



Department of Psychology
Graduate Handbook

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Note

The Department of Psychology is part of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Virginia. For detailed information about policies in the GSAS, visit:
<http://records.ureg.virginia.edu/content.php?catoid=57&navoid=4686>

The above website contains valuable information about degree requirements, financial assistance, research, registration procedures, teaching assistantships and student life.

This handbook describes the policies and procedures directly relevant to the Department of Psychology.

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Mission

The University of Virginia Department of Psychology strives to advance the science, the methodology, and the application of psychology through research, teaching, graduate training, and engagement in our community. Specifically, we are committed to:

- Conducting rigorous collaborative research aimed at understanding the human condition, solving societal problems, and generating breakthrough discoveries;
- Using our scholarship to guide practice, policy, education, and future research;
- Teaching and mentoring the next generation of psychological scientists and psychologically literate citizens and leaders; and
- Practicing open communication and transparency in our methods and conducting ourselves according to the highest ethical standards.

We are best able to accomplish our mission as a diverse and inclusive community of scholars.

Educational Excellence

The Department of Psychology at the University of Virginia is committed to fostering an academically enriching and supportive climate for all members of our community. We hold the mission of promoting diversity and inclusion as a core value around which institutional decisions are made and believe this mission to be fundamental to our scholarly endeavors.

In these efforts, we understand that diversity is an ongoing commitment, rather than an outcome measured at a single point in time; therefore, we commit to these principles:

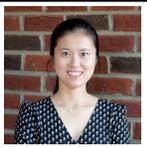
1. **Evaluation:** Proactively identify, address, and monitor inequalities.
2. **Communication:** Regularly and transparently disseminate information on diversity and inclusion-related initiatives and outcomes.
3. **Inclusivity:** Invite all members of our community to take an active role in diversity and inclusion-related efforts. Encourage representation of all groups, perspectives, and voices within our community, and recognize and value the intersections between community members' multiple identities and life experiences.
4. **Accountability:** Hold ourselves and others accountable for working against all forms of oppression and discrimination

For more information and resources, see <https://psychology.as.virginia.edu/mission-statement>

Who's Who in the Department – AY2025-2026

Staff & Administration

	Name/Email	Title	What they do
	Gracie Anderson (rga2d@virginia.edu ; for grant-related, use psych-grants@virginia.edu)	PreAward Grant Coordinator	Gracie assists with the preparation of grants and shepherding the grant through the university system.
	Morgan Davis (morgandavis@virginia.edu ; for purchase-related email, use psy-buy@virginia.edu)	Purchaser	If you need to buy something, see Morgan. He also has a purchase order form you can use.
	Chad Dodson (cd8c@virginia.edu)	Department Chair	As department chair, Chad is responsible for all aspects of the functioning of the department, especially undergraduate and graduate instruction and research, budgeting, etc. He is the ultimate authority to see if you've seen someone else about a problem and aren't happy with the solution.
	Eric Dynarski (cogsci@virginia.edu OR psy-neuro@virginia.edu)	Undergrad Cog Sci/ Neuroscience Coordinator	Handles the nuts and bolts of the cognitive science and neuroscience programs (similar to a major). If an undergrad wants info about the programs, send them to see Eric.
	Elsa Fry (uqu7te@virginia.edu)	Clinic Coordinator	Coordinates appointments for the Mary Ainsworth Clinic.
	Donna Hearn (dlh6f@virginia.edu)	Assistant Chair	If a staff member is having a hard time helping you to resolve a problem, Donna may be able to help. She emphasizes that her (virtual) door is always open!
	Karen Johnson (klj6wf@virginia.edu ; for grant-related, use psych-grants@virginia.edu)	Grants and Contracts Administrator	Karen keeps things running smoothly for pre- and awarded grants.

	Tabitha Lillard (tml9t@virginia.edu)	Accountant	Tabitha handles reimbursements if you've spent money and need to get reimbursed from the department. See her before you spend.
	Tom Martin (psy-comp@virginia.edu)	Computer Guru	Helps troubleshoot hardware and software problems.
	Chris Mazurek (cjm5ma@virginia.edu)	Director of Undergraduate studies	Chris runs the undergraduate program and works closely with the Undergrad Coordinator.
	Melissa Rowland	Front Office Coordinator	Melissa helps to make sure that things are running smoothly in the main office.
	Tammy Seal (tseal@virginia.edu)	Grants accounts	Like Tabitha, Tammy handles \$\$ matters for grants that have already been awarded. (In contrast to Gracie, who helps you submit grants). Tammy works exclusively with research accounts like grants.
	Debbie Snow (dsnow@virginia.edu)	Asst. to the Chair & to the Director of Graduate Studies	Debbie is the assistant to the Chair and the DGS. Debbie is a good person to talk to with questions about the timing of your funding checks, your credit hours, and other ways that graduate students interact with the university.
	Cynthia Tong (xt8b@virginia.edu)	Director of Graduate Studies	Cynthia coordinates the running of the graduate program. Any problem of any sort is fair game for the DGS—she'll figure out who can solve it for you
	Justin Woodward (psych-info@virginia.edu)	Undergraduate Psych Coordinator	Handles many of the practical aspects of the undergraduate program. Undergrads wanting to declare a psych major, wanting info about course admission, etc. should see the Undergrad Coordinator.

Head of Each Area - Fall 2025

	Name	Area
	Bethany Teachman	Clinical
	Dan Willingham	Cognitive
	Noelle Hurd	Community
	Angeline Lillard	Developmental
	Hudson Golino	Quantitative
	Adrienne Wood	Social
	Jianhua JC Cang	System & Behavioral Neuroscience

Selecting (and Changing) Advisors and Labs

The advisor and advisee work together in defining the student's graduate training goals and coursework. New students who do not yet have a primary advisor should consult with either their area leader or the Director of Graduate Studies. Students should have a primary advisor by the end of their first semester. The student is responsible for (1) obtaining agreement from a faculty member to serve as primary advisor, and (2) if they have not come into the program with an advisor, reporting the advisor to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and the Assistant to the DGS before the end of the first semester.

It is not unusual for students to have multiple advisors during their graduate education. Students may switch advisors at their own initiative, provided the new advisor agrees. The student should notify the DGS and the Assistant to the DGS about the change.

In the unlikely event that an advisor asks a student to leave a laboratory, the advisor will inform the DGS. This action will typically be a consequence of the student's unsatisfactory performance in the lab that affects their progress toward the degree, while remaining in good standing as a graduate student. The advisor will have previously provided feedback to the student and suggested corrective measures, so it will not come as a surprise. If an advisor takes such action, it is the student's responsibility to find a new advisor within four months—generally in consultation with the Area Head and/or the DGS. If the student has not found a new advisor within four months, the Graduate Committee will decide whether to grant the student an extension or recommend that the student be terminated from the program. This recommendation would be put to a vote of the faculty.

In the extremely unlikely case of a student's gross negligence or wrongdoing, the advisor may ask the student to leave the laboratory without prior warning, while informing the DGS and the Area Head. The DGS and the Graduate Committee will investigate (e.g., by interviewing the advisor and the graduate student), and determine what steps to take: to treat this event as a dismissal as described in the preceding paragraph, or to initiate disciplinary proceedings. The Department encourages all students to identify a secondary advisor during their first semester of graduate school. The nature of the relationship with this advisor will be idiosyncratic across students. In some cases, the secondary advisor will be a research collaborator - perhaps as much as the primary advisor. In other cases, the secondary advisor may serve as a yearly check-in for professional development and progress and help with advising during times that the primary advisor is on sabbatical.

It is the student's responsibility to report all official changes of primary advisor to the DGS in writing. Almost all students will work with multiple secondary advisors during graduate training.

Annual review of student progress is conducted by the primary advisor, the other faculty in the student's primary area, and the Director of Graduate Studies (see the section on Student Evaluation).

Graduate Training, Requirements, Timeline

The graduate program has a few department-wide requirements, and each area (Clinical, Cognitive, Community, Developmental, Systems and Behavioral Neuroscience, Quantitative, and Social) defines its own additional expectations. Course requirements are described below, followed by the additional requirements for the M.A. and the Ph.D. degrees. Students are admitted with the expectation that they will complete the Ph.D. degree. On some occasions, however, students exit the program with an M.A. degree because of a change in personal priorities or because of difficulty completing the requirements.

The graduate program is based on a model of one-to-one interaction between students and faculty members. There is approximately a 2.5/1 ratio of students to faculty. Much of graduate education is derived from working with individual faculty members and collaborating with fellow students.

An overview of all of the requirements/deadlines for all areas and for all years is shown in the table linked here, but unfortunately documents are not always updated in a timely way—so check with your colleagues, advisor, and area head:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wo0r7gq_kgFLwzTyD5_rOuxDOiwqNhOGr5DkXZhf8v4/edit#gid=0

Typical Schedule

Here is a typical yearly schedule for a graduate student (things to do every year: be involved in the program, attend conferences in your area, present at conferences locally and nationally, present in area lunch meetings, collaborate with others on research). A slide summarizing a generic 5-year plan is also linked [here](#) (details would vary by area).

Year 1

1. Coursework - 12 credits per semester (at least 9 graded; you can register for up to 15 if needed/wanted), usually 2 or 3 classes (work with your advisor to select courses); attend at least one area lunch series; attend all department colloquia.
2. Research - Initiate research project(s) and attend lab meetings. How to get started? Ask faculty mentors how to get started doing research in their laboratories.
3. Teaching - Most students will TA each semester, usually lower-level introductory courses.
4. Service - Get involved in the area, department or university by participating in a committee
5. Deadlines – Some requirements are specific to certain areas. For example, at the end of the first year, the students in the cognitive area will complete an exam. In general, all students should be making progress on a research project that will fulfill the Predissertation (Master's Thesis), which is due at the end of the 2nd year. (SBN students do not complete the prediss, but instead complete the requirements for a Master's through a qualifying exam no later than 2 weeks before the beginning of the 3rd year.)

Year 2

1. Coursework - 12 credits per semester, usually 2 or 3 classes (work with your advisor to select courses; you can register for up to 15 credits if needed/wanted); Attend at least one area lunch series; Attend all department colloquia.
2. Research - Continue research projects and attend lab meetings.
3. Teaching - Most students will TA each semester, usually the 2005/3006 sequence, or other courses with weekly discussion sections led by graduate students.
4. Service - Participate on a committee, contribute to graduate recruiting
5. Deadlines - Predissertation must be approved by advisor and reader by the end of Year 2, either August 15 or September 1 for most areas (except SBN, which requires Comps/Quals no later than 2 weeks before the beginning of the 3rd year). See here for the exact deadline for each area:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wo0r7gq_kgFLwzTyD5_rOuxDOiwqNhOGr5DkXZhf8v4/edit#gid=0

Year 3

1. Coursework - Attend at least one area lunch series; Attend all department colloquia; Likely done with courses but can sit in on classes OR take the occasional course for credit.
2. Research - Continue projects and involvement in lab meetings. Foster healthy program(s) of research with an eye toward developing and defining a longer-term research agenda.
3. Teaching - Significant variation in teaching responsibilities. Some students are supported by grants. Of those teaching, there is a mix of (a) reinforcing experience with 2005/3006 sequence and (b) TAing for upper-level courses. Those especially interested in teaching can apply for DTF for year 4.
4. Service - Lead a committee, contribute to graduate recruiting
5. Deadlines - Qualifying Exam (Comps) must be approved by faculty advisor and two other faculty members by August 1 at the end of Year 3 (except SBN, which does this at the end of Year 2). See here for a description of the Qualifying exam for each area:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wo0r7gq_kgFLwzTyD5_rOuxDOiwqNhOGr5DkXZhf8v4/edit#gid=0

Year 4

1. Coursework - Attend at least one area lunch series; Attend all department colloquia; Sit in on classes that are relevant for training.
2. Research - Continue projects and involvement in lab meetings. Define dissertation project and defend dissertation proposal.
3. Teaching - Significant variation in teaching responsibilities. Teaching experiences are mixed and also include TA positions for grad-level courses or teaching own course through the Distinguished Teaching Fellowship program.
4. Service - Lead a committee, contribute to graduate recruiting
5. Deadlines - Defending the dissertation proposal (see Dissertation Requirements), is usually done by the end of year 4. See here for more specific details:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wo0r7gq_kgFLwzTyD5_rOuxDOiwqNhOGr5DkXZhf8v4/edit#gid=0

Year 5

1. Coursework - Attend at least one area lunch series; Attend all department colloquia.
2. Research - Continue projects and involvement in lab meetings. Complete Dissertation Requirements and keep other projects active and productive.
3. Teaching - Significant variation in teaching responsibilities.
4. Service - Lead a committee, contribute to graduate recruiting
5. Deadlines - Complete dissertation defense; see here for more details:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wo0r7gq_kgFLwzTyD5_rOuxDOiwqNhOGr5DkXZhf8v4/edit#gid=0.

