



UNIVERSITY OF
South Carolina

College of Arts and Sciences



PhD in Psychology
Quantitative Psychology Concentration
Graduate Student Handbook
2023 – 2024

Department of Psychology

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***Note:** Organization of this document and some content was borrowed from the Arizona State University Department of Psychology, with their permission.*

Table of Contents

Purpose of the Handbook	3
Program Overview	3
Role of Faculty and Staff in Advising	3
Values and Expectations for Student Mentoring	5
Quantitative Concentration Curriculum	7
Program of Study	9
Master's Degree	9
Doctoral Minor in Cognitive Neuroscience	12
Doctoral Comprehensive Exams	12
Advancement to Candidacy and Dissertation	14
Graduation (Master's and Doctoral)	16
Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy	17
Resources	20

Purpose of the Handbook

Welcome to the Psychology Department! This handbook is designed to serve as a guide for graduate students admitted into the Quantitative Psychology Program Concentration within the Psychology Department at UofSC. It provides information about degree requirements, resources, and policies and procedures. Although the handbook serves as an initial resource for answers to common questions, it is not inclusive of every university policy and provides links to policies outside the department as needed.

In addition to this handbook, other references for graduate students are the: 1) [Graduate Student Bulletin](#), 2) [Graduate School Website](#), and 3) [Department of Psychology Website](#).

It is important for students to read the handbook content thoroughly and to check with their faculty mentor, concentration director, or key faculty when questions arise. **It is the responsibility of each student to understand and observe all requirements and procedures.**

Program Overview

The overview of the Quantitative Psychology Concentration can be found on the [concentration area's webpage](#). Application and admission information can be found on the department's [Apply](#) webpage. Students who have graduate courses taken prior to admission and want to apply those to their degree can find policy information in the [Program of Study \(POS\)](#) section of this handbook.

Role of Faculty and Staff in Advising

Faculty Mentor

Upon admission to the Quantitative Psychology Concentration, each student is assigned one faculty mentor or two faculty co-mentors. The department has created a set of guidelines called "[Values and Expectations for Graduate Student Mentoring](#)" for successful relationships between faculty and students, which appears in a later section of this handbook. Students are encouraged to contact the Concentration Director with any concerns about their mentoring relationship and/or to discuss changing a faculty mentor if needed.

Student Supervisory Committees

As students progress in their research and milestone activities, they are required to have various committees supervising their doctoral progress. Membership on doctoral committees, excluding the outside member (as applicable), is limited to regular and associate members of the *graduate faculty* and those who hold special term appointments with approval to serve as a regular member of a doctoral committee. The designation *graduate faculty* refers to those faculty members who are eligible to teach graduate courses and serve on graduate students' committees (see "Academic Personnel Policies" in *the [Graduate Bulletin](#)*).

Doctoral Advisory Committee

The Doctoral Advisory Committee (DAC) provides initial advisement of the student, guides academic planning and research efforts, and constructs the program of study to file with The Graduate School. The DAC is appointed within the 1st semester and is comprised of the student's primary faculty mentor and one other Quantitative Concentration faculty member of the mentor's choosing. This initial advisory committee may, or may not, overlap with the student's Written and Oral Comprehensive Exam Committee and their Dissertation Committee. The student does not have to file any paperwork to establish this committee.

The Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination Committee

The Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination Committee administers the oral and written portions of the student's comprehensive examination. The student must officially establish this committee by filing a [Doctoral Committee Appointment Request Form](#) with the Graduate School.

The Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination Committee consists of at least four faculty members, selected by the student in conjunction with their faculty mentor and approved by the concentration area director. Three of the committee members must be regular graduate faculty in the Department of Psychology, with two of these members having a primary affiliation with the Quantitative Psychology concentration. The fourth committee member must be a graduate faculty member from another department.

The responsibilities of the Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination Committee are to advise the student on the written comps reading list and proposal, approve the written comps reading list and proposal, and evaluate the resulting written comps product and its associated oral component. The chair of the committee is responsible for supervising the process, summarizing feedback from all committee members in written form, providing this feedback to the student, and informing the area director of the outcome.

The Dissertation Committee

The Dissertation Committee directs the research and preparation of the student's dissertation, examines the student on the content of the dissertation, directs the student to complete documents required for graduation, and signs forms required for graduation. If membership of the Dissertation Committee fully overlaps with the Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination Committee, the student does not need to submit a separate Doctoral Committee Appointment Request Form to the Graduate School to establish the committee. If membership of the Written and Oral Comprehensive Examination and Dissertation Committees does not fully overlap, the student must file a second [Doctoral Committee Appointment Request Form](#) with the Graduate School to officially establish a separate Dissertation Committee.

The Dissertation Committee consists of at least four faculty members, selected by the student in conjunction with their faculty mentor and approved by the concentration area director. Three of the committee members must be graduate faculty in the Department of Psychology, with two of these members having a primary affiliation with the Quantitative Psychology concentration. The fourth committee member must be a graduate faculty member from another department at UofSC.

Masters Supervisory Committee

If a student elects to pursue a MA degree en route to the doctorate, they need a supervisory committee to oversee their Master's Thesis work. This committee should consist of at least three members of the graduate faculty, with two of these members have a primary affiliation with the quantitative psychology concentration. We recommends that students establish their master's committee no later than the second semester of their graduate study. There is no formal paperwork submitted to establish this committee.

Graduate/Concentration Directors

Each concentration has a faculty member who oversees all concentration functions including graduate training. This role is called the "concentration director". Concentration directors are expected to meet regularly with graduate students, and students are encouraged to consult with their concentration directors about any questions, concerns, or decisions that arise as they progress through the program.

The Department Graduate Director (GD) oversees all the activities related to graduate students and the graduate concentrations within the department. The responsibilities include identifying and nominating students for various awards, making TA assignments, coordinating graduate course scheduling, and allocating departmental funding for graduate students. In all these tasks, the Graduate Director works closely with both the Graduate Student Services Coordinator and the Department Chair.

