9 hours credit in PSY 594 and a maximum of 9 hours credit in PSY 599.

Grades

You will not receive credit toward your degree for a course in which a grade of C (or below) is received. The grade will remain on your record, however, and will be included in calculations of total hours attempted and grade point average.

Comprehensive Exams

The Graduate School policy is that all students must successfully complete a comprehensive written examination prior to graduation. You will take a written exam at the end of your second spring semester. This exam may consist of multiple choice and essay components. If you fail the exam, you will be required to retake it by the end of your second summer term.

The Graduate Committee will meet regarding individuals who have failed the comprehensive examination two times to determine if remediation and/or a third attempt will be recommended or if the student will be immediately dismissed from the program. Failure on the third attempt will result in automatic dismissal, in accordance with University of South Alabama Graduate School policy.

Transfer Hours

A maximum of 9 semester hours or the equivalent of graduate credit obtained at another institution may be transferred with the approval of the Psychology Department and the Graduate Dean. Transfer credits will be evaluated and approved only after at least 9 semester hours or equivalent have been successfully completed at the University of South Alabama. Only courses in which a grade of A or B was received will be considered for transfer credit.

Electives Outside of Psychology

Graduate courses in other departments or colleges may be used as elective credits toward a degree in psychology with the **prior approval of the Graduate Committee**. Such courses must be related to your plan of study and must be approved **before** you register for them. Submit any such requests to the Graduate Coordinator for evaluation by the Graduate Committee.

Grade Requirements

According to the USA graduate bulletin, students will be placed on probation any term in which the student drops below a GPA of 3.0. According to the graduate school, each student will have two terms in which to attain a program GPA of 3.0 before they are dismissed from the graduate school. Also, within the Psychology graduate program, no courses completed with a grade below a B will be counted toward the degree.

Any student who earns 6 semester hours or equivalent of F will be immediately academically dismissed from the Graduate School and from the Psychology Department. In addition, any combination of 9 semester hours or equivalent with grades of C or less in all work attempted for graduate credit will result in immediate academic dismissal from the Psychology program.

A provisional student who receives any grade below a B in a course taken for degree credit will be dismissed from the Psychology Graduate Program.

Time Commitment

The graduate program is designed for the full‑time day student. It will not be possible for students to complete degree requirements by attending at night since graduate courses are rarely offered in the evening. Since most courses are offered only once a year, if you do not take a course when it is scheduled, or if you must retake a course, you may have to wait a year or more before that course is scheduled again. As a full-time graduate student, you should be able to complete the requirements for the Master of Science degree in Psychology at the end of two full years, which includes taking classes or thesis hours during two summer semesters.

All degree requirements must be completed within seven calendar years from the date on which you first matriculated as a graduate student. Course work completed more than seven years prior to the date of graduation will not be counted for degree credit.

Review of Progress by Graduate Committee

Graduate students will be evaluated comprehensively each Fall and Spring. These evaluations provide a critical means with which a student can gain a more comprehensive understanding of their achievement within the graduate program on the areas necessary for success in Psychology. Reviews will be compiled by the Graduate Committee. It is expected that students will meet with the Graduate Coordinator to discuss these reviews.

The first time a student is found to have unsatisfactory reviews in any category, he or she will be required to devise a plan and have it approved by the Graduate Committee to improve performance in that area. If a student continues to receive unsatisfactory reviews for two or more evaluation periods, the Graduate Committee will conduct a review of that student and recommend an appropriate action, including but not limited to: censure, additional assignments, or dismissal from the graduate program.

**Graduate Student Status**

Students may be admitted to the Graduate School on a regular or provisional basis. The criteria for this decision are defined by the graduate school at the University of South Alabama. If you were admitted to the Graduate School on a provisional basis, you should complete the necessary requirements for regular status as soon as possible. To be admitted to regular status, the following requirements must be met:

1. Completion of the first 9 consecutive semester hours or equivalent of approved graduate course work with minimum grades of B or S. These courses must be specified in advance of registration and must be approved by the Graduate Coordinator. If more than 9 hours are completed before applying for regular status, a minimum grade of B or S is required in all courses completed.
2. All deficiencies must be removed by completing specified undergraduate courses with grades of B or better. Any deficiencies and the course work required to remove those deficiencies will be specified when you begin the program. You must register for the specified courses at the first opportunity. You will be allowed to take graduate courses concurrently if you have no more than two undergraduate courses to take.
3. Scores on the General Test of the Graduate Record Examination must be on file in the Psychology Department unless this requirement was waived at the time of admission.