Note: To graduate in May, the dissertation committee must sign off on the dissertation by April 30. This means that by April 30 the student will have defended the dissertation and completed any revisions to the dissertation, if any are required. Everything must be completed and approved by the committee by April 30.

Research Planning

Each student is required to conduct research in collaboration with a faculty advisor during every semester and summer in residence.

Developing One's Own Area of Research

Occasionally students want to pursue an area of interest for which there is not an established area grouping, such as law and psychology. To do so, students need to find an advisor and three additional faculty members to oversee their program. This faculty committee's function is to approve the student's annual progress and to make certain that the student completes a set of courses suitable for a Ph.D. in Psychology and consistent with Departmental guidelines. Any student wishing to form such a committee should speak first with the Director of Graduate Studies.

Developing Breadth

Part of a broad academic training includes exposure to multiple ways of thinking and doing research. The most common means for achieving this is to work in multiple laboratories and with multiple faculty members during one's graduate career. This serves the breadth training objective, and a practical objective of having professional relationships with multiple faculty members that can write detailed recommendations for the post-graduate job hunt. The importance of the practical value should not be underestimated. Recommendation letters are one of the key criteria for job search committees, especially for academic jobs. Brief, non-specific letters from faculty that do not know the applicant well provide an easy reason to put the application aside.

Many students choose to work in multiple labs concurrently – sometimes within the same area, sometimes across areas. Other students practice serial lab monogamy during their graduate

training. There are advantages and disadvantages to each approach. The key is to consult with your advisors and communicate openly about your participation in multiple laboratories. Advisors should be aware of how their advisees are organizing their time to provide the most effective mentorship possible

Coursework Planning

Course Types

PhD students can register for up to 15 credits, but it is expected that 12 will be the default. There are five main types of courses in the Psychology department:

1. **Graded Courses.** These are regular courses for which you attend class, complete assignments, and receive a grade.
2. **“Contemporary Issues in” Courses.** These are credit hours offered by each area for attending their weekly research meetings (e.g., Psychology 7960, “Contemporary Issues: Social Psychology”). These are also known as “area lunches.” All students attend at least one area lunch for every semester of their graduate education. However, students only register for the area lunches during the semesters that they need those credit hours.
3. **Topical Research.** Graduate students get credit hours for doing research. One way is to sign up for “topical research” (Psyc 9501). Each faculty member has a different section number of this course.
4. **Practicum Credits.** Practicum research experience credits (e.g., Psychology 998) are taken by students in the clinical and community areas. For accounting purposes these credits are treated the same as topical research.
5. **Non-Topical Research.** There are four courses labeled non-topical research: Psychology 8998, 8999, 9998, 9999. Each faculty member has a “modifier number” that the student adds during registration to make sure that they are assigned to the primary advisor. Modifier numbers for each faculty member are listed in the main office.

In the first two years, most students will complete the required 42 credits of graded courses, contemporary issues, topical research and practical credits. In later years, students will typically take non-topical research credits for their 12 units (an exception is some practicum credits that are required for clinical students after year 2).

The difference between Topical and Non-topical research is irrelevant from the student’s training perspective – it is purely an accounting distinction for the University. Topical research counts towards the 54 hours needed for the Ph.D. The Assistant to the DGS in the main office is the resident expert on this distinction between types of courses. It is important to sign up for the right type of research for department accounting and financial stability.

Course Requirements for the Master's Degree: 30 hours of graded courses, contemporary issues, topical research and practica credits. Non-topical research, extension, correspondence, home study, and transfer courses cannot be counted toward the M.A. degree.

Course Requirements for the Ph.D. Degree: 72 total hours, including those completed for the Master's Degree. At least 42 of the 72 hours must be graded courses, topical research, “Contemporary Issues in”, or practicum courses. Courses taken through a continuing education

program or when the student was an undergraduate may not be counted toward these unit requirements even if they were graduate level courses.

Selecting Courses

Students should work with their advisor to select the courses to register for each semester, ideally with a long-term plan of coursework in mind. When selecting graded courses, it is important to note that some courses are offered on a fixed schedule, and others are available infrequently – sometimes just once during a student’s graduate career. Also, there are departmental and area course requirements. Clinical students, in particular, have a well-defined course schedule in their first two years.

Summer Session Registration

Almost all graduate students remain in the Department during the summer to continue with research. However, very few enroll in summer school. In unusual circumstances, students may enroll for research hours only or for nonresident status during Summer Session after consultation with their advisor, Director of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Enrolled Student Office regarding registration requirements. The most common use for summer registration is to earn a degree during the summer.

Teaching Experience

There is no requirement for a minimum or maximum amount of teaching in our program; how much you are required to teach depends on your funding package year to year. The ideal teaching load provides sufficient experience to gain skills in being an effective teacher, but not so much that it interferes with research activity. Full information about the TA program is in teacher training.

Time Requirements for Completing Degrees

Time to Complete the MA

By September 1 at the beginning of the 3rd year, students should have completed their predissertation (or for SBN, their quals/comps). That means it has been signed off by their primary advisor and submitted to a second reader. Approval should be reported to the DGS and the Assistant to the DGS with an email from the primary advisor.

Students should also have finished the 42 credits needed by August 1 of the end of the second year. In occasional cases, students will have coursework to complete (sometimes unofficially) after the second year. Such scenarios should be approved by the DGS before the Spring semester of the 2nd year so that the implications for degree requirements can be arranged prior to the beginning of the 5th semester of classes.

If a student is not able to complete his or her Master's degree in a timely manner, then extensions are possible with the support of the advisor and graduate committee.

Time to Complete the Qualifying Exam (“Comps Requirement”)

The comprehensive exam should be completed by August 1 at the end of the 3rd year (or 2nd year for SBN). If it is not completed by that date, the Graduate School will initiate the process of blocking registration, and the DGS will (with the advisor's approval) request a one-semester extension.

Time to Complete the Ph.D.

The Ph.D. (including the dissertation and oral defense) can be completed by the end of the student's fourth year, though five years is the typical course of study in the graduate program. Students may stay longer in the program because their dissertation research takes longer than expected, or because it is in their professional and training interest to stay longer to publish more research prior to entering the job market. In this case, alternative deadlines may be negotiated between the student and advisor. **Note that students are guaranteed funding for only five years.** Alternative timetables should consider the availability of funding within the department and may require acquisition of external funding by the student and advisor.

The Seven Year Rule

Any student who does not complete all requirements for the Ph.D. in the seven-year period of eligibility stipulated by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences will be terminated without a degree. Any student currently in their seventh year of eligibility has until May 31 of that academic year to complete all requirements. Exceptions to these guidelines will only be made in cases in which extraordinary circumstances have prevailed, and such exceptions will be granted only by a unanimous vote of the Graduate Committee and are conditional on approval by the Graduate School.

Leaves

Family Leave

Eight weeks of parental accommodation leave is offered to graduate students on assistantship having a parental accommodation event, see policy here: <https://uvapolicy.virginia.edu/policy/PROV-028>

<https://uvapolicy.virginia.edu/policy/PROV-028>

Eligibility: Any full-time enrolled graduate student in good standing with the University, who is earning financial support through a graduate assistantship (GTA or GRA) and experiences a parental accommodation event during the assistantship appointment. However, this policy means that students who receive support from a fellowship, such as an NSF, are not eligible for this parental accommodation from UVA because their wages are from another entity. NSF and other funders may have their own policies with regard to supporting parental leave.

What is a parental accommodation event?

1. birth of a child
2. placement of a child with the student for adoption or foster care
3. assumption of legal guardianship for a child under eighteen years of age.

According to the Provost policy, parental accommodation may begin one week prior to the Parental Accommodation Event, but no later than eight weeks following the Parental Accommodation Event.

Family leave may not be used for short-term conditions for which treatment and recovery are brief, such as minor illnesses and outpatient surgical procedures with expected brief recuperating periods. It does not provide for the intermittent care of a child for such commonplace illnesses as colds and flu.

Students will be considered “not-in-residence” during the leave, unless there is a specific need to remain “in-residence,” such as to use University facilities or to maintain health insurance. For students on leave, the department will pay the not-in-residence status fees but will not provide other funding during this period.

Family leave will extend departmental and GSAS academic deadlines, including the “7-year rule” by one semester. Students may take additional leaves in the event that more than one of the above circumstances occurs (e.g., birth of a second child). Students who desire to take a longer leave may petition the faculty to do so. Petitions should be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies and will be voted on by the Department Faculty. **Please note that there is no guarantee of funding beyond the 5th year after initial matriculation.**

Leave status must be confirmed by the GSAS. Please email the DGS as soon as you know you will be making use of this option so that the paperwork can be initiated.

Medical Leave and Other Leaves of Absence

A student who wishes to suspend full-time study temporarily may request approval from the Director of Graduate Studies and the assistant dean (via the University Registrar) to undertake a leave of absence and postpone his or her expected date of graduation. Depending on the circumstances of the leave, a student may be required by the Graduate School to meet with the associate dean of students as part of the approval process. Leaves are approved for a full term or academic year, with a student eligible for up to two years of leave cumulatively. A student on an approved leave retains access to his or her UVA e-mail account but is otherwise ineligible for financial aid and the use of University facilities. So, to be clear, your funding stops when you go on leave. A student must affirm his or her intent to return from leave. **A student on leave must file a reinstatement request by April 1 to return in the fall term and by November 1 to return in the spring term.**

Leaves of absence involving medical circumstances may be approved at any point before or during a particular term. In the latter case, tuition is charged according to the portion of the term elapsed before the effective date of the leave, and financial support allocated to the student for the remainder of that term is forfeited.

Detailed Degree Requirements

Master's Degree Requirements

MA Coursework

The Department requires 30 units of graded course work for the M.A. degree including topical and non topical research, practicum, and the “Contemporary Issues in” courses. By rules of the GSAS, extension, correspondence, home study, or transfer courses cannot be counted toward the M.A. degree (see GSAS rules

<https://records.ureg.virginia.edu/content.php?catoid=62&navoid=5351>). However, this does not preclude you from transferring an M.A. you received elsewhere, or units from graduate courses you have taken elsewhere. For more information, see below.

All course work should be completed by the end of the second year. Students take 12 units each semester of Year 1 and 12 units each semester of Year 2 -- but only 2 or 3 actual courses each semester. (You can take up to 15 units if wanted/needed.) The department-wide required courses are:

1. Quantitative Methods I and II PSYC 7710 (usually Fall of first year) and PSYC 7720 (usually Spring of first year). These must be completed by the end of the second year. However, both PSYC 7710 and 7720 are optional for students in the Systems Neuroscience and Behavior (SNB) area – see the Systems Neuroscience and Behavior section (beginning on page 84) for the specific quantitative requirements for students in this area. In consultation with their primary advisor and area leader, SNB students may substitute a special course more suitable for analyzing the types of data they are likely to collect.
2. One Course in Research Methods and/or Experimental Design. Most students take at least one course in research methods, experimental design, or advanced quantitative methods. Most areas offer an area-specific methods course. Students may take a methods course from another area, but are not required to take a methods course if their area does not offer one.
3. Ethics –The department used to offer a required graduate Ethics course. However, this course has not been offered in several years, and decisions about whether it will be replaced have yet to be made as of AY2025-6. Part of all graduate students’ training should involve ongoing discussions about research ethics in their labs and areas. The Clinical area additionally has developed its own Ethics course (see Clinical section).