Psychology Graduate Student Services Coordinator

The Psychology Graduate Student Services Coordinator is the lead academic advisor for the PhD programs. This role is to support the department faculty and students by serving as a liaison between them and the university (the College, the Graduate School, and other university offices). Although faculty mentors guide students on their research activities and milestones, the Student Services Coordinator is the expert on university policies and procedures, which may impact the completion of milestones at times. Therefore, all graduate students need to meet with the Graduate Student Services Coordinator at least once per year to review the student record and program of study (POS).

Values and Expectations for Graduate Student Mentoring

Mutual Expectations

The fundamental goal of a mentoring relationship is to benefit the student, and a good faculty mentor is important to a student's success. Good mentors act as role models and provide advice, resources, opportunities, support, and feedback. The mentor-student relationship is bidirectional. The student is responsible for meeting milestones and for being active in seeking advice, information, and feedback. If desired, the student can receive mentoring from multiple faculty members and should not feel constrained by the limits of a single faculty advisor/chair. Students and mentors are strongly encouraged to create a mentoring contract early in the mentoring relationship to outline expectations and goals. A sample mentoring contract is available upon request from the quantitative concentration director.

Respect for Students

Whether providing academic support or related services, a mentor should create a respectful learning environment that helps the student achieve professional goals. The faculty mentor strives to be supportive, equitable, accessible, encouraging, and respectful. The mentor fosters the graduate student's professional confidence and encourages critical thinking and creativity, providing an environment that is intellectually stimulating, emotionally supportive, safe, and free of harassment. The mentor adheres to all APA [ethical principles and code of conduct](#), as well as all UofSC [Title IX](#) policies. Finally, the mentor recognizes that the student's interests and goals can change and supports the student in changing mentors as needed.

Diversity

The faculty mentor nurtures and builds community for students from historically underrepresented groups and for international students. The faculty mentor welcomes students' perspectives on diversity issues, while understanding that their viewpoints are their own. The mentor recognizes each student's unique strengths and scholarly promise, and this helps eliminate stereotypes.

Meeting on a Regular Basis

The faculty mentor asks the graduate student to develop and share a work plan that includes short-term and long-term goals, as well as a timeframe for achieving those goals. They make sure the student's plan is feasible and meets the program's requirements. The mentor and student discuss the plan to help the student balance the competing demands of multiple roles. The mentor communicates with the student regarding how frequently they can meet, with an understanding that it is the student's responsibility to arrange and take the lead in these meetings. Faculty mentors let students know if they have a busy travel schedule, are about to take a sabbatical, or will be assuming an administrative position. The mentor lets the student know whether the student may contact the mentor at home, and under what circumstances, and asks for the student's preferences as well. The mentor and student discuss how often assessments of student progress will occur and what type of feedback will be given. The student is informed of the mentor's typical response time to student work and how the student can best prompt the mentor if a response has not been received within that specified time.

Program Milestones

The mentor guides the student through the requirements and deadlines of the graduate concentration. This includes course selection and strategies for successful completion, selection of various committee members, and facilitation of timely committee meetings as articulated in the graduate handbook.

Intellectual Contributions

Intellectual policy issues are discussed in the initial phase of each project. The mentor discusses authorship policies regarding papers with the student. The mentor explains upfront the approach to handling authorship before any work is done. The faculty mentor is explicit about the amount of work the student is expected to complete. The mentor acknowledges the student's contributions to projects and works with the student to publish their joint work in a timely manner.

Career Goals

The mentor facilitates the training of the student in skills needed to be a successful professional. The mentor provides career advice and assists in finding a position for the student after graduation, in accordance with the student's career goals. The mentor provides honest letters of recommendation and is available to give advice and feedback on the student's goals. If additional expertise is needed, the mentor helps the student identify relevant sources of information and advice about achieving these goals.

Graduate Students as Members of Faculty Research Teams

The graduate student is expected to share common research responsibilities in the research group/lab and to utilize resources carefully and frugally. The mentor is committed to the student's research projects in that the mentor helps plan and direct those projects, sets reasonable and attainable goals, and establishes a timeline for completion. There is great variability across types of laboratories and projects in terms of the time required; the mentor discusses expectations for student workload and work schedule (e.g., expectations for holidays/vacations). The mentor recognizes the possibility of conflicts between the interests of the mentor's own larger research program and the research goals of the student. Although it may not always be possible to accommodate the student's research goals within a particular lab, the mentor always attempts to support the student's pursuit of their own research.

Graduate Students as TAs/RAs

Graduate students have a responsibility to fulfill their contractual obligations as TAs or RAs. The student informs the mentor of the number of hours dedicated to teaching and/or research obligations; the mentor encourages the student not to exceed the number of hours stipulated in the contract. The student is responsible for informing the TA/RA supervisor(s) and mentor of any changes or circumstances that would interfere with carrying out these obligations. The student always attempts to ensure stability and continuity for faculty, programs, and departments. The student has a responsibility to seek accurate information about the conditions of TA/RA employment (e.g., asking faculty supervisors about how to handle sick leave, vacation, and/or professional development opportunities). If the student has a concern, the student should discuss it with their mentor, concentration director, or other appropriate faculty member (e.g., Graduate Director, Chair of the Department). Students in these roles also need to follow all department- and university-level policies as they relate to TA/RA positions.

Graduate Students as Future Members of the Scholarly Community

The mentor leads by example, modeling best practices in the following areas: oral and written communication, grant writing, lab management, participant research policies, ethical conduct in research, and scientific professionalism. The mentor participates in and encourages the student to attend area, departmental, and professional meetings and help the student network with others during such activities.

Addressing Problems in the Mentoring Relationship

As in any relationship, problems or conflicts may arise. When this occurs, the goal is to address the problem openly in a context of mutual respect. The student can reach out to the mentor, and the mentor should be open and receptive to such discussion. If a student feels the need for additional support for such a discussion, the student should consult with other faculty members, including the concentration director, Graduate Director, Department Chair, or [Graduate School Ombuds](#). These individuals can provide advice and/or offer to meet with the student and the mentor to resolve the problem. We encourage students to have these difficult conversations when necessary, even though we recognize that they may be uncomfortable. Psychology Department faculty are committed to ensuring that there will be no negative repercussions for students who express concerns about their mentoring relationship.

