

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

2023-24 Cohort and Thereafter

The following guidelines specify requirements for the PhD for students who begin graduate work in the Social Psychology Program during fall semester 2023 or thereafter.

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COURSEWORK

Required Psychology Courses

Students should complete all coursework in the Social area curriculum in their first three years in the program. Required courses are documented in the Graduate Planning and Audit System (GPAS). Students should check GPAS regularly to track their progress completing all required coursework. Consult the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) for guidance on using GPAS.

Some courses must be taken at specific times in your program:

- **PSY 8205: Principles in Social Psychology (3 cr)** must be taken in your first and second fall semesters in the program.
- **PSY 8206: Proseminar in Social Psychology (1 cr)** must be taken each spring in years one through three. All three enrollments must be completed before your [Proposed Dissertation Research](#) is approved. Students are expected to continue participation in this course for the duration of the academic semester during which their dissertation has been approved.

Additional coursework policies for students in Social Psychology:

- Complete at least 12 credits from the psychology electives specified for a degree in social psychology. At least 6 credits must be at the 8xxx level. These electives currently include the following courses (but be mindful that courses may be added or removed due to change in faculty offerings): PSY 5202 (Attitudes and Social Behavior), PSY 5204 (Interpersonal Relationships), PSY 5206 (Social Psychology and Health Behavior), PSY 5207 (Personality and Social Behavior), PSY 5960 (Sociocultural Psychology), PSY 8201 (Social Cognition), PSY 8204 (Prejudice and Intergroup Relations), PSY 8208 (The Self), PSY 8209 (Research Methods in Social Psychology), PSY 8210 (Law, Race, and Social Psychology).
- In addition to completing PSY 8814 and PSY 8815 (Analysis of Psychological Data), students must complete at least 3 credits of advanced statistics courses.
- Coursework should always be selected in consultation with your advisor(s).
- Students should take a minimum of 6 credits per semester, but will find that they typically need to take more each semester to finish all credit requirements in the first three years.

Required Coursework Outside of Social Psychology

- Students **must complete at least 3 credits** from PSY 5xxx or PSY 8xxx offerings
 - PSY 52xx and PSY 82xx coursework cannot be applied to this requirement.
 - This must be done in consultation with your advisor(s).

Recommended and Optional Coursework

In addition to your required courses, you are encouraged to consider taking additional courses to enhance your training, provided this does not prevent you from maintaining the degree progress timeline communicated in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

- You must complete 12 credits for the **Electives** requirement. However, you are encouraged to complete **18 or more credits** from the listed courses to enhance the depth and breadth of your training and inform your research.
- You must complete three credits for the **Advanced Statistics Courses** requirement. However, you are encouraged to complete a sequence of statistics courses in consultation with your advisor(s), and which may include courses beyond those listed for the requirement in GPAS. Doing so will help you to attain advanced quantitative methods which will advance your research agendas.
- Students may opt to enroll in or audit **additional courses** within and outside the Social Psychology curriculum and/or the Department of Psychology to secure greater breadth and depth of exposure to psychology and related social sciences.
 - Additional courses must be selected in consultation with your advisor(s).
 - See the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) to understand how audited courses impact your tuition benefit.
- You may pursue a **PhD minor** (optional), provided you receive approval from your advisor(s) before adding a minor to their degree program. The minor must be declared before completing preliminary exams, and coursework must typically be completed by the end of the third year.
 - Coursework for the minor will be taken in addition to the coursework required for the degree in social psychology. However, if there is overlap in the courses required for the degree in social psychology and the PhD minor, students who elect to pursue that PhD minor may request up to 6 credits of coursework from the electives requirements in the Social Psychology curriculum waived to allow the credits to apply to the minor.
 - Examples of minor programs in a psychology-related disciplines include:
 - [Prevention Science](#)
 - [Educational Psychology](#)
 - [Interpersonal Relationships](#)
 - [Political Psychology](#)
 - [Public Health](#) (multiple graduate minor options)
 - [Sociology](#)
 - [Statistics](#)

RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

Active Participation in Research

In addition to coursework, students are expected to actively participate in the research activities of the program (or adjunct) faculty¹ as early as possible in their graduate careers and are expected to continue to make progress toward an increasingly independent line of research activities throughout their time in the program.