See area pages or area head for specific details on coursework.

Predissertation (Master's Thesis)

The predissertation requirement is a written research report, usually resembling a journal article in style and content and must be approved by the primary advisor and submitted to a second faculty reader by September 1 of the student’s third year. Note that this deadline is earlier for

some areas. It's a good idea to notify the Director of Graduate Studies by email when you submit your prediss to your readers. That way the DGS knows that it's under review.

The predissertation can serve as your Master's thesis, but completing the prediss is NOT identical to getting your Master's Degree. To get the MA degree (and walk at graduation for the MA) you must apply to the GSAS. Instructions for getting the en route MA for doctoral students are here: <https://graduate.as.virginia.edu/thesis-submission-and-graduation>

Receiving an MA is not required to be advanced to candidacy for the PhD.

The two readers of the prediss must be regular members of the faculty in the Department of Psychology. If a student selects a person from another department as his/her predissertation advisor, the student must also have a co-advisor who is a departmental faculty member. The faculty reader must be on the Department of Psychology faculty.

The Graduate Committee selects one prediss to receive the Maury Pathfinder Award. **The manuscript arising from the approved prediss that you would like to be considered for the Award must be turned in by September 1 at the start of the student's 3rd year** (i.e., the typical due date for the prediss) to be considered for the Pathfinder. See the Awards page for more information.

Submitting MA Paperwork

Information for completing this paperwork may be found here: <https://graduate.as.virginia.edu/thesis-submission-and-graduation>

Transferring Credit Hours from Another Institution

Some students take graduate courses in another program prior to entering UVA. It is possible to transfer up to 24 of those credits with the approval of the area head, DGS, and Dean. If you are interested in pursuing this route, meet with the Director of Graduate Studies, your advisor, and area head shortly after your arrival to discuss what a modified course plan would look like, if approved. Students wishing to transfer graduate course credits should submit to the Director of Graduate Studies the name of the university at which the course was taken, the course number, the course title, and a one-paragraph summary of the course along with an official transcript. The student's area head and DGS will review and approve the courses. Approval for statistics transfer credits requires approval following an in-person meeting with a Quantitative Area faculty member. Following Departmental approval, the approved list of transfer courses and credits will be submitted to the Dean for University approval. To receive a Master's degree from the University of Virginia, all M.A. credits must be from the University. So, transfer credits are applied to credit hour requirements for the PhD (i.e., they count as credit hours past the 30 required for the M.A.).

Note that, according to the GSAS policy (<https://records.ureg.virginia.edu/content.php?catoid=57&navoid=4686>), if nine or more transfer credits are awarded, the student's date of graduation will be accelerated by one term. If 21 or

more transfer credits are awarded, the student's expected date of graduation will be accelerated by two terms.

The GSAS also maintains University-wide regulations about transferring degrees and credits, which supersede any of those listed here: <https://graduate.as.virginia.edu/transfer-credits>.

Ph.D. Requirements

A Master's Degree or Equivalent

The student must have completed all of the requirements for the Master's degree in our department (see above) or fulfill requirements for (Transferring MA).

Qualifying Exam ("Comps Requirement")

Students must pass a Major Area Qualifying Examination. **By August 1** of the student's third year (except SBN, where this occurs at the end of the second year), the advisor must approve the student's qualifying exam in order for the faculty to vote to advance the student to candidacy. (If an area requires a committee approval of quals/comps and the committee won't meet or return comments until after August 1, depending on the area's regulations, the advisor can provisionally "sign off" by August 1 by emailing the DGS and the Assistant to the DGS that they have seen and approve the student's quals. This will begin the process of advancing the student to candidacy even as the committee may request some additional work on the quals after August 1.)

If the student is unable to meet the August 1 deadline (or if the advisor declines or is unable to "sign off" by then), then the student and their advisor should develop an academic plan as a basis for a request for an extension from GSAS by August 15. Requesting and receiving an extension is not automatic and will occur in situations when the advisor and the DGS feel extra time is warranted. The email requesting an extension should include the following information in the plan for completion:

1. Submitting the candidacy project to their committee on DATE
2. Defending their project in front of the committee during the week of DATE
3. Responding to feedback (if needed) from the committee by DATE

The qualifying exam will be evaluated by the advisor and at least two other faculty members. Typically, one of the other faculty members will be in the same area as the student as well as the advisor and the third faculty member will come from a different area. At least two of the faculty must be regular members of the Psychology department. Typically, a student will be unable to progress to the next phase (e.g., unable to hold a defense of their dissertation proposal) until they have the committee's approval of their qualifying exam material.

Each area of the department has developed procedures for completing the major area exam. Specific questions about the qualifying exams should be directed to the primary advisor or

area leader. In some circumstances, students can develop their own major area exams. To do so, the student (1) approaches the primary advisor with a topic and a proposal for how to satisfy the major area requirement; (2) in consultation with the advisor chooses three other committee members and secures their approval of the proposal; (3) reports this Examining Committee membership to the Director of Graduate Studies; (4) fulfills the requirement as proposed; and (5) submits the work to the Examining Committee for review and approval.

The major area qualifying examination must be completed before a dissertation proposal is approved. In order to change this sequence, a written request explaining the reasons for the alteration and stating that the request has the approval of the student's area or committee head and the dissertation advisor, must be submitted to the Director of Graduate Studies for review and approval by the Graduate Committee (DGS + all area heads). Such requests will be approved only under extraordinary circumstances.

Advancement to PhD Candidacy

To advance to Ph.D. candidacy, students must have satisfied their area's qualifying exam and be approved in a Department faculty vote that the student is capable of doing Ph.D.-level work. Advisors should email (1) the Assistant to the DGS, (2) the DGS and (3) the Area Head to attest that the student has passed the qualifying exam.

Coursework

The GSAS web page is definitive on this issue,
http://records.ureg.virginia.edu/content.php?catoid=44&navoid=3076#doctor_of_philosophy

Here's a summary: 72 total hours, including those completed for the Master's Degree. A minimum of 24 out of the 72 credit hours must be graded coursework; only graduate courses taught by members of the graduate faculties of the University, offered during the fall or spring term and graded on the standard A through F scale may be counted toward the graded coursework requirement.

Dissertation Requirements

Every student must complete a dissertation. The dissertation committee is chaired by your advisor (who must be a faculty member in Psychology; adjuncts may not serve as chair).

Committee members

The committee must consist of at least **four** tenured or tenure-track faculty (including your advisor/chair). Emeritus psychology faculty can serve as one of these core four people if they are within two years of having become Emeritus. After two years, the Emeritus faculty would need approval by the department and GSAS. At least three people on the committee must be tenured/tenure-track faculty of the GSAS. Note that many of the people who are affiliated faculty in Psychology (e.g., Eileen Chou, Jamie Jirout, etc.) are not members of the Grad School of Arts and Sciences, so they could not be one of the three tenured/tenure-track faculty of GSAS.

One member of the committee will serve as a representative of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (“outside member”) to affirm that the student has been assessed fairly and with due rigor. This GSAS-representative must hold either a primary appointment or a majority-appointment outside of the Psychology Department. So, for example, Paul Perrin could serve as this external member of the committee because the majority of his appointment is in the School of Data Science. This GSAS-representative may also be drawn from the tenured or tenure-track faculty of other graduate schools at the University (e.g., Law, Education), but must hold a Ph.D. So, for example, Eileen Chou of Batten or Jamie Jirout of Education could serve as the “outside member.”

Is it possible for someone from another university to serve on the committee? Yes, this occurs frequently. But we need approval from the Graduate School for this non-UVA person to serve on the committee. Email the Director of Graduate Studies the CV for this non-UVA person and a brief statement about why this person is suitable for your committee (along with the names and affiliations of the rest of your committee). The DGS then will request permission from the Graduate School. (Note that this non-UVA person may not serve as the representative of the GSAS.) Once these minimum requirements have been met, additional committee members from within the University or other institutions may be added.

Any deviations from these requirements about the dissertation committee will likely be approved by the Dean’s office once we send them a justification. For example, we recently had a dissertation committee that consisted of two faculty from Psychology and two faculty from the School of Education. This required permission because the committee consisted of 2 GSAS faculty and 2 non-GSAS (School of Ed) faculty. It was approved by the Dean’s office when we sent them a simple justification because the Dean’s office wants students to benefit from the expertise at UVA.

Before finalizing your committee, confirm with the Assistant to the DGS that it adheres to all the rules above. The committee must be reported to the DGS prior to the proposal meeting.

If a committee member is on leave during the term in which the dissertation will be defended and will not be able to attend the dissertation meeting, a substitute member must be selected. Changes to the membership of the dissertation committee should be reported to the Director of Graduate Studies.

Dissertation proposal meeting

The proposal meeting (sometimes called the “proposal defense”) is held prior to the completion of the dissertation research so that the committee can discuss, comment, and request revisions to the rationale, design, methods, or analysis plan for the project. Depending on the area, the dissertation proposal typically includes an abstract, a survey of the relevant literature, the rationale for the research, description of the methods, and an outline of the planned data analysis. When the student and advisor agree that the proposal is ready to be defended, the student schedules a meeting of the dissertation committee and circulates the formal proposal document **at least one week prior to the meeting date.**

Also, **at least one week before the meeting**, the student announces the date, time, and place of the proposal meeting to the Department by email to all faculty, postdocs, graduate students, and the Assistant to the DGS, and by submitting the announcement to psychology@virginia.edu. The student should make a .pdf copy of the proposal available to any department member that requests it. Failure to email the announcement on time will require rescheduling of the proposal meeting.

The proposal meeting with the Committee can result in approval of the proposal or a request for minor or major revisions. The Committee may decide to schedule additional meetings as necessary. When the committee is satisfied with the proposal, the advisor will notify the Director of Graduate Studies and the Assistant to the DGS by email.

Additionally, beginning summer 2024, GSAS is collecting some data to evaluate our program's training. After the committee is satisfied with the proposal, the advisor should complete this (very short) questionnaire that will be reported in aggregate and anonymized form to the administration in 2026 or later: <https://forms.gle/9gjanEHKaGfh19AE9>

Defense of the dissertation

The oral defense is a discussion of the dissertation research, and the research literature on which it is based. When the advisor and student agree that the dissertation is nearing completion (ideally in consultation with the committee), they should schedule the dissertation defense with the committee (the same committee that provided feedback about the proposal). They should coordinate with the Assistant to the DGS to secure a room in which to hold the defense; many students make arrangements to have their defense in the North Oval Room of the Rotunda. But you can of course hold it in Gilmer.

The dissertation should be distributed to the members of the Dissertation Committee and made available to the rest of the Department **at least two weeks prior to the final oral defense**. If necessary, corrections should be circulated at least one week before the final oral defense. Also, **at least two weeks before the meeting**, the student announces the date, time, and place of the proposal meeting to the Department by email to all faculty, postdocs, graduate students, and the Assistant to the DGS, and by submitting the announcement to psychology@virginia.edu. The student should make a .pdf copy of the proposal available to any department member that requests it. Failure to email the announcement on time will require rescheduling of the proposal meeting.

The particular format the defense takes depends on the area, and this should be discussed with the advisor and committee well in advance of the defense to prepare. In general, defenses are scheduled for a 2-hour block and are open to anyone who wishes to attend. The advisor briefly introduces the student to the audience, the student gives a 20-30-minute overview of the background and studies, and the committee then engages in conversation with the student about the research. Committee members may also ask the student “big picture” questions about the field. Some areas allow questions from the audience if there is time.