Quantitative Concentration PhD Curriculum

Overview of Curriculum

Our curriculum aims to help students develop competence in one or more areas of research and theory, with the goal of being able to make a unique scholarly contribution in quantitative methods. This is typically achieved by completing required coursework, six credit hours of PSYC 799 or 889, 12 credit hours of PSYC 899 and passing the area comprehensive examination requirement. The total number of hours required by the Graduate School for a PhD in the Quantitative Psychology Concentration area is 60 credit hours.

Core Quantitative Courses (6 credit hours)

PSYC 709 Basic Quantitative Methods in the Analysis of Behavioral Data I

PSYC 710 Basic Quantitative Methods in the Analysis of Behavioral Data II

(may be substituted by an alternative two-course sequence with approval of the area head and mentor)

Core Research (6 credit hours)

PSYC 799 Thesis Preparation (if pursuing a separate MA degree en route to the PhD)

PSYC 889 Independent Advanced Research (if not pursuing a separate MA degree en route to the PhD)

Core Area Courses (6 credit hours)

2 courses chosen from the offerings of any other Psychology concentration.

(May be substituted by courses outside the department with approval of the area head and mentor)

Specialty Research (12 credit hours)

PSYC 899 Doctoral Research and Dissertation Preparation

Advanced Quantitative Courses (18 credit hours)

PSYC 815 Introduction to Causal Inference

PSYC 821 Theory of Psychological Measurement

PSYC 823 Multivariate Analysis of Behavioral Data

PSYC 824 Special topics in Quantitative Psychology (e.g., *structural equation modeling, etc.*)

PSYC 825 Introduction to Mediation analysis

PSYC 826 Longitudinal Data Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences

(may be substituted by other courses with approval of the area head and mentor)

Ethics & Professional Development Courses (at least 2 credit hours)

PSYC 760 Issues & Ethics in Health Services Psychology (3 hours)

PSYC 790 College Teaching of Psychology (1 hour)

PSYC 792A Responsible Conduct of Research in Psychology and Neuroscience (1 hour)
 PSYC 792B Issues and ethics in Research and Teaching in Psychology (1 hour)

Quantitative Elective Courses (10 credit hours)

BIOS 815/STAT 775 Generalized Linear Models
 BIOS 780 Quantile Regression
 BIOS 775 Bioinformatics
 BIOS 700 Introduction to Biostatistics
 BIOS 770/STAT 771 Applied Longitudinal Data Analysis
 BIOS 754 Categorical Data Analysis
 BIOS 805 Advanced Categorical Data Analysis
 BIOS 810 Survival Analysis
 BIOS 811 Advanced Survival Analysis
 BIOS 650 Quantitative Methods in Health Science
 BIOS 820 Bayesian Biostatistics & Computation
 BIOS 822 Statistical Methods in Spatial Epidemiology
 BIOS 808/STAT 708 Environmetrics
 BIOS 760 Biostatistical Methods in Clinical Trials
 CRJU 816 Applied Quantitative Data Analysis
 EDRM 712 Nonparametric Statistics
 EDRM 728 Technical Aspects of Tests and Measurements
 EDRM 789 Principles and Applications of Structural Equation Modeling
 EDRM 812 Hierarchical Linear Modeling
 EDRM 878 Seminar in Research Techniques
 EDRM 889 Advanced Principles and Applications of Latent Variable Modeling
 STAT 770 Categorical Data Analysis
 STAT 775 Generalized Linear Models
 STAT 778/EDRM 828 Item response theory
 (May be substituted by other courses with approval of the area head and mentor)

Suggested First Year Schedule for Incoming Students

	Course	Title	Credits	Notes
Fall Semester	PSYC 709	Basic Quant Methods I	3	<i>STAT 702 often may be preferable depending on student/mentor goals</i>
	PSYC 799	Thesis Preparation	1-3	<i>Students entering with a quantitative masters can take PSYC 899</i>
	PSYC 7XX or 8XX	Core Area Course	3	<i>Seminar that supports student's substantive research interest</i>
	Course	Title	Credits	Notes
Spring Semester	PSYC 710	Basic Quant Methods II	3	<i>STAT 703 often may be preferable depending on student/mentor goals</i>
	PSYC 799	Thesis Preparation	1-3	<i>Students entering with a quantitative masters can take PSYC 899</i>
	Elective	Quantitative Elective	3	<i>Course that supports student's quantitative development</i>

Program of Study (POS)

Program of study (POS) documents are the student's official contract between the department and the university. It lists all the classes the student plans to take to complete a given degree. Students are encouraged to create a plan with their mentor before submitting their official POS documents. Students who have graduate courses taken prior to admission and want to apply those to their degree can make a [request to transfer graduate credits](#).

Upon approval, students are expected to keep the POS up-to-date by checking it at the start of each semester and making changes as needed. Students are not able to graduate if they have missing grades (NR), incomplete grades (I), or grades of "D+" or below on their POS. It is the student's responsibility to ensure their POS is accurate at the time of graduation to avoid having to extend the graduation date to a later semester. In accordance with the University of South Carolina Graduate School Bulletin's Academic Standard for Graduation, at the time of graduation, the student's graduate cumulative grade point average (GPA) must be at least 3.00 (B) on a 4.00 scale. If a student receives a grade of C for a required class listed on the Program of Study, the student must re-take the class or follow other remediation procedures specified by the student's advisory committee. The PSY Graduate Student Services Coordinator can help with POS issues and questions.

Doctoral Program of Study

All students must complete a Doctoral Program of Study ([DPOS](#)). The DPOS must have a minimum of 60 credits for Quantitative Psychology, including 12 credits of PSY 899 Dissertation and additional requirements laid out in the curriculum overview. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure they fulfill all internal requirements of their degree whether they are listed on the DPOS or not.

Master's Program of Study

Students seeking to complete a MA degree en route to the doctorate must submit a Master's Program of Study ([MPOS](#)). The MPOS must be approved before the student can schedule the thesis defense. Note that a DPOS must be submitted and approved before a student can submit a MPOS.