Research achievements (e.g., authorship on manuscripts submitted for publication, authorship on published articles, research presentations at regional or national conferences) should be commensurate with students' seniority in the program. Research progress is an important consideration in faculty members' [annual evaluations of student progress](#) at the end of the academic year.

First-Year Project Requirement in the Social Psychology Proseminar (PSY 8206)

As the first research-related milestone in your graduate training, students are **required** to make a formal research presentation in PSY 8206: Proseminar in Social Psychology **no later than** the spring semester of their second year in the doctoral program. This presentation will typically be around 45 minutes and will be the focus of a class meeting of PSY 8206. Students should consult with their advisors regarding the content and structure of their presentation.

Although the ultimate responsibility for fulfilling this requirement is the student's, faculty advisors are responsible for actively monitoring and ensuring progress toward this goal, and for ensuring that satisfactory progress is made toward establishing a research agenda. Students may not proceed to working on their written preliminary examination until this requirement has been met.

PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

Written Preliminary Examination

All UMN PhD students must complete a preliminary examination, which is both written and oral. The written examination is sometimes referred to as the "specials examination."

¹ If a student's research is primarily with a faculty member outside of the Department of Psychology (e.g. one of our adjunct faculty), it **must** be with the approval of that student's advisor in the Department of Psychology.

Procedure and Deadline

Students complete the preliminary written examination in summer of their third year in the program, provided they have, at minimum, completed the [research requirement](#) and all required coursework for the PhD in social psychology. The preliminary written exam is a take-home exam and is available to students at the end of the spring semester. Students will have five weeks to complete the exam (which includes a one week break) and the exam needs to be completed by August 1. During the spring semester students will work with the Area Director to specify the date they want to start the exam (as well as the week they will take as a break).

Grading and Evaluation

The Written Preliminary Examination will be read and evaluated by all social psychology faculty members in residence at the submission deadline.

Students who do not pass at first administration may retake the exam. (**Note:** Not all students will be extended this offer). If students do not perform at a passing level at the second administration of the exam, the student will be terminated from the program. If the quality of the work is deemed sufficient for passing at the master's level, the faculty may recommend completion of a terminal Psychology MA (typically Plan B).

Preliminary Oral Examination

Exam Scheduling

After passing the preliminary written examination, students may proceed with the preliminary oral examination steps communicated in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#). This includes scheduling the preliminary oral examination, which students are encouraged to do **as soon as possible** after passing the written examination.

All psychology students should complete the preliminary oral examination in fall of their fourth year whenever possible, but by the end of the spring semester of their fourth year at the latest.

Committee Membership

In preparation for this oral examination, students are—in consultation with their advisors—to convene a committee that meets the membership requirements communicated in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

Exam Scope and Evaluation

The preliminary oral examination is a closed-door discussion of your research program and your written preliminary examination with the members of your committee. Students in the Social Psychology area should anticipate a two hour exam in which the student provides a brief presentation on the research activity and interests (typically around 30 minutes) followed by a discussion with the committee regarding theory and methods in social psychology as it pertains to the content of the presentation as well as topics from the written preliminary exam. See the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) for an overview of oral exam outcomes (pass, pass with reservations, or fail) and related procedures.

After Passing the Preliminary Oral Exam

Students who have passed the preliminary oral examination should proceed with their dissertation prospectus, which must be approved before the student begins their dissertation research.

DISSERTATION PROSPECTUS REQUIREMENTS

Overview of Dissertation Prospectus

The dissertation prospectus's content and structure will depend, in part, on the proposed program of research. Students should confer with their advisors regarding the specific components necessary given their proposed plan.

Dissertation Prospectus Meeting

Students are **required** to form their dissertation/final oral examination committee and meet with all members **as soon as possible** after passing the preliminary oral examination **and before** collecting data associated with dissertation research.

Your dissertation prospectus must be circulated to all committee members at least **two weeks in advance** of the prospectus meeting.

Committee Membership

In preparation for the prospectus meeting, students are—in consultation with their advisors—to convene a committee that meets the membership requirements communicated in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#). Students in the Social Psychology area are strongly encouraged to select outside committee member(s) who do not hold an appointment on the Psychology graduate faculty (i.e. a faculty member who is not on the Psychology PhD entry in the [Faculty Role List database](#)).