Once questions have been completed, the student and audience will be asked to step out while the committee deliberates. The student is invited back in for a discussion with the committee where the advisor summarizes the conversation and provides an overview (ideally followed up by email) of revisions the committee is requesting. Committee members may also provide feedback in written form—some of which may be important to revise for the dissertation and some of which may be relevant in the publishing process after graduation (if there are ever questions, be sure to ask). The committee may approve the dissertation, approve contingent on revisions, or request substantial revisions – sometimes even requiring another defense. The advisor and committee will provide guidance on which committee members need to see the document again before approving the dissertation.

All committee members should be present for the defense. If unforeseen circumstances develop after scheduling the meeting that make it impossible for either the advisor or the GSAS-representative to attend, the defense must be rescheduled. If such circumstances occur for one of the other committee members, the defense can proceed if that person agrees. However, the defense must have at least 3 members present. There are no exceptions to the attendance requirements.

All faculty members and graduate students in the Department of Psychology are invited to attend. All faculty members present are entitled to vote on whether or not the dissertation is acceptable or requires revision, and whether or not the oral defense was satisfactory.

Note: To graduate in May, the dissertation committee must sign off on the dissertation by April 30. This means that by April 30 the student will have defended the dissertation and completed any revisions to the dissertation, if any are required. Everything must be completed and approved by the committee by April 30.

Tradition suggests that the student gives a bound copy of the final dissertation to each committee member and one to the Department. The Department will pay for the copy and binding costs for one dissertation.

Submitting the dissertation, formatting, and degree paperwork

See here (<https://graduate.as.virginia.edu/thesis-submission-and-graduation>) for forms and documents for obtaining the PhD degree.

Teacher Training

An important component of academic training is becoming an effective instructor. The Department has multiple mechanisms that facilitate teacher training including Teaching Assistantships, the Graduate Teacher Training Program, and Distinguished Teaching Fellowships. The University also offers teacher training programs that many Psychology students have used including Tomorrow's Professor Today and regular teaching seminars. To learn more, visit: <https://cte.virginia.edu>

Teaching Assistants

Graduate students serving as teaching assistants are supposed to serve two goals simultaneously:

1. educational support for the students (usually undergraduates) taking the course, and
2. a pedagogical role of teacher training for the graduate students.

These two goals are sometimes at odds – certain courses must be taught and staffed, and those staffing needs may not correspond perfectly with a strong pedagogically-driven teacher training model. Despite such unavoidable constraints, the pedagogical value of teaching experiences can be improved by (a) establishing pedagogical goals for teaching experiences, (b) having a clear and consistent process for TA assignments that is designed to achieve those goals for all students, and (c) integrating other teacher training practices into the graduate training program.

Pedagogical and Practical Goals

Students should get sufficient teaching experience to (a) be comfortable in the classroom, (b) establish a record of competent teaching, and (c) gain specific teaching skills for a variety of course formats (e.g., lecture, discussion). At the same time, students' top priority in our program is research. Too much teaching will interfere with research productivity. There are two structural constraints that are meant to help ensure that students do not devote too much time to their teaching responsibilities:

1. Students should seldom (if ever) have multiple TA positions in a single semester and, ideally, would have “semesters off” from teaching with grant or external fellowship funding; and
2. TA assignments average no more than 20 hrs/wk. This hourly limit is a University regulation. TA slots are paid as 1/2 time effort for a 40 hr/week job. Note that TA positions are paid for 20 weeks (a total of 200 hours), even though the average semester is around 15 weeks long.

Typical Teaching Experience in the Department of Psychology

Although there will be some variation, here is a template of the TA journey a student might expect during their time as a graduate student (assuming the student is TA-ing throughout their time here and is never supported by a grant or external fellowship):

Year 1 = PSYC 1010 or 2000-level course Fall and Spring
 Year 2 = PSYC 2005 Fall, PSYC 3006 Spring
 Year 3 = PSYC 3006 Fall, PSYC 2005 Spring, OR head 2000/3000-level
 Year 4 = Head 2000/3000-level, OR 4000/7000-level, OR DTF
 Year 5 = Where slots available OR DTF

TA Assignments in Reality

Each December, the Department submits a graduate program budget request to the Dean's office. A major portion of that budget is TA funding. The Department projects which courses are likely to be offered and requests the requisite number of TA positions that could fill those slots. In practice, the Department receives fewer funded TA slots from the Dean's office than it needs, so each year the request is for the same number of slots as last year plus an additional allocation. The Dean's office responds to the budget request in the Spring (as late as April). The Dean does not place any particular restrictions on how those TA slots are divided among the courses that are ultimately offered.

In early Summer, the Chair, the DGS, the Assistant DGS, and the Assistant Chair (Hearn) project the following year's budget based on TA funds, fellowship funds, anticipated grants (e.g., student earned NRSAs or RA-positions on faculty grants), anticipated graduation or attrition, and any other sources or uses of graduate program funds. This projection guides the targeted size of the incoming graduate class, and informs the TA assignment process. Instructors provide TA descriptions for their courses.

In Summer, graduate students rank order TA preferences for Fall (the ranking process is repeated in November for Spring courses). For some courses, instructors select TAs based on student rankings and qualifications. For other courses, the DGS and the Assistant DGS assign based on student ranks, eligibility, and available slots. Students receive tentative TA assignments for the Fall toward the end of the summer. Many factors contribute to your TA placement. In general, here are the priorities the DGS considers:

1. A few courses have a very limited number of people who can realistically TA, e.g., grad courses in stats or clinical assessment.
2. 1010 and 2xxx-level TA assignments are generally held for first years.
3. The DGS tries to honor everyone's first or second preference of courses to TA but very few people choose to TA 2005 or 3006 and those courses require more TAs than any other.
4. Thus, the history of courses you've TA'd is relevant. That is, everyone has to take a turn at TA-ing Stats.

In late Summer, students receive tentative TA assignments for the Fall (this occurs in December for Spring). These assignments are tentative because there are many factors in flux, even into the beginning of the semester including: (a) grant and external fellowship funding, (b) whether particular courses are going to be offered or not, and (c) unexpected enrollments or reallocation needs. As a consequence, even if the assignment process is perfectly planned and executed in the

Summer, there are continuing uncertainties that can be disruptive until the early part of each semester. The DGS and Executive Secretary are tasked with managing this uncertainty and ensuring maximum funding coverage for students and TA position coverage for courses.

TA Assignment Process

At the beginning of Summer, the DGS and Assistant to the DGS circulate the tentative courses and TA slots to all graduate students in residence (not incoming first years for the following Fall). Students who need a TA assignment will complete a TA ranking form separately for Fall and Spring semesters and submit it to the Assistant to the DGS. The DGS and Assistant to the DGS use the rankings, funding availability, course needs, TA qualifications/experience, and the idealized/prototype TA sequence to make TA assignments. The assignments are distributed by early August.

Notes for Assignments

1. It is unlikely that anyone other than 1st year students will get “starter” assignments, such as PSYC 1010 and others that are mostly grading/office hour/review session positions (e.g., Review TA’s for 2005 and 3006). You may wish to take this into account when submitting your rankings.
2. Also, it is likely that most 2nd year students will do 2005 in the Fall and 3006 in the Spring if they will be serving as TAs. A presumption of the Department’s training program is that all students should be strong enough on methodology and statistics to TA this course sequence. Teaching can be the best way to learn a topic that needs a stronger foundation.

Distinguished Teaching Fellowships

Advanced graduate students can apply to teach their own 4000-level seminars. Interested students should find a faculty sponsor and write a detailed syllabus of the course they propose to teach (sample syllabi from other 4000-level seminars are available on the collab Resources page). The Undergraduate Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies meet in March to choose the DTF seminars that will be offered the following year. Note that teaching a DTF seminar does not normally increase the level of living support the department can offer above what a student would receive as a TA.

Careers

What are the options outside academia with a PhD in Psychology from the University of Virginia? Certainly, one career path is an academic one—often, a post-doc, ideally followed by a faculty position. But not everyone who comes through our PhD program will choose an academic path post-PhD.

We are fortunate to have students in all of our areas of study who have pursued and succeeded in academic, industry, government, non-profit, business, and other sectors. We encourage graduate students to devote time to learning about their career interests, take advantage of department and University-wide opportunities to gain insight and experience, network with alumni, and have open and honest conversations with your advisors and other faculty (and peers) as you think about your path.

One University-wide resource to consider taking part in is the PhD Plus Program. PhD Plus is a university-wide initiative to prepare graduate students and postdoctoral scholars across all disciplines for long-term career success. Their goal is to enable versatile academics who are deeply engaged with society's needs to become influential professionals in every sector and field. They offer workshops, seminars, etc. that you might be interested in:

<https://phdplus.virginia.edu/>

Assessing Student Performance

The biggest change from undergraduate to graduate school is the role of courses. In graduate school, courses are a means of acquiring training for the real basis of performance: research, mentorship, and teaching. As such, weak performance in courses indicates a problem, but strong performance in courses is not sufficient for graduate excellence. Developing an area of interest, proficiency in the methods and techniques of that research area, generating new ideas to advance knowledge, translating those ideas into testable questions and research designs, executing the research and analysis, and following through with writing and interpretation of the results are key skills that predict graduate excellence.

Performance in Graded Courses

The standards are:

Grade

A+	Distinguished (rare: one student in three or four years)
A	Outstanding
A-	Superior
B+	Typical and solid performance
B	Competent, but a little below expectations
B-	Weakness (a message to the student that s/he needs to perform at a higher level if a Ph.D. is the goal)
C	Failure (not at graduate level)
IN	Incomplete

The Department discourages the use of the grade IN. Incompletes should be made up within two or three weeks of the end of the semester. Any student with 2 or more INs may be placed on probation unless there are extraordinary circumstances to justify the incompletes. Failure to make up an incomplete by the end of the following semester may result in a grade of C (failing by graduate student standards). Any student who receives a C in any course will automatically be considered on probation until the course has been retaken or a full semester of additional course work has been taken with satisfactory grades. A C in two courses is basis for dismissal from the program. A person who does not maintain a B+ average or better may be asked to leave the program.

Performance in Nongraded Courses

Most performance feedback in research is given as a written narrative or verbally in meetings with advisors or other faculty members (and via the annual letter each year in May). Students who are uncertain about their standing should ask for regular direct feedback. This is the essence of the apprenticeship model of training. Grading for research (topical and nontopical research), contemporary issues, and practicum activities is relatively uninformative. In most cases, the grade will be S. The standards are:

S Satisfactory performance.

IN Incomplete. Can be made up by the end of the following semester and changed to S.
U Unsatisfactory. Six or more credits of U are grounds for automatic dismissal from the graduate program.

Students who are underperforming or who do not show the capacity or commitment to execute doctoral level research may be put on probation or asked to leave the program. Probation indicates that the student is not making satisfactory progress toward a degree. As a consequence, when a student is placed on probation, all financial obligations of the department to the student are considered null and void.

Supervisory Reports of Practicum Performance (Clinical)

For clinical students, supervisory reports of practicum performance are critical to the student's continued satisfactory progress in the clinical program. Unsatisfactory reports are grounds for dismissal from the clinical program.

Annual Reports

Each year by April 17th, all students (whether in residence or not) submit an annual progress report and a copy of their vita to the Director of Graduate Studies covering the preceding year. Each area of the department reviews students in its area at least once a year. Information regarding the reviews is submitted to the faculty as a whole and the faculty reviews the progress of all graduate students in a meeting during the Spring semester.

Written evaluations are sent to each student in May. These evaluations provide the student with an assessment of progress and information about next steps to ensure successful completion of the program. The basis of the evaluation is the student's annual progress report, vita, advisor's comments, and comments of other faculty members that have had occasion to observe the student's research, teaching, mentoring, or coursework.