Master's Degree

Overview of the MA

The MA degree is not required for PhD students in the Quantitative Psychology Concentration but is strongly encouraged for those students entering the program directly from a baccalaureate program. Students not electing to complete a MA en route to the PhD will complete an alternative 1st year project in lieu of a thesis. Students electing to complete a MA in Psychology with a Concentration in Quantitative Psychology while in pursuit of the PhD must formally [request concurrent enrollment](#) into the MA program through the Graduate School. The M.A. degree is awarded upon successful completion of the pertinent coursework, submission of a satisfactory thesis, and a positive evaluation of the oral thesis defense.

The student should consult with their faculty mentor/s about the proposed research topic early in the process. Typically, students have an approved master's prospectus by the end of their second semester, which means the topic and [committee selection](#) happens during the 1st (or early 2nd) semester.

The Master's research usually differs from the dissertation research in three ways, the: a) student is in the role of research apprentice, b) expectations for originality are somewhat less, and 3) overall supervision of the mentor is apt to be somewhat closer.

Master's Degree Step-by-Step Procedures

Completing the MA requires two meetings of the Master's Supervisory Committee: a) the Prospectus Meeting, and b) the thesis defense. Note that successful completion of the thesis and its associated oral defense satisfies the Graduate School's "Comprehensive Assessment" requirement for the MA degree.

1. By the end of the 1st semester, the student discusses research topic ideas with faculty mentor/s and begins to form their master's supervisory committee.
2. By the end of the 2nd semester, the student submits their master's prospectus to the supervisory committee. The student is required to send the document at least two weeks before the meeting.
3. The student works with their committee to set the day and time of the [prospectus](#) meeting, [reserving a room](#) and preparing a short oral presentation to accompany the written document.
4. By the end of the 3rd semester, the student submits a draft of the thesis to their primary mentor.
5. The student [applies for graduation](#) before the applicable deadline.
6. The student works with their committee to set a day and time for the thesis defense, [reserving a room](#) and preparing an oral presentation to accompany the written document.
7. The student completes the full thesis in APA style with input from their chair and committee members.
8. The student [schedules the thesis defense](#) with the Graduate School.
9. The student submits a [formatted draft](#) of the thesis two weeks before the defense to the supervisory committee and to the Graduate College.
10. The student holds the defense and the committee tells the student after if they passed and what, if any, revisions are required on the document. The student completes any revisions required by the committee, then works through format revisions with the Graduate School as needed.
11. The student uploads their format-approved paper to the [UMI/Pro-Quest](#) library database.
12. The student's MA degree is conferred on the date listed on the [Academic Calendar](#) for the semester in which they completed the MA requirements. The student continues with the pursuit of the PhD.

MA Research Prospectus

The prospectus must be approved by the supervisory committee before any data are collected or significant work is started on the project. Students should confer with their mentors before preparing the prospectus document for advice concerning its format; however, the following observations will apply in most instances:

1. Preparation of the prospectus should begin with a thorough literature review. The review must be sufficient in scope as to make the statement of the problem fully comprehensible without requiring the reader to consult other sources.
2. The prospectus should report all details of the methods that are necessary for the reader to make an effective evaluation. While the prospectus is customarily a shorter document than the thesis, students should be wary of omitting significant details of the methodology. All methods should be fully comprehensible from the written prospectus.
3. Because the final thesis must be in APA style, it is advisable to write the prospectus in APA style.

MA Thesis Defense

For complete details, review the [Graduation \(Master's and Doctoral\)](#) section of this handbook. Upon successful completion of the written thesis document and its associated oral defense, students must file both a [Master's Comprehensive Exam Verification Form](#) and [Thesis Signature and Approval Form](#) with the Graduate School.

MA Course Requirements (30 hours)

Core Quantitative Courses (6 hours)

PSYC 709 Basic Quantitative Methods in the Analysis of Behavioral Data I

PSYC 710 Basic Quantitative Methods in the Analysis of Behavioral Data II

(may be substituted by an alternative two-course sequence with approval of the concentration director and mentor)

Core Research Activity (6 hours)

PSYC 799 Thesis Preparation

Advanced Quantitative Courses (9-18 hours from course list below)

PSYC 815 Introduction to Causal Inference

PSYC 821 Theory of Psychological Measurement

PSYC 823 Multivariate Analysis of Behavioral Data

PSYC 824 Special topics in Quantitative Psychology: Structural equation modeling

PSYC 825 Introduction to Mediation analysis

PSYC 826 Longitudinal Data Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences

(may be substituted by other courses with approval of the concentration director and mentor)

Elective Quantitative Courses (0-9 hours from course list below)

BIOS 815/STAT 775 Generalized Linear Models

BIOS 780 Quantile Regression

BIOS 775 Bioinformatics

BIOS 700 Introduction to Biostatistics

BIOS 770/STAT 771 Applied Longitudinal Data Analysis

BIOS 754 Categorical Data Analysis

BIOS 805 Advanced Categorical Data Analysis

BIOS 810 Survival Analysis

BIOS 811 Advanced Survival Analysis

BIOS 650 Quantitative Methods in Health Science

BIOS 820 Bayesian Biostatistics & Computation

BIOS 822 Statistical Methods in Spatial Epidemiology

BIOS 808/STAT 708 Environmetrics

BIOS 760 Biostatistical Methods in Clinical Trials

CRJU 816 Applied Quantitative Data Analysis

EDRM 712 Nonparametric Statistics

EDRM 728 Technical Aspects of Tests and Measurements

EDRM 789 Principles and Applications of Structural Equation Modeling

EDRM 812 Hierarchical Linear Modeling

EDRM 878 Seminar in Research Techniques

EDRM 889 Advanced Principles and Applications of Latent Variable Modeling

STAT 770 Categorical Data Analysis

STAT 775 Generalized Linear Models

STAT 778/EDRM 828 Item response theory
(May be substituted by other courses with approval of the concentration director and mentor)

Doctoral Minor in Cognitive Neuroscience

The Department of Psychology offers two doctoral minors: Quantitative Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience. Any PhD student in good standing within the Quantitative Psychology Concentration may elect to receive a minor in Cognitive Neuroscience.