At the conclusion of the meeting

If changes to the prospectus document or specific research protocols described therein are required, the doctoral candidate will write a memo to committee members **no later than 10** days after the prospectus meeting. This memo must include a summary of changes agreed to by the student and the committee members and a detailed description of how those required changes will be implemented. After the committee members approve of the recommended changes summarized in the memo, the candidate will revise the prospectus and distribute the revision to committee members for their final approval. **Data collection can only begin after final committee approval of the (original or revised) prospectus.**

Once approval of the dissertation prospectus has been secured, data collection can begin. Students who have an approved prospectus and have begun data collection will also be better positioned to apply for the Graduate School's Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship (DDF). **Note:** A candidate may technically apply for a DDF without an approved prospectus. However, because the DDF is a completion fellowship, Graduate School reviewers expect to see strong evidence that dissertation research is underway and there is a feasible path to completing the dissertation during the fellowship year. Social area faculty strongly believe that the DDF proposal will be more competitive after the student has an approved prospectus.

DISSERTATION AND FINAL ORAL EXAMINATION

Prior to the Final Oral Examination

Consult the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) for instructions regarding the distribution and approval of the penultimate version of the dissertation to your committee members. In general, after the candidate's advisor(s) approve this version of the dissertation, the candidate should circulate the dissertation draft **no later than** four weeks before the final oral exam.

EVALUATION OF ONGOING PROGRESS

In keeping with University Policy, all graduate students will be provided with written performance feedback following each spring semester in order to ensure that they are progressing toward the PhD in a timely manner and meeting the area's, Department's, and Graduate School's requirements for satisfactory progress.

Prior to your Annual Review

All students in the program are required to complete and submit a draft version of their departmental Annual Progress Report (APR) to their advisor(s) and the Social Psychology Area Director, along with attached requirements. The requirement to submit the draft to the Area

Director is specific to the Social area and in addition to the APR requirements set by the department.

Written Feedback

The Area Director will provide students with written feedback reflecting consensus of the entire social psychology faculty. This detailed written feedback will include assessment of the extent to which students are making [timely progress through the program](#) and assessments of their performance in courses and seminars, research activities, and appointments as teaching assistants or course instructors. Copies of this feedback will be placed in graduate students' area-level file.

Students are expected to meet with their advisor(s) to discuss both the evaluative feedback and plans and goals for the upcoming academic year. Based on this discussion, students submit finalized answers to all APR questions in the online workflow. The primary advisor will provide a formal progress determination, which is recorded in the student's central UMN student record.

Students whose progress or performance is of serious concern to area faculty will be provided with specific goals for the next academic year; failure to meet those goals may lead to placement on probation or termination from the program.

PROGRAM MILESTONES

The following milestones are used by faculty to assess a student's timely progress in the program:

- Complete coursework requirements
 - End of year two or middle of year three
- Submit the GPAS planner
 - Spring of year three
- Submit the preliminary oral examination committee to GSSP
 - Summer of year three
- Pass the written preliminary exam
 - Before starting year four
- Pass the preliminary oral examination
 - Fall semester of year four is **strongly recommended**
 - No later than spring semester of year four
- Complete all thesis credits
 - In fall of year four when possible, but by the end of the fourth year at the latest. See the [Graduate Student Handbook](#) for procedures and timelines.
- Submit the final oral examination committee to GSSP
 - Fall semester of year four is **strongly recommended**
 - No later than spring semester of year four

- Written prospectus approved and prospectus meeting held
 - Spring semester of year four is **strongly recommended**
 - No later than October 1st of year five
- Complete and defend the dissertation at the final oral examination
 - End of year five or during year six
 - The Department of Psychology has a seven-year time limit for completing the degree.

It is anticipated that the annual provision of candid written feedback beginning after students' first year in the Social Psychology area of specialization, in combination with ongoing consultation with and informal feedback from advisors along the way, will prepare students to complete requirements for the PhD in five years (and, if need be, in no more than six years). This timeline ensures students finish within their five years of guaranteed funding.

REVIEW AND REVISION OF TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

The training requirements specified in this document will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Social Psychology faculty. Changes in curricular requirements will only apply to students entering in the effective year for the new curriculum. Students who entered in prior years may, at their discretion, opt into an updated curriculum but are not required to do so, and will have their entering curriculum honored. Changes to general policies and procedures for meeting requirements are also subject to revision upon a unanimous faculty vote. Any changes will be made prior to the start of an academic year whenever possible and communicated in writing to all students.

The information in University catalogs, publications, or announcements is also subject to change without notice. University offices can provide current information about possible changes.