Mentoring Plans

Each year by **October 1**, the student and advisor should create (or update) a mentoring plan and upload it to the Box folder as described below. The goal of these plans is to make lab and mentorship expectations explicit and to provide an opportunity for mentors and mentees to check in with one another and discuss their plans collaboratively. There is no one ‘right’ mentorship plan as students and faculty vary in how they work best, and their needs and priorities change over time. Please work together to express your preferences and provide feedback to each other about desired changes, in order to collaboratively negotiate how best to navigate the mentor-mentee relationship.

This initiative was developed by the Graduate Student Well-being Committee in response to repeated feedback on surveys indicating that many students would like to have clearer feedback from and communication with their advisors to strengthen the mentoring relationship and its impact. Also, variations of this mentorship plan are being used effectively at peer institutions in an effort to help prevent and address problems tied to mentorship.

You can access the UVA Psych Department template for mentoring plans at the Box folder linked below. You can modify the template provided so that it best addresses your lab’s culture and needs. Alternatively, if you would like to use a different form, have a look at some of the samples available in the Box folder linked here:

<https://virginia.box.com/s/n1albvqg65bsz8g3g3w3bvnf6l06vmpz>

We ask the student and advisor to complete the plan collaboratively by **October 1 each year**. Both the student and faculty advisor should ‘sign’ it by adding their names and entering the date on which they reviewed it at the end of the document. The faculty member should then add each of their student’s mentoring plan to the Box folder that has been created for them (“[Last Name] Mentoring Plans”), which reside in a “Psychology Graduate Mentoring Plans” Box parent folder that the Chair and DGS have access to. For students/mentors who completed a plan last year, a simple update may be made to reflect any changes that have occurred.

Human & Animal Subject Research

One of the fundamental responsibilities of all members of the Psychology Department is following ethical guidelines in the conduct of research with human and animal subjects. All researchers must complete one of UVA's IRB online training modules prior to conducting ANY research at the University of Virginia. Discuss with your advisor and lab-mates what the needs and requirements for your lab's work are.

Links to IRB training modules, guidelines, forms, and instructions for submission appear at UVA's research site:

1. animal research: <https://sites.research.virginia.edu/compliance/compliance-programs/animal-care-use-committee>;
2. human research (non-medical): <https://sites.research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs>;
3. human research (medical): <https://sites.research.virginia.edu/irb-hsr>

Research protocols must be submitted for IRB consideration even if you believe that the research is exempt.

Participant Pool

The Psychology Department maintains a participant pool of undergraduate students in 1000- and 2000-level courses (most of the Introductory classes) who complete studies for course credit. Research participation is the laboratory component of the course experience in which they learn about the process of research by participating in it. As such, researchers that use the pool bear responsibility for providing the participants with an educational experience. This is usually accomplished with a structured debriefing process that guides the participants through the logic of the research and encourages questions and discussion.

If you have questions about anything then email the administrators at ppool@virginia.edu

How to use the participant pool:

To use the participant pool, you need to first register as a researcher in the participant pool here: <https://forms.gle/RpBXEirKMwxqmxuY9>. After registering, you can request a study number through this link: <https://forms.gle/CgSgzwLctdaJDjyn9>.

More information is available in this Research FAQs document:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HRnVYHLWhSTU3nRi_p5fxycYOXvD1NLRNiYDJfBTuE/edit?usp=sharing

Student Grievances

If a graduate student has a disagreement with a faculty member(s) or has any other academic grievance, s/he should try to resolve the problem with the person(s) involved and with the Director of Graduate Studies. If this does not work, s/he may file a written complaint with the Director of Graduate Studies who after consultation with the student will submit it to members of the Graduate Committee if the student desires (Chair = Director of Graduate Studies; Members = All area heads). The Graduate Committee may invite all parties to discuss the matter. If the Graduate Committee finds justification for the complaint, it may try to resolve the problem directly or, failing that, bring the complaint to the Departmental faculty as a whole. In either case, the Director of Graduate Studies will notify the student in writing of the Graduate Committee's action. If the student is not satisfied, the student may employ the University's formal grievance procedure (<http://uvapolicy.virginia.edu/policy/PROV-019> AND <https://records.ureg.virginia.edu/content.php?catoid=62&navoid=5912>).

If the student wishes to appeal actions taken by the Departmental faculty such as termination in the program the student must, within two weeks of the action, submit a written appeal to the Director of Graduate Studies stating the grounds for seeking relief. The Director of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Committee may consult with the student and with any particular faculty members involved. If the Committee finds the appeal merits further consideration, it will bring the matter to the attention of the Departmental faculty or the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. The Graduate Committee will inform the student in writing of whatever decision it makes and steps that it takes. If the appeal is brought to the faculty, a special meeting of the Department will be convened. If the student is not satisfied with the eventual outcome, the steps of the University's grievance procedure remain open to the student.

One function of the Director of Graduate Studies is to be available for confidential discussions with any graduate student who is concerned about problems related to another member of the department or to any of the academic requirements. Such meetings will be confidential unless the student gives the Director of Graduate Studies permission otherwise. Students with academic or other department concerns who do not feel comfortable speaking with the Director of Graduate Studies are encouraged to speak with any faculty member with whom they do feel comfortable. Also, the University Ombudsman is available as an independent resource (<https://ombuds.virginia.edu/>).

Non-discrimination Policies

Information about university policies on non-discrimination can be found at these sites:

- **Notice of Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity:**
<http://eocr.virginia.edu/notice-non-discrimination-and-equal-opportunity>
- **Preventing and Addressing Discrimination and Harassment:**
<http://uvapolicy.virginia.edu/policy/HRM-009>
- **Preventing and Addressing Retaliation:**
<http://uvapolicy.virginia.edu/policy/HRM-010>
- **Policy on Sexual and Gender-based Harassment and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence:**
http://uvapolicy.virginia.edu/policy/HRM-041#Sexual_or_Gender_based_Harassment
- **Office for Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights**
<http://eocr.virginia.edu>

Graduate Representation Committee

The Graduate Representation Committee (GRC) is the official vehicle for graduate student involvement in department administrative and service activities. The GRC oversees multiple committees that enrich the graduate student training program and provide opportunity for department service. In addition, the GRC includes class representatives that represent the interests of the students in their cohort. These representatives are available as resources for other students in the program.

In AY2025-6, the GRC has two co-chairs, Taylor Hinton (dvh5dz@virginia.edu) and Craig Gallagher (rcg7jb@virginia.edu). The co-chairs coordinate and oversee the GRC committees, and they also act as a liaison to the administration. One co-chair is elected at the end of each Spring Semester for a 2-year term; therefore, there is always one co-chair who has been in the position for a year before the other starts.

Want to know about the responsibilities of the GRC co-chairs? [GRC Cochair Responsibilities.docx](#)

The GRC committees are described on the spreadsheet linked below (click on the relevant year's tab). If you have any questions about the GRC, please feel free to email the co-chairs.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1QRMrD6aYeKppUzq16PrmP9Bjc0xo4s978As1jgPubqc/edit#gid=429207801>

Financial Support

Students receive a guaranteed minimum funding offer in their admission letter. The department is committed to meeting that minimum funding and seeks to exceed that level whenever possible. The department also strives to maintain funding equity across students despite the challenges associated with managing multiple sources of funding. **Support beyond the number of years guaranteed in the admissions letter is highly unlikely. GSAS support is not likely to be available to support students beyond their 5th year unless you have been supported by a multi-year external fellowship (e.g., NSF) or if your advisor is able to support you via a GRA in your 6th year.** This means that you should be having ongoing conversations with your advisor and area head to develop a plan to finish in five years. Also, continued financial support is dependent upon satisfactory progress in the program.

Sources of funding vary across semesters and students and include a combination of teaching assistantships, research assistantships, and fellowships. Payment schedules are provided at the beginning of the academic year and may vary depending on the “type” of funding received.

If your funding through the department has ended before you finish your dissertation and you need to maintain your student status so that you can complete the dissertation, you can apply for “affiliated status.” Details about affiliated status, the cost, and the form for applying for affiliated status is [here](#).

If you are not a U.S. citizen, it is essential that you confirm that your visa status is compatible with your source of funding or with going on affiliated status. Some sources of funding require particular statuses and maintaining your visa may require something other than affiliated status. Check with the International Studies Office: <https://iso.virginia.edu/>

First-year Students, I-9 Forms, GradBridge Loan

Payroll processing generally begins a couple of weeks before the first day of classes. This is a good thing (because otherwise you’d have to wait to receive a paycheck until way after the semester begins). But it also means that paperwork issues can arise for first year students. Specifically, first year students have to be “hired” and “onboarded” by HR before their info can be processed in the payroll system. And so, what sometimes happens is that a first year student has not arrived yet in Charlottesville and receives automated emails from HR saying that they will be terminated if they don’t present their I-9 documents within a day to the appropriate authorities. According to the Assistant DGS, “If our new students are not here to present docs in person in the required time period, their assignments will be terminated after the 3rd day [after their hire in HR]. Those students will have to work with HR to get onboarding including I-9 completed and once done, will be rehired.”

(In the past, some students who were being paid from a University source that handles financials through Workday did not make it to HR to show the required documents to complete the I-9 until after the deadline required to get their first paycheck of the Fall semester. This included 1st year students who did not arrive on Grounds in time to meet the deadline, as well as students in upper

years who had not had a Workday-related appointment for some time (because, e.g., they were on some other kind of funding recently). As a result, they did not receive their first paycheck on time, which is certainly something no one wanted to happen.)

GSAS worked with the Assistant to the DGS and the department to try to rectify this situation. Specifically, affected students were informed of the situation. Affected students will receive their first and second paychecks at the same time (assuming that they have completed the required I-9 paperwork by then). Unfortunately, the University was unable to issue the first paychecks immediately on receiving the completed I-9 process for each student because that's apparently not possible in the current University or administrative procedure.

However, when they updated affected students about the delay in the first paycheck, they also informed them of the availability of a one-semester no-interest "GradBridge" loan of up to \$2500 through GSAS that is intended to be helpful in these kinds of situations where a student is transitioning from fellowship to wage assistantships (or because of paperwork difficulties) to e.g., pay rent and living expenses. Details about this GradBridge loan are available here: <https://sfs.virginia.edu/tuition-billing/billing-payment/view-and-pay-your-bill/emergency-funds> (open GradBridge section).

Update on 2/5/25: We have learned that moving forward, HR should be able to process required I-9 documents virtually! What this means is that if you are not on Grounds when you get reminders from HR about completing the I-9 process, there should also be info about how to do so in person or remotely. Hopefully, this will prevent the challenges we have experienced in the past on this issue.

Another important pay-related issue is that you should complete any Workday-related tasks you are assigned (and notified about by email) ASAP. This includes making sure that your home address is updated (probably best to have it as your Cville address so all official University info is sent directly to you and any paper paychecks are sent directly to you), as well as ensuring that you complete and keep your payment elections updated (i.e., for directly depositing your paycheck rather than having a paper check mailed to you).

Emergency Funds

GSAS maintains some programs to provide graduate students (and undergrads) who need financial help quickly for e.g., living expenses. These are typically short-term no-interest loans of a small amount. For details about these programs, please see here:

<https://sfs.virginia.edu/tuition-billing/billing-payment/view-and-pay-your-bill/emergency-funds>

External and Internal Fellowships, Grants, and Research Support

A student earning fellowship or grant funding for their graduate studies is a win-win for the student and department. Applying for external funding can increase one's level of funding, is a significant enhancement to the vita, provides experience in grant writing, and increases the

overall pool of graduate funding for the department. As such, students should seek out opportunities for earning grants and fellowships with the assistance of your faculty advisor. If it is determined you are eligible to apply, please contact the Psychology Department Preaward Grants Coordinator (psych-grants@virginia.edu) for further information before applying.

Taxes

Figuring out taxes for your time in graduate school can be tricky because some of your income may be taxed before it gets to you, and some may not (and so you may need to pay estimated taxes on the untaxed income). We cannot offer tax advice. You should consult with your peers (especially more advanced students) and with a tax accountant to sort this out!