Objectives

Cognitive neuroscience is a cutting-edge focus of research and theorizing across the discipline of psychology. This minor provides recognition that the student has established extensive knowledge of theories and methods essential to conducting research in cognitive neuroscience.

Minor in Cognitive Neuroscience Requirement (12 credit hours)

Students must make a B or better in four 700/800-level courses focused on cognition, neuroscience, or both as approved by the CNS program director. These include:

PSYC 702a Basics of Neuroscience
PSYC 702B Basics of Cognitive Psychology
PSYC 702C Basics of Learning and Motivation
PSYC 703A - Integration across Cognitive Psychology and Neuroscience
PSYC 703B - Integration across Developmental Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, and Neuroscience
PSYC 703C - Integration across Developmental and Cognitive Psychology
PSYC 703D - Integration across Areas of Psychology (when applicable)
PSYC 801 - Cognitive Neuroscience I
PSYC 802 - Cognitive Neuroscience II
PSYC 819 - Seminar in Biological Psychology
PSYC 822 - Seminar in Cognitive Psychology
PSYC 888 - Selected Topics in Psychology (when applicable)

Doctoral Comprehensive Exams

Overview of the Comprehensive Examinations

The Graduate College requires a comprehensive examination. Within broad guidelines established by the Graduate College and the department, the concentration faculty are free to develop comprehensive examinations along somewhat different lines. The comprehensive examinations are designed to assess a student's level of academic preparation to pursue dissertation research. The comprehensive examinations require the student to demonstrate a thorough understanding of research and theoretical issues through written work and in an oral defense. The comprehensive examinations must be completed before the dissertation prospectus is submitted.

Passing the Comprehensive Examinations

There are two components to the comprehensive examinations, a written component and an oral component and students must pass both. Students must pass the written component to qualify for doctoral candidacy. Students who fail one or both parts of the exam must retake the portion/s failed. Upon successful completion of both the written and oral comprehensive examination components, the student must file a [Doctoral Comprehensive Exam Verification Form](#) with the Graduate School.

Comprehensive Examination Policies for the Quantitative Psychology Concentration

After defending the Master's thesis (or completing an alternative 1st year project), students concentrate their efforts on the development of a written comprehensive examination (i.e., "comps"). A formal Comprehensive Examination Supervisory Committee oversees evaluation of the written comps and its corresponding oral comps component. The committee's evaluation of the written and oral comps determines the student's eligibility for PhD candidacy. Although membership of the written and oral comps committee often overlaps with the Doctoral Supervisory Committee, modifications may be made as needed.

Comprehensive Examination Scope & Overview

The student identifies a topic in the quantitative literature that has not been the topic of a recent review. Papers should conform to APA style. The text of the student's paper should be approximately 50 pages. The purpose of the comps is to ascertain whether a student has obtained an adequate knowledge base to continue in the PhD program; to identify any knowledge gaps and suggest remedial action; and to provide a student with the opportunity to get an integrative perspective on their chosen field of study. The written comps document should reflect the student's development into an expert in their given field (or fields) of study and demonstrate the student's ability to think deeply, successfully navigate/integrate existing strands of pertinent study, and develop novel directions for future, high impact research. Students will prepare a major, critical literature review over the course of 4-6 weeks that thoroughly and innovatively integrates the existing research on one or more topics in quantitative psychology. The paper should be grounded in a novel theoretical or empirical proposal and should critically analyze the extant literature considering that proposal. Ideally, the comps should pave the way for a student to embark on a new program of research emerging from the proposal. As such, the comps often lay the groundwork for the student's doctoral dissertation. The written comps document is expected to be of a caliber appropriate for submission to a top-tier quantitative journal such as *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, *Psychological Methods*, or *Behavioral Research Methods*. In unusual circumstances, prior, first- authored publications meeting these criteria and published in one of these named outlets during the course of graduate study in the program, may be allowed to fulfill the comprehensive exams requirement with the approval of the committee and completion of an appropriate oral comps component.

Within 1-2 weeks of completing the written comps, students schedule and hold the associated oral comps that occurs in a question-and-answer format. The oral comps meeting typically takes approximately 75 minutes but should not exceed 90 minutes. Committee member questions focus primarily on content in the written paper but may also include broader questions to encourage confidence in mastery of content relating to the student's core research area.

Developing the Written Comprehensive Examination Proposal and Reading List

The student is responsible for presenting a formal written comps proposal and draft reading list for committee approval, which is discussed (and modified as needed) in an informal comps proposal meeting with the committee. The comps proposal meeting should happen within the first semester after completion of the Master's thesis defense (or completing an alternative 1st year project). The draft reading list and proposal should be circulated to all committee members no less than two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting. The proposal should include a set of questions and/or issues that the reading list is intended to address and a planned timetable for completing the exam. Upon committee acceptance of the proposal

and finalized reading list, the 4-6 week writing clock for the written comps begins and consultation with committee members (and any other faculty or student colleague) is no longer permitted.

The total number of readings in the comps reading list is typically $n=50$ but may be shorter or longer depending on the number of books included in the list. Students may consider subdividing the reading list into key areas, to facilitate summarizing the major issues covered in each area and how the areas inform one another in answering questions posed in the review. Students are expected to study from the readings on their list, while continuing to enrich their skill sets, collect data, write manuscripts/proposals, and/or be a teaching assistant. Balancing these many activities is expected to prepare the student for the multi-tasking expectations that occur later when one is an independent and productive scholar.

Evaluation of the Written Comprehensive Exam

Students submit the written comps to the committee by the proposed deadline. After reading the exam, the committee meets to evaluate the written product. Three outcomes are possible: (a) *pass*, such that the student immediately qualifies for PhD candidacy; (b) *incomplete*, such that the student's PhD candidacy will be determined only after revision and/or partial re-examination of the document; and (c) *fail*, such that a new proposal and written comprehensive exam process will have to be undertaken.