**Master's Thesis**

All Behavior and Brain Sciences track students MUST complete a thesis in order to graduate. Completion of a thesis is expected to enhance students’ probability of being accepted into a Ph.D. program.

The most difficult task in completing a thesis is probably the task of selecting a research problem and determining the approach you wish to utilize in examining that problem. To give you an idea of what is expected in a thesis; the Psychology Department has prepared a list of criteria for a master's thesis. These are found in Appendix C.

Most theses require a minimum of two semesters for completion and it is quite typical for a longer period to be needed. Therefore, all students should begin thinking about possible research topics as soon as you enter the program. In addition, regular reading of psychology journals may lead to research ideas.

Selection of Thesis Committee

You must work very closely with your research mentor in all stages of the research, from planning through the final oral defense. Your research mentor will help you to select a thesis committee consisting of at least three faculty members, at least one of whom must be from another department. This committee must then be submitted to the department chair and the graduate dean for approval. Your thesis committee must be approved before you register for thesis hours. The purpose of this committee is to advise you about your research. Forms to be used when requesting a thesis committee are available on-line through the Graduate School.

Changing a Thesis Chair

Students may request a change in their committee members, including their thesis chair. To do so, the following procedures must occur. First, we strongly encourage you to talk directly with your current thesis chair or committee member prior to initiating this action. Second, you must then request this change in writing from the Graduate Coordinator. A copy of this request must be sent to the existing thesis chair or committee member simultaneously. The request should include the name of the proposed replacement. The request for a change should also be sent in writing to the replacement person. Third, the Graduate Coordinator will bring this request to the Graduate Committee for discussion and approval. Next, the student will be notified in writing of the outcome of this meeting. Finally, depending on the length of time that the student worked with the original mentor, that faculty member may also be given a say in determining a portion of the student’s final grade for the thesis.

Thesis Proposal

The first step in completing a thesis, once a topic has been selected, is to write a research prospectus. You may register for PSY 594 (Directed Studies) under the supervision of your research mentor while working on your research prospectus. You may not register for PSY 599, Thesis Research, until you have submitted to the Graduate Coordinator the approved form indicating your thesis chair, committee members, and title of your thesis. An outline to be used in preparing the prospectus is contained in *A Manual for the Preparation of Graduate Theses and Dissertations*, available in the University Bookstore and on-line. This manual will aid you in the preparation of both your thesis prospectus and the final copy of your thesis.

Proposal Orals

An oral defense of your proposal is required for completion of your thesis. When your prospectus is complete, which is determined by you AND your thesis chair, you should schedule a meeting of your committee to consider and approve it. This meeting is open to all interested Psychology Department faculty members. Notice of the time and place of the meeting must be made to the faculty and a copy of your prospectus must be made available in the Psychology Department office at **least one week** in advance of the meeting. In addition, each member of your committee must be given a **HARD** copy of your prospectus at least one week prior to the meeting (unless the committee member specifies a preference for a digital copy). Approval of your research project by the IRB or the Animal Use and Care Committee is also required before your begin data collection.

While the Psychology Department may be able to furnish equipment and space necessary for thesis research, this must be approved by the department chair prior to final approval of your prospectus. Normally, any expenses incurred, including photocopying expenses and test materials, are the responsibility of the student.

Once your prospectus is approved by your committee and the IRB, you can proceed with your research as outlined in your prospectus. All members of your committee must approve any major changes from your prospectus. You should periodically inform your committee of the progress of your research, either individually, via email, or by having additional meetings of the entire committee.

Thesis Grades

A grade of P (in progress) will be given for PSY 599 until your thesis and oral defense have been completed. Completion of a thesis is determined by the approval of your major professor, a majority of your committee, the department chair, and the graduate dean. Typically, a student will be enrolled in PSY 599 continuously from the inception of the research to its completion. However, a student MUST be enrolled in at least one credit hour of thesis in the semester in which he or she graduates.

Thesis Orals

An oral defense of your thesis is required and should occur during the last semester of residence. You must be registered for at least one hour of research in the semester in which your thesis is approved. The defense consists of an oral presentation and examination of your research, including, but not limited to, such things as the justification for the research, the methodology, the analysis, and interpretation of the results, and the significance of the research.

Concerning the thesis, the oral defense is open to all interested faculty members and graduate students. Notice of the time and place of your final defense must be sent to the chair of graduate studies for the College of Arts and Sciences at least two weeks prior to the actual defense. In addition, notice of the time and place of the exam must be made to the Psychology Department, a hard copy of the thesis must be provided to each committee member (unless the committee member specifies a preference for a digital copy), and an additional copy must be available in the Psychology Department office at least one week in advance of the defense.