But here is some info that others have found useful to get info as you prepare to file taxes about how much of what you were paid was from wages vs. stipend sources: For your wages, the W2 is the documentation you would use. For the stipends, the IRS exempts universities <<https://sfs.virginia.edu/tuition-billing/tax-information/scholarship-tax-information>> from providing a reporting document, so it's a bit more tricky. The best way is to navigate to UVAPay <<https://sfs.virginia.edu/tuition-billing/billing-payment/view-and-pay-your-bill>>, in the SIS Finance Center, then to the account activity section. There you should see "generate term statement," which will allow you to either download the statements by term or enter a date range. From there you would need to look through for anything with "Stipends" in the description, excluding the refund part of the transaction as you would be double reporting if included.

Awards

Maury Pathfinder Award

The Department makes an annual award of \$5000 for an outstanding predissertation/Master's thesis completed in a student's 1st or 2nd year. (Unfortunately, the \$5K cannot be split across more than one recipient because of the donor's stipulation as such. However, occasionally, when the donation accrues enough interest over \$5K, a second award may be possible.) The predissertation must have been submitted by the September 1 department deadline for it to be eligible for the Pathfinder award. A .pdf of the manuscript (or beginning in Fall 2024, in the case of SBN students, the NRSA-style proposal), along with a questionnaire that the DGS provides that asks students about their contribution to the reported project, should be uploaded to a Box folder (which the DGS will provide the link to) by September 1 of the 3rd year in order to be considered for this award. The DGS works with the graduate committee (composed of area heads) to select the recipient of this award.

Distinguished Teaching Fellowship

Advanced graduate students can apply to teach their own 4000-level seminars. Interested students should find a faculty sponsor and write a detailed syllabus of the course they propose to teach. The Undergraduate Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies meet in March to choose the DTF seminars that will be offered the following year. In recent years, we have been able to offer four (4) DTFs: Two in Fall and two in Spring. Note that teaching a DTF seminar does not normally increase the level of living support the department can offer above what a student would receive as a TA.

Rebecca Boone Memorial Teaching Award

In memory of Becky Boone, the Psychology Department's Administrative Assistant from 1982-1988, who was much beloved by students and faculty, is given annually at the May graduation ceremonies for excellence in teaching. Nominations can come from graduate students or faculty members during the Spring semester after the DGS circulates a call for nominations. A committee composed of the Director of Graduate Studies (Chair), the Director of Undergraduate Studies, and the Chair of the Steering Committee determine the recipient(s) of the prize. In recent years, it has been ~\$750.

Graduate Teaching Awards (Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs)

The Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs offers teaching awards for Graduate Teaching Assistants. These awards recognize excellence in undergraduate instruction. Details about the award can be found at: <http://gradstudies.virginia.edu/teachingawards/>.

Life in the Department

Education beyond Courses and Research

Courses, consultation with faculty members, and research are not the whole of graduate education in the Department of Psychology at the University of Virginia. There are often colloquia and other important events on **Mondays from 1230-145 p.m.**, featuring distinguished faculty and well-known speakers from inside and outside the Department. There are also job talks at that and other times. Colloquia provide an opportunity to hear about the latest theory and research in various fields of psychology and to meet people who are leaders in research. **All students and faculty are expected to attend these colloquia and job talks.**

There are also various informal discussion groups and “Contemporary Issues in” research meetings (often over lunch) that promote exchange of ideas and communication about the latest research. Students must attend their primary area meeting every semester of their in-residence graduate training and are encouraged to attend at least one other area meeting on a regular basis.

Conferences and Conference Travel

One of the most important opportunities for graduate students is presenting their work and networking at professional conferences. Each area has its list of go-to conferences, some small and intimate, others large and overwhelming. Talk to your lab-mates, peers, and advisor to get a sense of which conferences would be most appropriate for you given the kind of research you do. You are unlikely to receive support to attend them all each year, so you’ll also want to think (together with your advisor) about how to prioritize. In the ideal world, you’d be able to present at a conference each year you are in graduate school. What funds are available to support conference expenses?

1. The first source of support for conference expenses for most students is their advisor. So once you identify a conference that you think would be beneficial for you to attend, the first step is to discuss with your advisor to see what they think. If they think it’s a good idea, sometimes they have funds that can cover some or all of your expenses. Funds from a federal grant can only be used to support student travel to a conference if the student is presenting at the conference (e.g., a poster or a talk). But other sources of funding from a faculty member could be more flexible. If your advisor is going to support you, email psych-expense@virginia.edu and cc your advisor to explain and follow the instructions in the next section (Travel Planning and What to Know Before you Go).
2. Another source of support for conference expenses is the interest from a generous donor’s gift to the department. This source cannot provide funds to every student each year in the program—that’s why the advisor’s funds are the first source of support for conferences. But if an advisor cannot support a student’s conference travel, as of Fall 2025, the department can provide up to \$500 in a given academic year to support the student’s travel to a conference (e.g., conference registration, society membership, travel, hotel). The student does not have to be the presenting author at the conference,

but they do need to be a co-author on a talk or poster that is being presented at the conference. Only students in their 1st through 5th years are eligible for this opportunity. To tap into this source of support, you should email to psych-expense@virginia.edu and cc your advisor, explaining that after discussion with your advisor, you would like to request the \$500 department grad student travel support to attend X conference; confirm that this is your only request of the current academic year; confirm that you are a co-author on something being presented; and follow the instructions in the next section (Travel Planning and What to Know Before you Go).

3. A third source of support comes from internal and external opportunities and competitions that you should always be keeping your eye out for! For example, the [EXPAND](#) program offers conference travel funding for grad students on a rolling cycle. The Psi Chi organization offers [travel grants](#) you could apply for twice a year. And of course, many professional organizations that sponsor conferences often have travel awards students can apply for (e.g., [SRC](#), [SPSP](#), etc.).

If you are supported by your advisor or the department to travel to a conference, the department can pay for conference registration, society membership, etc., and it can book your travel for you. (The department cannot pay for your hotel because that requires showing a credit card on check-in.) Where possible, we are trying to avoid you having to pay out of pocket and get reimbursed, both so you don't have to worry about having the funds and to avoid the red tape that comes with the reimbursement process. So as soon as you are ready to begin the process of making arrangements, you should email psych-expense@virginia.edu, and follow the instructions in the next section (Travel Planning and What to Know Before you Go).

Travel Planning and What to Know Before You Go

Airfare

- It is best practice and preferred for Psychology Admin staff to book and pay for your airfare with a department credit card since travel expenses cannot be reimbursed until after the travel has occurred.
- Please send requests to psych-expense@virginia.edu including name of conference or reason for travel, dates of travel and preferred itinerary.
- Airfare will be booked either through TravelUVA's online booking tool or with a Christopherson Business Travel (CBT) travel agent.
- University policy is to book Economy class so Basic Economy fares are not available. Though the ticket price of a basic economy ticket may be less than a standard economy fare, the benefits and protections offered by UVA's contracts with the airline companies far outweigh the small difference in fare.
- It is not recommended to mix airline carriers.

Lodging

- Hotel reservations cannot be prepaid or booked with a department credit card since the traveler will need to present a credit card in their name at check-in; therefore lodging will need to be reimbursed after the trip has concluded.
- Please obtain an itemized receipt that shows the breakdown of the nightly rate and tax.

- Before booking with a third-party vendor, please check the nightly rate with the hotel. Sometimes booking directly with the hotel offers a better rate.
- If sharing a room with others, please ask the hotel if they can split the bill at check-out.
- University policy on Alternate Lodging (i.e., Airbnb, VRBO):
Hotels and other commercial properties carry insurance that covers their guests in case of injury or property loss. The type of properties offered via Airbnb and similar services vary widely in the type of coverage available for guests, if they offer any at all. Because of this, the University of Virginia does **not** recommend their use for university business.

Other Travel Expenses

- Ground transportation (taxi, Uber, Lyft, etc.) can be reimbursed with receipt after travel has concluded.
- Please make sure the receipt is in your name and indicates you paid with your personal credit card.

Submitting Receipts

- Upon return from your conference/meeting, please submit all travel receipts for reimbursement to psych-expense@virginia.edu.
- If the receipt is electronic, you may forward the emailed receipt.
- If a paper receipt, please scan and send in PDF format.

Email Lists

The Psychology Department maintains email lists for graduate students, faculty, postdocs, and staff: psych-grads@virginia.edu, psych-faculty@virginia.edu, psych-postdocs@virginia.edu, psych-staff@virginia.edu, and for the members of the subareas: psych-clinical@virginia.edu, psych-community@virginia.edu, psych-cognitive@virginia.edu, psych-developmental@virginia.edu, psych-quantitative@virginia.edu, psych-social@virginia.edu, and psych-neuro@virginia.edu.

These lists are for announcements or questions concerning area, department or university business. These lists should not be used for non-departmental business such as non-departmental social events, political announcements, solicitation or sales.

Students are automatically added to the “grads” and their primary subarea lists. Department members are welcome to be added to as many sub-area lists as they wish. To be added to other subarea email lists, send your request(s) to psy-comp@virginia.edu.

Office Space

The Department wrestles with a perennial space shortage. Office space for graduate students is provided within advisor laboratories or in designated graduate student office space. Area Heads coordinate office space for students in that area. The department chair is ultimately responsible for all space assignments.

Keys

Building, lab and office keys are issued by the front office staff.

Purchasing

Morgan Davis manages all purchasing of equipment, supplies, and other items for members and labs in the department. Please do not email Morgan directly but instead send requests to psy-buy@virginia.edu when you want the staff to buy something, such as lab supplies, software licenses, conference registration, etc. (Get your PI's permission, as an account number will be needed.)

Parking Spaces

Psychology parking spaces in front and in back of Gilmer are for visitors, scheduled appointments for the clinic and various labs, and other official department business. They are not for general graduate student or faculty use. Parking passes for guests are obtained and scheduled through the department front desk.

Clinic

For training purposes, the department's clinical psychology program maintains the Mary D. S. Ainsworth Clinic that treats clients free of charge. The clinical coordinator is Patricia Llewellyn, Ph.D. Privacy of clients is essential. Please maintain appropriate decorum at all times when in this area.

Your Contact Info

The departmental office and the Registrar maintain records of students' current address, phone number, and place of employment (after leaving the program). Students should keep the front office informed of moves and new contact information during and after their graduate career. Having contact information for post-grads is helpful for providing job contacts and advice for current graduate students.

Department Projectors

Portable Projectors and laptop computers are available to be checked out from the main office if needed.

Personal Emergency?

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis, contact the CASS on Call: <https://caresupport.studenthealth.virginia.edu/care-and-support-services/cass-call>

See also Care and Support Services: <https://www.studenthealth.virginia.edu/CASS>

Area-specific Requirements

Clinical

(Last updated: August 2024)

Clinical Training Mission Statement

Our clinical training program is designed to provide students with the broad skill set needed to offer the most widely-used and research-supported assessment and therapy approaches for working with clinical problems, including Axis I and II disorders, as well as problems in living and relationships. The training sequence includes theoretical and applied training in how to provide therapy for adults, children, families and couples. The clinical faculty has practice expertise across a variety of different theoretical orientations (e.g., cognitive-behavioral, interpersonal, motivational interviewing, psychodynamic), recognizing that not all problems or clients respond to a single type of therapy. Thus, students are trained to use a thoughtfully-developed individual case conceptualization along with the research literature to guide the choice of therapy approach for a given client.

The program emphasizes evidence-based approaches and the development of the clinical scientist. This means that when a client presents with a problem area for which there is a well-established empirically supported treatment, this is considered a logical starting point for developing a treatment plan. At the same time, in recognition of the fact that not all problem areas have a clearly identified empirically supported treatment and not all clients respond to these treatments, we emphasize the importance of learning a variety of clinical approaches and techniques. A combination of the research literature and the client's personal characteristics (e.g., demographic features such as ethnicity and age, comorbidity with other disorders, prior treatment history, wishes for therapy and comfort with structure, etc.) are both used to determine the choice of therapy approach and the individualized treatment plan.