Failure to submit the Written Comprehensive Exam product by the deadline will result in failure of the exam. To pass, the majority of the comps committee must approve the product. Only one "incomplete" can be assigned prior to each "pass/fail" decision. A student is given a maximum period of up to 3 weeks to complete the exam after an incomplete is rendered. Normally, the outcome of the evaluation process will be provided within two weeks of the submission of the Written Comprehensive Exam product. If the Written Comprehensive Exam is failed twice, the student will be terminated from the program. The entire program faculty must approve any petition for an exception to this policy.

Evaluation of the Oral Comprehensive Exam

The purpose of the Oral Comprehensive Examination is to provide evidence to the department that the student is: (a) competent in areas of quantitative psychology as they relate to the student's area of expertise; (b) can integrate knowledge from diverse areas effectively; and (c) can perform as an expert in quantitative psychology in a conversational and interrogatory setting. This last purpose has direct relevance to professional development and successful participation in professional events. Three evaluation outcomes are possible: (a) *pass*, as designated by a positive vote by at least three members of the committee; (b) *incomplete*, such that reexamination in a specific area (or areas) is required; and (c) *fail*. There is only one attempt at re-examination. Students are expected to pass within two attempts. Failure to pass with two attempts constitutes unsatisfactory progress toward the Ph.D. and the student may be recommended for termination from the program.

Advancement to Candidacy and Dissertation

Advancement to Candidacy

The student's status will change from PhD student to PhD candidate after passing the written comprehensive exams.

Overview of the Dissertation

While few students complete the PhD in less than 5 years, there are no administrative or legal barriers to completing the degree in an accelerated timeframe. The step-by-step procedures for completing the dissertation are analogous to those described in the section on the master's thesis.

Many of the comments in the section on the master's thesis have obvious relevance to the dissertation as well. A clear point of difference, however, is the greater emphasis placed upon originality in the doctoral research. Even in those situations where the dissertation research is conducted as part of a faculty member's project funded by outside sources, it is expected that the student will be able to devise a substantially original research plan which also fits into the overall theme of the mentor's research program.

Students should be wary of rumors concerning what will or will not be viewed as an acceptable dissertation. What the department desires is what universities of quality wish everywhere—that the dissertation should constitute a significant, original, and scientifically rigorous contribution to the literature of the discipline. These criteria may be met by research studies of such great diversity that it is not feasible to set down here guidelines for attaining them. Rather, the student is encouraged to seek their mentor and [doctoral advisory committee's](#) advice at an early stage in his/her thinking concerning the merit of his/her topic.

Doctoral Prospectus

The doctoral prospectus describes the research project that will constitute the student's dissertation. It consists of a thorough literature review and description of the proposed methods, measures, and data analyses. Dissertations must be prepared in APA style. This document is carefully reviewed and revised with input from the student's chair and other faculty members as needed and circulated to the student's committee two weeks before the dissertation prospectus meeting (or later with the committee's permission).

The student must have a [Dissertation Committee](#) identified before scheduling the prospectus defense with their committee. The student should [reserve a room](#) for the prospectus once the committee has confirmed a day and time, unless meeting on Zoom, in which a physical room reservation is not required.

Prospectus defenses done after the spring degree conferral date, on the summer degree conferral date, or anywhere in between require enrollment in a summer graduate-level course, per Graduate School policy. The Academic Calendar lists the degree conferral date for each semester. Most summer funding does not come with tuition benefits, meaning students may have to pay tuition out-of-pocket if enrolling in summer.

Students should print the Doctoral Dissertation Proposal/Prospectus form and bring it to the prospectus defense. The entire committee must sign the form to verify the student has passed the prospectus milestone. In instances where one or more people are unable to physically sign the form, the student can obtain an email from each person who could not sign the form. The email needs to confirm the person participated and voted the student passed the prospectus. The student is still required to fill out the form and forward the email(s) to the Graduate Student Services Coordinator.

Doctoral Dissertation Defense

See the entire [Graduation \(Master's and Doctoral\)](#) section of this handbook for complete details. Upon completion of the dissertation defense, students must file a [Dissertation Signature and Approval Form](#) with the Graduate School.

Graduation (Master's and Doctoral)

Apply to Graduate

Every student is required [to apply for graduation](#) in the semester in which they plan to complete the Master's Degree (MA degree) or the PhD degree.

The university lists the graduation application deadline on the [Graduate School Website](#). A separate application is required for each degree. It's important for students to make sure their mailing address is correct prior to applying for graduation so the diploma gets mailed to the correct address.

Students must be registered for at least 1-credit at the graduate-level during their graduation semester. For most students, this is the semester in which they hold their defense. However, if the student completes defense-related steps after the posted deadlines, then their graduation term will be the next semester and the student will have to register for another graduate-level credit, even if all steps are still completed by the end of the defense semester. For example, if a student defends in fall after the "last day to submit a defense" but still completes all the steps within that semester, they will be a graduate of the spring semester because they did not meet the fall deadlines set by the Graduate School.

The Graduate School has a list of [Steps and Deadlines](#) (for each step) listed on their academics webpage. Students must complete these steps on time to ensure their degree is conferred (awarded) on time.

Scheduling a Defense

Students must have an approved [MPOS](#) and [master's comprehensive exam verification](#) on file to schedule a thesis defense. PhD students must have achieved candidacy before they can schedule the dissertation defense, which requires an approved [DPOS](#), [doctoral comprehensive exam verification](#) (both written and oral), and dissertation prospectus approval.

The student will work with their committee to choose a day and time for the defense. Students should review the [Graduation Steps and Deadlines](#) section to know the timeframes for the semester. The student will then reserve a room and officially schedule the defense with the Graduate School. The defense must be scheduled at least 10 working days before the proposed defense date. Defenses should not be scheduled on a "blackout" date, such as the week of graduation, as the Graduate School staff is too busy to process defense items during that time. Blackout dates are also university holidays.

A formatted draft of the paper (thesis or dissertation) is required two weeks before the defense. Strict adherence to [formatting rules](#) is advised, to avoid unexpected delays of any kind. Students submit the paper to the university thesis editors through the [ProQuest ETD Administrator](#) on the Graduate School Website. They will also need to email the complete draft to everyone on their committee at least two weeks before the defense day. Failure to send the draft to the committee or thesis editors in this timeframe will result in a need to reschedule the defense.