Requirements for typing and format of the final copy of your thesis, as well as requirements for the type of paper to be used, can be found in *A Manual for the Preparation of Graduate Theses and Dissertations* available on the University Website. When that manual does not specify format, the *APA Publication Manual* should be followed. Four copies of the approved thesis and four copies of an abstract of not over 600 words must be submitted to the graduate dean at least three weeks prior to the anticipated date of graduation (see college calendar for exact date).

All theses must be submitted by the student to Turnitin.com prior to their final acceptance. The results of this submission must be shared with your research chair for evaluation.

**Summary of Research Requirements and Time Recommendations**

1. Selection of research mentor and topic by the end of the first fall semester.
2. Selection and approval of a thesis committee by the end of the first spring semester.
3. Thesis chair and committee approved by the graduate dean, by the end of the first spring semester.
4. Library research and writing of thesis prospectus, worked on during the first spring semester.
5. Meeting of thesis committee to consider prospectus should be scheduled and announced at least one week in advance of meeting, usually at the end of the first spring semester or during the first summer semester.
6. A copy of the prospectus is given to committee members and is available in the department main office one week in advance of meeting.
7. Prospectus approved by thesis committee and department chair by the beginning of the second fall semester. **You cannot register for Thesis hours unless you have submitted to the Graduate Coordinator the approved form indicating your thesis chair, committee members and title of your thesis.**
8. Data collection, analysis, and writing of thesis, during the second fall semester.
9. Oral defense of thesis scheduled and announced to chair of graduate studies for Arts and Sciences at least two weeks prior to actual defense, during the second spring semester.
10. Oral defense announced to Psychology Department at least one week prior to actual defense.
11. Copy of thesis to committee members and available in office at least one week prior to oral defense.
12. Thesis approved by thesis advisor and a majority of thesis committee at oral defense.
13. Thesis approved by department chair.
14. Courtesy check of approved thesis format by Graduate Dean’s office. Specific deadlines for this are announced each term.
15. Four copies of thesis and of abstract submitted to the graduate dean by specified deadline (approximately three weeks before the end of the term).Thesis approved by the graduate dean.
16. Satisfactory grade (B or better) submitted by thesis advisor for a minimum of 6 semester hours or equivalent of PSY 599. Note that you must be registered for at least one credit of PSY 599 in the term in which your thesis receives final approval by the graduate dean.

**Summary of Degree Requirements**

Following is a brief summary of requirements you need to fulfill to receive a Master of Science degree in psychology. If you have any questions, see the appropriate section of this manual and the Graduate Bulletin, and consult with your mentor for clarification.

1. Acceptance to graduate program.
2. Regular status achieved.
3. Completion of core curriculum.
4. Completion of Behavior and Brain Sciences requirements, including thesis.
5. Minimum program GPA of 3.0 and completion of at least 36 approved credits (core curriculum, Behavior and Brain Sciences track courses, approved electives) with a minimum grade of B in each course.
6. Satisfactory completion of Comprehensive Examination in Psychology.
7. Application for Graduation (specific deadline appears in University calendar).

**APPENDIX A**

**ETHICS AGREEMENT**

I agree to conduct myself in an ethical manner as set forth in *Ethical Standards of Psychologists*, *Ethical Principles in the Conduct of Research with Human Participants* and *Standards for Providers of Psychological Services*. Specifically, I agree that I will not engage in:

1. Misrepresenting (or allowing the misrepresentation of) training, degree, program, or extent of supervision.
2. Engaging in behavior that violates ethical standards, as set forth in the most recent Ethical Principles of Psychologists and the Standards for Providers of Psychological Services.
3. Going beyond levels of training or experience without adequate supervision.

I understand and acknowledge that I may be disciplined and possibly dismissed from the Graduate Program in Psychology if I engage in unethical behaviors. It is my understanding that my professional behavior will be reviewed and evaluated in such regard and that due process will be observed.

I concur by my signature to adhere to these standards

Signature Date

Witness

Return this page to Graduate Coordinator

Department of Psychology

University of South Alabama

Mobile, AL 36688

**APPENDIX B**

**ADMISSIONS AGREEMENT**

You have been offered admission to the Behavior and Brain Sciences Track in the Master’s Program of the Department of Psychology at the University of South Alabama. You must meet the degree requirements of this track as outlined below.