In order to maintain an evidence-based approach to treatment for all clients, students are trained to use a scientific approach in their development of an iterative treatment plan that includes gathering data from individual clients. This involves setting clear goals for a given phase of therapy, thinking through how one will measure progress toward achieving those goals and the strategies most likely to achieve progress on the goals. Further, progress in therapy is reviewed regularly to determine whether goals are being met, with the expectation that treatment planning is a dynamic process.

Training program requirements

The Clinical Psychology Training Program at the University of Virginia is APA Accredited by the: Committee on Accreditation American Psychological Association 750 First Street, NE Washington, DC 20002-4242 (202) 336-5979. The program is also accredited by the Psychological Clinical Science Accreditation System (PCSAS).

Requirements	Course #	Course Title	Year
Core Clinical Courses	P7430	Psychological Assessment I	Year 1
	P7440	Psychological Assessment II	Year 1
	P7470	Experimental Psychopathology	Year 1
	P7420	Psychological Intervention I	Year 2
	P7450	Psychological Intervention II	Year 2
	P7410	Practicum to Clinical Intervention and History and Systems	Year 1/2
	P7740	Practicum to Clinical Intervention and Multicultural Issues	Year 1/2
	P7400	Practicum to Clinical Intervention and Ethics	Year 1/2
	P7750	Practicum to Clinical Intervention and Supervision	Year 1/2
	Basic Science	P7710	Quantitative I
P7720		Quantitative II	Year 1
**		Biological Bases of Behavior	Year 1-3
**		Cognitive Bases of Behavior	Year 1-3
**		Social Bases of Behavior	Year 1-3
**		Affective Aspects of Behavior	Anytime in residence

	**	Developmental Aspects of Behavior	Anytime in residence
	P7745	Ethics of Clinical Science (can substitute GSCI 8000, as this course is required for students with certain types of NIH funding, including an NRSA, or P8040)	Anytime in residence
Friday Area Meetings	P7504	Contemporary Issues: Ethics and Clinical Psychology	All
As part of training in ethical procedures in research, students are also required to complete and pass the University online ethics training in research.			Year 1-3
As part of training as a teacher, all students are expected to complete a minimum of one semester in serving as a Teaching Assistant for a departmental course at some point during their time in the program.			Open
First-Year Practica		Team Observations	Year 1
Second-Year Practica		2-4 Clients/week	Year 2
Third-Year Practicum Placement		1-2 days/week	Year 3
Fourth-Year Practicum Placement		1-2 days/week	Year 4
Pre-Dissertation Research Project (Students are expected to present this work at the clinical lunch series)		Due Sept. 1	end of Year 2
Pre-Dissertation Oral Defense (presentation of project and responding to questions at P7504 Contemporary Issues: Ethics and Clinical Psychology; i.e., clinical lunch series)			Year 2 or 3
Comprehensive Exam		Psych Bulletin Type Paper or NRSA type grant application Syllabus Journal Article Review	Due Aug. 1 after Year 3 ¹

Dissertation (Students are expected to present this work at the clinical lunch series)

Proposal Meeting

Pre-internship²

Oral Defense

APPIC-Member Internship

Within 7 years

Notes

Students are required to be in residence for at least 4 years of graduate training.

** See Core Courses: Breadth Requirements for acceptable courses to meet this requirement.

These breadth requirements should be completed during students' first 3 years in the program, except for Affective and Developmental Aspects of Behavior, which can be completed any time before a student heads to internship.

¹ By August 1, the advisor must approve the student's qualifying exam in order for the faculty to vote to advance the student to candidacy. If the student is unable to meet the August 1 deadline, then the student, their advisor, and the DGS have the option to develop an academic plan as a basis for a request for an extension from GSAS. This request should be completed by August 15. Requesting and receiving an extension is not automatic and will occur in situations when the advisor and the DGS feel extra time is warranted.

Note, it is not necessary for the entire qualifying exam committee to approve the qualifying exam materials by the August 1 deadline. Instead, requirements for approval from the student's entire committee will follow the area's guidelines. Typically, a student will be unable to progress to the next phase (e.g., unable to hold a defense of their dissertation proposal) until they have the committee's approval of their qualifying exam materials. Also, students who have not completed the comprehensive exam by March 1 of their fourth year will not be allowed to apply for a fifth-year practicum.

² Students must successfully defend their dissertation proposal by November 1 or they will not be allowed to apply for an internship for the following year. To meet this deadline, it is expected that students will have a complete proposal available by the last week of September, and have the entire month of October available so as to find a workable time to defend their proposal.

Establishing Evidence of Competency

- Students must achieve a grade of at least a B- in all courses to be in good standing in the program.
- Students must receive formal approval from two faculty members on their pre-dissertation that it meets the standards of a "publishable quality" manuscript (*Note, publishable quality is determined by the methodological rigor, theoretical contribution, and quality of writing, analysis and interpretation of the work, rather than by whether or not a given article is accepted for publication). This approval is noted in an email sent to the Director of Graduate Studies after the faculty are satisfied that their requests for revisions to the manuscript have been addressed.
- Students must successfully defend their dissertation proposal and final thesis before a committee of faculty, and demonstrate that they are able to talk about the work in a thoughtful way. The faculty committee requests changes to the work at each stage and the student must show they are responsive to this feedback, so that faculty are satisfied that the work is ultimately of publishable quality and the student has made a substantive contribution to the field in their original area of research.

- Clinical competency is formally evaluated in classes and on the Ainsworth Competency and external Supervisor practicum rating forms (see “Clinical competencies” section on Wiki).). Students are expected to score a 2 or above on the items on the rating forms. A support or remediation plan will be considered for scores below a 2.
- Students are expected to present their research at P7940 Contemporary Issues: Ethics and Clinical Psychology, the clinical lunch series.

Note. Students are expected to see 4 clients concurrently at the Ainsworth clinic during their second year internal practicum, though this number may vary. To determine each student’s readiness for external practicum (usually starting in students’ third year), a committee comprised of the Director of the clinic, Intervention instructors, as well as the individual student’s clinical supervisor, will evaluate the students’ clinical skills and personal readiness for more independent clinical work. This evaluation occurs in part via the Ainsworth competency rating forms, and in part via discussion among the clinical faculty.

Clinical Core Courses: Breadth Requirements

Rationale: In addition to their course work in clinical psychology and quantitative methods, students are required to take additional courses that ensure broad familiarity with the basic science of psychology. These courses are typically expected to be general (rather than specialized) in their content, providing an advanced survey of current knowledge in one of the fundamental areas of psychology. Students will sometimes take these core courses from non-clinical faculty members. Emphasis is given to courses that describe general principles rather than the study of individual differences and to courses that focus on the basic psychological knowledge rather than the application of psychological knowledge.

Requirement: Each student must take at least one course in each of the following five areas. In order to retain some flexibility in students' curricula, the clinical faculty has decided to allow some deviation from a narrow list of core course alternatives. Courses that do not appear on this list (e.g., special seminars on advanced topics) must be approved by the Director of Clinical Training. Students must get the DCT's approval for any proposed core courses not on the list below. You are responsible for keeping a record of this approval (a copy of an email from the DCT is sufficient).

Biological Bases of Behavior

PSYC 5559: Affective Neuroscience [PSYC5559-1.pdf](#)

PSYC 7200: Advanced Neural Mechanisms of Behavior

PSYC 7230: Genetic and Epigenetic Research in Behavior

PSYC 5326: The Neuroscience of Social Relationships: Brain, Body, and Ecology

PSYC 5620-RM: Social Psychophysiology

EDHS 8680: Integrative Course in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience

Cognitive-Affective Bases of Behavior

PSYC 7180: Cognitive Science

PSYC 7160: Cognition and Emotion

PSYC 7140: Cognitive Neuroscience of Illusory and True Memories

PSYC 5310: Developmental Psycholinguistics

PSYC 7150: Advanced Cognitive Psychology

PSYC 8820: Cognitive Development

PSYC 5325: Cognitive Neuroscience

PSYC 5559: Lifespan Cognition/Cognitive Aging

Affective Bases of Behavior

PSYC 7725: Affective Aspects of Behavior

PSYC 5160: Emotion and Cognition

Developmental Bases of Behavior

PSYC 7730: Developmental Aspects of Behavior

Social Bases of Behavior

PSYC 7480: Community Psychology/Prevention Science

PSYC 8460: The Minority Family

PSYC 7600: Social Psychology

PSYC 8470: Ecological Theory and Assessment

PSYC 7475: Ethnic Minority Issues in Research and Intervention

PSYC 5550: Social Ecological Psychology

PSYC 7605: Self Knowledge and the Adaptive Unconscious

PSYC 8650: Social and Personality Development

PSYC 5410: Juvenile Justice

PSYC 7115/5559: Subjective Well-Being/The Science of Subjective Well-being

PSYC 5703: Cultural Psychology

PSYC 7559: Social Psychology in the Public Interest

PSYC 7485: Structural Determinants of Inequality

PSYC 7645: Psychology of Inequality

Comprehensive exam

Instead of the traditional written exam, the Comprehensive Exam will be based on three specific activities which represent a sample of primary responsibilities associated with an academic career:

1. **Journal article critique:** write a short (two or three page, single-spaced) review of a recent journal article (published or unpublished). Assess its strengths and weaknesses, and make detailed recommendations for its revision. A good idea is to ask your adviser to act as a student reviewer of an actual, submitted article.

2. **Review paper** (after Psychological Bulletin or Annual Review of Psychology format) or **Grant Submission** : Either: 1. write a comprehensive review of a particular topic or issue which demonstrates breadth of knowledge across more than one area of psychology as well as a critical and thorough understanding of a particular topic. Picking your topic is a key so that you do not become overwhelmed. Be focused; demonstrate breadth by bring other issues to bear on your focused topic. OR 2. Write and submit a grant comparable in length and scope to an NRSA pre-doctoral fellowship proposal.

For a grant to meet the comps requirement, it must include a: 1) research proposal, 2) brief training plan, and 3) human subjects component, and must be completed in your second or third year.

Note. If the grant that is the best fit for your research and professional development does not already include those 3 components, then you may apply for the best-fitting grant option (with approval from your research advisor) and simply add the missing components for your comps submission. For instance, if you do an NSF application in your 2nd year, the research plan is done but you'd need to draft a brief training plan (.5-1 page expected length) detailing how you will obtain the training needed to complete the proposed research and how doing this training and research are a good fit for your broader professional development and career goals. You would also need to do a human subjects component, which could either be the IRB submission for your proposed project or an analogous human subjects recruitment/protocol/ethics & protections description.

3. **Course syllabus:** prepare a detailed syllabus (statement of goals, course outline, and readings) for a one-semester course at either the undergraduate or graduate level. Use the syllabus from a course you have taken as a model.

Students are expected to do the work required for the Comprehensive Exam during their third year of graduate study. All three parts are expected to be finished by August 1 following the completion of the student's third year in the program.

Students should choose a Comprehensive Exam adviser by the end of the Fall Semester in their second year of graduate study. Two other members of each student's Comprehensive Exam Committee must then be chosen in consultation with this adviser. One of these members ordinarily will be from within the core clinical faculty, and the other ordinarily will be from

another area within the Department of Psychology (to ensure breadth of coverage). This committee will be responsible for supervising all three parts of the exam process. All three members of the committee must be consulted before the exam process is initiated. This process of consultation and negotiation, particularly with regard to the topic of the review paper, is designed to ensure that the final paper will meet the general spirit of this assignment in terms of breadth and depth of coverage.

Students cannot fail the Comprehensive Exam, but the committee may return any part of the work for revision. If any part of the work is severely flawed, the committee may inform the student that a single revision is unlikely to be acceptable.

Practicum activities policies

The clinical faculty in the Department of Psychology is responsible for the practical training and clinical activities of graduate students (regardless of their level of prior experience or length of time in the program). In order to establish and maintain a coherent training program, we must be sure that placements are available for all students on an equitable basis and that all students participate in a balanced series of practicum experiences. We are also accountable (e.g., malpractice and liability insurance) for any problems that might arise during students' clinical work.