Holding a Defense

The student should bring the [Dissertation Approval Form](#) to the defense. If the committee requires revisions to the paper, then the student must complete those revisions before the committee chair adds the final signature to the form. After that, the student will continue with the format review process and the Graduate Student Services Coordinator will forward all required documentation to the Graduate School.

Format Review Process

The Graduate School is the publisher of all UofSC theses and dissertations; therefore, the student's formatting must be as accurate as possible prior to publication in the library ProQuest database system. The student may have several rounds of format revisions to do, as requested by a thesis editor via the ETD Administrator system. To get through the process faster, students are encouraged to have their paper in proper APA format prior to the prospectus and early stages of the thesis writing process. A formatted version of the paper is required two weeks before the defense, as stated in the Scheduling a Defense section of this handbook. The format review continues after the defense in the event the committee required revisions or the student changed items on their own.

The Graduate School has several resources on their website for the formatting review process, including a formatting guide, samples, and formatting templates.

At the conclusion of the format review process, the thesis editor will instruct the student to upload the format-approved version of the paper into ProQuest. This is the final step in the graduation process.

Graduation Ceremony (Commencement)

The Graduate School organizes the graduation ceremony, which is called "Commencement". Student participation is optional but requires an RSVP to attend. PhD students are hooded at the ceremony and receive a diploma cover. Diplomas are sent to the student's mailing address (the one listed when applying to graduate) after the degree has been conferred, which may take up to six weeks after the end of the semester.

Graduation regalia (gap with tassel, gown and hood) is required for all students to participate in these ceremonies and are not provided by UofSC. These items are available to purchase either on campus or online. Students are responsible for ordering, purchasing, and picking up their regalia.

Graduation ceremonies take place at the end of the fall and spring semesters. Students who graduate in summer are not allowed to walk in the spring ceremony.

Diploma and Transcripts

UofSC mails diplomas, shortly after the student's final semester, provided that there are no holds preventing the generation of the diploma (e.g. no pending graduation application on file, a balance on the student's account, or missing grades).

Students may request their unofficial or official [transcripts](#) on SSC. Transcripts will not show that the degree is completed until after the degree conferral date.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy

As a graduate student it is your responsibility to be aware not only of your program's requirements, but also policies set in place by the UofSC Graduate School that influence your degree progress.

The Process: Annual Student Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on an annual basis. Each year, students will submit a progress report to their primary mentor that addresses coursework, research activities, teaching (if applicable), professional service, and any other psychology-relevant activities that they have completed. The department also solicits feedback from the supervisor of the student's RA or TA assignment. Concentration area faculty then meet to discuss the evaluation. Students receive a written letter of evaluation prepared by the

concentration director, and a copy of the letter is placed in the student's file. This feedback is intended to recognize graduate student accomplishments and to provide advice for improvement.

Academic Probation Policy

Poor or substandard performance in any single area is a matter for substantial concern, and probation or dismissal are possible outcomes in this case. If a training area wishes to recommend probation or dismissal, the concentration director will forward that recommendation to the Director of Graduate Studies. Recommendations for probation or dismissal may also be made at times other than the annual evaluation. If a student is placed on probation, the written notification will describe the conditions necessary for ending the probationary period, including time limits and requirements.

Lack of satisfactory academic progress includes performance in coursework, research, and development of relevant professional competences (e.g., teaching). Possible causes for probation or dismissal based on a lack of satisfactory progress are:

- a) failure to complete required course work in a timely manner according to program requirements
- b) failure to maintain a 3.0 GPA
- c) poor performance in research
- d) poor performance in professional activities (e.g., teaching)
- e) failure to complete program milestones in a timely fashion.

Exceptions to the training area's time expectations for program milestones can be granted only by student petition to the training area and are granted by the training area based on unusual circumstances (e.g., transferring programs, accommodations for health problems or disabilities, language barriers). The area head will put this new timetable in writing and include the new timetable in the student's annual evaluation.

Time Expectations for Milestones

Students are expected to maintain high quality work standards and to progress in a timely manner through milestones and coursework designed to meet their individualized training goals. Students in the area are evaluated annually to foster success and help promote progression through the program. Student evaluations include: (a) an assessment of whether the student is on track with respect to program milestones; (b) feedback about what the student is expected to do to stay on track and successfully move toward specific career goals; and (c) general feedback on academic and professional performance. Students who are not making satisfactory progress after receiving corrective feedback will be put on probation. After the probationary period, progress will be considered unsatisfactory if stated expectations continue to be unmet. A repeated evaluation of unsatisfactory progress may be grounds for dismissal from the program.

The typical Quantitative Psychology PhD student's program of study will take five or six years for completion. The area considers three distinct groups when specifying upper limit time frames for accomplishing concentration milestones in a timely manner: (a) students who enter the program with a bachelor's degree (or those who seek to earn a Master's degree en route to the PhD); (b) students who enter the program with a non-quantitative master's degree, and (c) students who enter the program with a master's degree in a quantitative area.

Students who Enter with a Bachelor's Degree (or those who seek to earn a Master's degree en route to the PhD)

Students must successfully defend the Master's Thesis (or an alternative 1st year project) within two years of entering the PhD program to be considered as making satisfactory progress. Students must complete

and defend the comprehensive examination within two years of completing the Master's Thesis (or an alternative 1st year project) to be considered as making satisfactory progress. Finally, students must complete and defend the Doctoral Dissertation within two years of completing the comprehensive examination to be considered as making satisfactory progress.



Students who Enter with a non-quantitative Master's Degree

Students complete a first-year quantitative research project under the direction of their faculty mentor in lieu of a thesis. Students must complete a 1st year quantitative project within two years of program entry to be considered as making satisfactory progress. Students must complete and defend the comprehensive examination within two years of completing the first-year project to be considered as making satisfactory progress. Finally, students must complete and defend the dissertation within two years of finishing the comprehensive examination to be considered as making satisfactory progress.



Students who Enter with Master's Degree in a quantitative area

The first-year quantitative research project is waived for students with a quantitative master's degree that is accepted by the quantitative faculty. Students must complete and defend the comprehensive examination within three years to be considered as making satisfactory progress. Students must complete and defend the dissertation within two years of completing the comprehensive examination to be considered as making satisfactory progress.