Degree Requirements for All Students

1. Completion of at least 36 Semester hours of approved graduate courses with a minimum grade of B including completion of core courses.
2. Successful completion of a thesis.
3. Successful completion of a comprehensive examination in Psychology.

Name of Applicant Behavior and Brain Sciences

\_\_\_ My signature below indicates that I have read and understand this agreement. I do plan to enroll in the Behavior and Brain Sciences Track of the Psychology Master’s Program at the University of South Alabama in the Fall Semester 2013 under the conditions outlined above.

\_\_\_ I do not plan to enroll in the Psychology Master’s Program at the University of South Alabama.

Signature Date

**APPENDIX C**

**CRITERIA FOR MASTER'S THESES**

The Department of Psychology supports the general principle, established by SACS standards and the Council of Graduate Schools, and required by A.C.H.E., that a thesis or dissertation should use scholarly methods to achieve original results. In applying these standards to the discipline of psychology, the Department of Psychology at the University of South Alabama has established the following specific criteria.

1. **Quality:** Theses submitted as a requirement toward the Master of Science degree in psychology must meet the following standards of quality:

A. **Originality:** Theses should be original in at least one of the following:

1. Topic selection.
2. Approach/Methodology.
3. Analysis and Interpretation.
4. Subject Population.

Note: Normally, literal replications will not be accepted, however replication of research may be acceptable if clear justification can be offered.

B. **Methodological Soundness:** Theses should be methodologically sound, using research design and statistical analyses appropriate to the problem.

C. **Logical Soundness:** Theses should be logically sound. This is especially important in theoretical discussions, problem statements, and discussions of results, but should be apparent throughout the thesis.

D. **Literature Survey:** Theses should include an adequate survey of the relevant literature and a critical examination of that literature.

E. **Discussion of Results:** Theses should include an adequate discussion of the results of the research to include, where appropriate, possible applications of the results, theoretical inferences that can be drawn from the results, limitations of the study, and further appropriate research.

1. **Range/Scope of Acceptable Topics.** Any topic will be considered appropriate if it relates to the field of general psychology.
2. **Nature of the Research.** Any of the following research approaches will be considered appropriate:
   1. Empirical Analysis.
   2. Theoretical Analysis.
   3. Methodological/Procedural Studies - Development of new method or technique or of new application for an old method.
   4. Historical/Archival Research.
   5. Applied Research.
3. **Product:** Normally the product of thesis research will be a manuscript from which could be prepared a paper suitable for publication in a refereed journal. The manuscript should be prepared according to guidelines found in the most recent editions of the following two publications:
   * 1. Manual for the Preparation of Graduate Theses and Dissertations, the Graduate School, University of South Alabama.
     2. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.
4. **Ethics:** All thesis research should be conducted according to ethical principles as established by the American Psychological Association.
5. **Procedures:** Students must follow established Psychology Department procedures concerning the approval of thesis proposals, conduct of research, and the final oral defense of the thesis.

**APPENDIX D**

**COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION**

The Graduate School policy is that all students must successfully complete a comprehensive written examination prior to graduation. You will take a written exam at the end of your second spring semester. This exam may consist of multiple choice and essay components. If you fail the exam, you will be required to retake it at the end of your second summer term. A committee of three graduate faculty members will grade the exam. The chair of the comprehensive examination committee will meet with student at the beginning of the spring semester before the exam to provide guidance on how to prepare for the exam.

The Chair of the Comprehensive Examination committee will contact all students by phone or in person and let them know whether they passed or failed the exam. The student will also receive written notice regarding the outcome of the exam. The Chair will give instructions on how to prepare for a second testing for those students who did not pass.

The Graduate Committee will meet and make a recommendation to the Psychology Faculty regarding individuals who have failed two times to determine if remediation and/or a third attempt will be recommended or if the student will be immediately dismissed from the program. Failure on the third attempt will result in automatic dismissal, in accordance with University of South Alabama Graduate School policy.

**APPENDIX E**

**PROGRAM OF STUDY (to be submitted by the end of your first semester)**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Mentor: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Core Courses**

PSY 500 Proseminar in Psychology 2 hours

PSY 501 Research Design and Statistics I 3 hours

PSY 502 Research Design and Statistics II 3 hours

PSY 510 Physiological Psychology 3 hours

**Behavior and Brain Sciences Track Courses**

PSY 516 Cognition 3 hours

PSY 524 Lifespan Development 3 hours

PSY 522 Social/Personality 3 hours

PSY 599 Thesis 6 -9 hours

**Proposed Electives**

**Course Title Hours**

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**Approved:**

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**Graduate Coordinator Date**