Resources

The University of South Carolina and the Department of Psychology provide numerous resources to assist students. The following list includes some of the many resources that may be beneficial for graduate students while pursuing a degree.

Graduate School Policies and Procedures Manual

The Graduate School oversees all graduate programs at UofSC and upholds university and graduate program rules and policies. All graduate students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Graduate School's [Graduate Academic Regulations](#) in addition to those specific to the academic unit.

Graduate School Assistantships

The [Graduate School website](#) provides an overview of UofSC policies and support services pertinent to teaching and research assistants. It includes information relating to:

- Eligibility
- Benefits
- Types of Assistantships
- Requirements

The teaching (TA) and research (RA) assistant role is an important one to the UofSC community. It provides graduate students with professional development opportunities that are unique to academia while supporting the university's teaching, research, and service missions.

Campus Safety

To report an emergency on campus, students can simply dial 911 or use one of the emergency call boxes found on campus. These call boxes can be identified by their blue light. Non-emergency UofSC police or campus safety matters should be directed to 803-777-4215.

Carolina Alert and information about life-threatening situations such as a major fire or armed suspect on campus are sent via three methods:

- [RAVE](#) Guardian Safety App
- Email to all student, faculty, and staff accounts
- Text message using the mobile phone numbers listed on your SSC profile

Best practices include completing your student profile with your mobile telephone number, enabling push notifications on your phone, and turning on location services. GPS data may provide UofSC police more information if you report an incident or make a call, and it will allow you to receive geo-fenced advisory messages.

Facilities and Reserving Rooms

The Department of Psychology business and advising offices are located in the main Psychology Building (PSY). Faculty and their grad students have office space and labs in various buildings, such as the following:

- Institute for Mind and Brain (IMB)
- McCausland Center
- Psychology Services Center (PSC)

The [campus map](#) illustrates the location of the buildings. Graduate students are assigned an office or lab space by their faculty mentor. If the mentor changes, then the office and lab space may change as a result.

Access

Graduate students will need to complete required forms to gain access – either by key or Carolina Card – to their workspaces. Students need to work with their faculty mentor to get the access.

Room Reservation

Students can reserve a room with the front desk in the Psychology Main Office, Room 220 of Barnwell or by sending an email to Ms. Miriam Callaham: callahmi@mailbox.sc.edu. For efficiency purposes, students should include complete details when requesting to reserve a room, such as the entire time frame the room is needed, how many people will attend, and any other pertinent details. If a room is reserved and then no longer needed, the student is expected to cancel the reservation so that room is available for others.

Self Service Carolina (SSC)

[SSC](#) is the university's secure website where you will log in to manage your academic, financial and personal information.

Blackboard

The University of South Carolina provides online courses and course material through a Learning Management System (LMS) called [Blackboard](#).

Carolina Card

The [Carolina Card](#) is the University of South Carolina's official photo ID card. Students may [upload a photo](#) and pick up the Carolina Card in the basement of the Russell House Student Union on Greene Street. A Carolina Card is required to access some locations on campus.

Housing

Most graduate students live off campus and the [Off Campus Living & Neighborhood Relations](#) webpage has helpful information for students seeking housing options.

Health Services and Insurance

UofSC [Student Health Services](#) provides a number of services focused on the health and well-being of students, including [student health insurance](#). International students are automatically enrolled in the UofSC student health insurance plan. All other students must take steps to enroll in an insurance plan (if desired). Students can enroll and explore the plan at: <https://sc.myahpcare.com/>.

UofSC Parking and Transportation Services

Students can find information about parking permits and rules about parking on the [Parking and Transportation Services](#) webpage, including the free COMET shuttle.

Student Organizations

UofSC has over 500 student clubs and organizations, providing every student an opportunity to get involved. Students can also form their own group. Explore options on the [Student Organizations](#) website.

Student Success Center

UofSC provides free assistance with writing and offers tutoring in a variety of subjects. For complete details, please visit [Student Success Center](#). Students are strongly encouraged to meet with a graduate writing tutor while drafting major deliverables such as proposals, presentations, and papers to ensure they meet the standards expected of graduate students.

UofSC Libraries

UofSC's [Thomas Cooper Library](#) hosts impressive online and hardcopy collections. Students can research past theses and dissertations, request documents from other libraries around the world, or search online article databases.

Student Disability Resource Center

The Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) provides services to qualified students with disabilities on all UofSC campuses. Eligibility is based on qualifying disability documentation and assessment of individual need. Every effort is made to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Qualified students who wish to request an accommodation for a disability should [contact SDRC](#).

Counseling Services

UofSC [Counseling & Psychiatry](#) offers professional counseling and referrals for all members of the UofSC community, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, student status, religion, ability, size, or financial situation, personal concern, or previous counseling. Support is available 24/7 and no appointment is necessary.

Veterans Services

[Veterans and Military Services](#) provides services specifically for all students who are current or former U.S. military.

International Student Services

The [International Student Services](#) (ISS) Office provides a variety of services for UofSC's international students, including providing important information on immigration and student employment issues.

Registrar's Office

The [Registrar's Office](#) provides a variety of services, such as enrollment or degree verification letters. Students who want to be coded as an in-state resident for tuition purposes must contact the Registrar's Office on the timeline and process for getting their tuition rate status changed.

Student Accounts (Billing)

Students can use the Account Information tab in SSC to access information about their accounts, including account charges, financial aid, and scholarships. For assistance, students are encouraged to contact the [Bursar's Office](#). They can answer questions about tuition and billing, student refunds (including financial aid disbursement), receipt and payment processing, support for past due accounts, third party sponsorship assistance, and Perkins Loan repayment. Students may also submit questions through email, bursar@mailbox.sc.edu, or by phone: 1-803-777-4233.

Technical Support

Students can contact UofSC's Division of Information Technology [Service Desk](#) for help with any technical issues. Chat, phone, and self-service portal request modalities are available.

Department IT Support

Students who need to request help from the department IT manager can contact Robert Heller, hellerre@mailbox.sc.edu.