Therefore, **all practicum activities must be approved and coordinated through the Director of the Ainsworth Clinic, Patricia (Lee) Llewellyn**. Discuss your interests and plans for future practicum placements with her during the spring semester of each year. She is responsible for arranging and maintaining our formal relations with practicum supervisors outside of this department. After you begin working at a site, you must stay in touch with Lee so that she can monitor your progress and be sure that you are receiving adequate supervision. If there are serious problems, they will be discussed by the clinical faculty as a whole.

Clinical skills training in the first two years of the program takes place primarily in the context of formal courses. Students in their third and fourth years (and beyond) are also expected to be actively involved in practicum training. This advanced activity must be closely supervised, and it must also be formally acknowledged, recorded, and evaluated. The vehicle for that process involves registration for PSYC 998 ("Clinical Practicum"), which is a variable (one to three) credit class. Student performance is evaluated on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis. You must enroll for this course whenever you are involved in practicum activities outside of Gilmer Hall. Students who sign up for P998 should list Lee Llewellyn as their instructor. Be sure to check with Lee before you register.

At the end of each semester, a form will be completed by your supervisors to provide feedback about your performance in several areas. The supervisor will also be asked to indicate on a global basis whether your work was satisfactory. The supervisor is required to discuss these comments with you before returning them to Lee Llewellyn. Your performance in practicum experiences is one important consideration in our evaluation of students' progress in the training program. Regardless of whether you are registered for formal course credit, two semesters of unsatisfactory work in practicum may be grounds for dismissal from the clinical training program.

Note: Students are expected to see 4 clients concurrently at the Ainsworth clinic during their second year internal practicum, though this number may vary. To determine each student's readiness for external practicum (usually starting in students' third year), a committee comprised of the Director of the clinic, Intervention instructors, as well as the individual student's clinical supervisor, will evaluate the students' clinical skills and personal readiness for more independent clinical work. This evaluation occurs in part via the Ainsworth competency rating forms, and in part via discussion among the clinical faculty.

Practicum descriptions

See the most recent partial Mary D. Ainsworth Psychological Clinic Practicum Packet on the "Clinical Psych Area" Canvas site. Descriptors change every year so specific sites' information are not included here. Full practicum packets are handed out every February to active clinical students.

Clinical competencies

For definitions of clinical competencies, please see the clinical section on the Psychology Dept.'s WIKI.

Monitoring student progress and problems

The clinical program has a series of steps in place to monitor student progress. Our goal is to catch problems early, and address problems as soon as they arise. However, we also note our policy regarding termination from the program to insure students' receive due process and are aware of the procedures should a problem not be resolvable:

Monitoring progress: Each year, all graduate students complete an Annual Report that documents their accomplishments in the course of the previous calendar year, including program requirements and general academic accomplishments, such as publications, presentations and grants. Clinical faculty, especially the student's research mentor and Lee Llewellyn, the practicum coordinator, monitor students' progress throughout the academic year. Faculty advisors and the Director of Clinical Training and Director of Graduate Studies also co-write a letter to each student in which they are informed about their standing in the program. Copies of all letters of progress are kept in the students' academic files, which are maintained by the Department of Psychology. In addition, at least one clinical faculty meeting, typically in April, is formally devoted to discussing the progress of all students in the program, and there is an opportunity at each area faculty meeting to raise concerns about students.

Addressing problems: Advisors, instructors or supervisors bring students who are having problems to the attention of the Director of Clinical Training and/or Director of Graduate Studies. The Director of Clinical Training or Director of Graduate Studies typically speaks with the student directly to ascertain more about the issue at hand, and (if appropriate) the circumstances may then be discussed with the entire clinical faculty. Any student who is considered to be doing work that is less than satisfactory is given written feedback about the problem(s) and asked to discuss the situation and ways in which it can be remedied. Every effort is made to find ways to enable students to make better academic progress, or if the problem is with the student's clinical skills, to find suitable ways to address the shortcoming (e.g., increasing supervision time). Improvements or the lack of change are noted in subsequent verbal and written communications.

Protocol for developing remediation plans to address problems in clinical work:

For evaluations at the end of the Fall semester:

1. If a student receives a 1 for any item, a remediation plan is established and documented with the input from the student, supervisor, and Director of the Ainsworth Clinic.
2. The plan is then signed by the student, the supervisor, and the Director of the Ainsworth clinic in a joint meeting, where the plan is, again discussed.

3. The Director meets with the student and contacts the supervisor during the spring semester to get updates on progress and work towards altering the plan, if needed.
4. After the next supervisor evaluation, a document indicating that she has successfully remediated the issues will be signed by all three parties. If continued issues persist, see next section.

For evaluations at the end of the Spring Semester:

1. If a student receives a 1 for any item at the end of their practicum, a tentative remediation plan is established and documented with the input from the student, supervisor, and Director of the Ainsworth Clinic.
2. The Director of the Ainsworth Clinic, with knowledge and consent of the student, then discusses those concerns from the last semester with their next supervisor. A formal remediation plan is established and documented with the input from the student, new supervisor, and Director of the Ainsworth Clinic.
3. The student, new supervisor, and the Director of the Ainsworth clinic meet in a joint meeting, where the plan is, again discussed, and signed, if all agree.
4. The Director meets with the student and contacts the supervisor during the spring semester to get updates on progress and work towards altering the plan, if needed.

If the student is not signed up for a formal external practicum in the year following an end of the year evaluation with ratings of 1 in it OR is the next practicum site is not able to provide remediation (e.g., the issues are in assessment and the new site does not provide any assessment experience), that student will perform clinical hours in the Ainsworth Clinic under supervision, and that supervisor will be the “new” supervisor who signs documents and performs the competency evaluations.

Termination from the program: Termination from the program is a possibility that is considered only after written warnings have been issued to the student and steps have been taken that have failed to correct the problem. Typically, this involves a year or more of feedback and attempts at remediation. (Note, if a serious breach of ethics or honors violation has occurred, then termination could be pursued without these prior warnings and interventions.) If a faculty member or members believe a student should be terminated, the student is informed of this circumstance, and the issue is discussed first among the clinical faculty, and then with the Director of Graduate Studies. Appeals to retain a student who has missed department deadlines can be approved by a unanimous vote of the Graduate Committee (comprised of all department area heads plus the Director of Graduate Studies).

Due process: Please review the section on Student Grievances. This section describes steps for raising and addressing student complaints, and informs students about available resources (e.g., the Director of Graduate Students is available in the department, and the University Ombudsman is available as an independent resource) [Homepage | University Ombuds \(virginia.edu\)](#). Also, if the student is not satisfied, the student may employ the University's formal grievance procedure (<http://uvapolicy.virginia.edu/policy/PROV-019> and http://records.ureg.virginia.edu/content.php?catoid=55&navoid=4417#stud_acad_griev_pol).

Sample 5-Year Plan

This is just a sample plan and we have purposefully structured the program so that students can individualize the program to meet their particular needs and career goals. We have only listed teaching for one semester each year, though some students will teach for 2 semesters. The teaching assignment is listed for the fall, but can occur either fall or spring (or both) semester(s). We encourage you to attend at least one conference per year.

Year 1

Fall:

Courses: Experimental Psychopathology (PSYC 7470), Assessment 1 (PSYC 7430), Quantitative 1 (PSYC 7710)

Practicum: Team in Ainsworth clinic (start tracking your clinical hours & do this throughout grad school)

Research: Start brainstorming ideas for your prediss research; get involved with an existing project to learn how research is conducted in your lab; complete human subjects IRB training

Teaching: Be a TA for a course with no labs/discussion section; Teaching Psychology: Review Sections (PSYC 9560)

Service: Nothing yet

Attend clinical lunch series

Spring:

Courses: Breadth requirement, Assessment 2 (PSYC 7440), Quantitative 2 (PSYC 7720)

Practicum: Team in Ainsworth clinic

Research: Develop design (if collecting data) or plan for analyses (if working with existing data) for your prediss research; continue work on existing project

Service: Help with grad recruitment (e.g., take a prospective student on a tour or to lunch)

Attend clinical lunch series

Summer: Continue research and complete a clinic testing case over the summer

Year 2

Fall:

Courses: Breadth requirement, Intervention 1 (PSYC 7420), Ethics of Clinical Science class (can be taken anytime during first 3 years)

Practicum: Team in Ainsworth clinic; start seeing your own clients at Ainsworth

Research: Collect data/run analyses for your prediss research; get involved with an additional project and/or join a second research lab

Teaching: Be a TA for a course with a lab/discussion section; Teaching Psychology: Sections (PSYC-9561)

Service: Join a committee

Attend clinical lunch series

Spring:

Courses: Breadth requirement, Intervention 2 (PSYC 7450)

Practicum: Team in Ainsworth clinic; see 4 clients at Ainsworth

Research: Prepare manuscript for prediss research; continue work on additional project/in 2nd lab

Service: Join a committee; help with grad recruitment

Attend clinical lunch series

Summer: Continue research (complete prediss) and complete a clinic testing case over the summer

Year 3

Fall:

Courses: Optional - consider sitting in on an additional quant class or class relevant to your research area (or complete breadth requirements; e.g., this can be a good time to submit materials for the Affective Aspects of Behavior course)

External Practicum: 1-2 days/week

Research: Begin comps research; start developing ideas for dissertation; continue participation in a second research lab

Teaching: Be a TA for a course with a lab/discussion section; Optional: Teaching Sections-Courses (PSYC 9562)

Service: Join a committee or volunteer to be clinical rep/referral liaison/buddy, etc.

Attend clinical lunch series & present your prediss research

Spring:

Courses: Optional - consider sitting in on an additional quant class or class relevant to your research area (or complete breadth requirements if not already done; e.g., this can be a good time to submit materials for the Developmental Aspects of Behavior course)

External Practicum: 1-2 days/week

Research: Continue comps research; work on dissertation proposal; continue participation in a second research lab

Service: Join a committee or volunteer to be clinical rep/referral liaison/buddy, etc.; help with grad recruitment

Attend clinical lunch series

Summer: Continue research (complete comps by August 1) over the summer

Year 4

Fall:

Courses: None (or consider an especially relevant class). If you have not completed the Affective and Developmental Aspects of Behavior courses, this is a good time to complete those requirements.

External Practicum: 1-2 days/week

Research: Defend dissertation proposal + work on other collaboration(s); continue participation in a second research lab; supervise a senior undergraduate honors thesis (DMP)

Teaching: Be a TA for a course with a lab/discussion section

Service: Chair a committee or volunteer to be clinical rep/referral liaison/buddy, etc.

Attend clinical lunch series

Spring:

Courses None (or consider an especially relevant class). If you have not completed the Affective and Developmental Aspects of Behavior courses, this is a good time to complete those requirements.

External Practicum: 1-2 days/week

Research: Work on dissertation research + other collaboration(s); continue participation in a second research lab

Service: Chair a committee or volunteer to be clinical rep/referral liaison/buddy, etc.; help with grad recruitment

Attend clinical lunch series

Summer: Continue research and start internship applications (essays, compiling hours, & list of sites) over the summer

Year 5

Fall:

Apply for internship (complete essays, cover letters, etc.)

Courses: None

Smaller Practicum: (e.g., seeing 2 clients at Ainsworth)

Research: Work on dissertation (e.g., complete data collection) + other collaboration(s); continue participation in a second research lab

Teaching: Be a TA for a course with a lab/discussion section or consider teaching your own course (DTF)

Service: Chair a committee or volunteer to be clinical rep/referral liaison/buddy, etc.

Attend clinical lunch series

Spring:

Internship interviews **Courses:** None

Smaller Practicum: (e.g., seeing 2 clients at Ainsworth)

Research: Complete dissertation research (defend dissertation before leaving for internship) + other collaboration(s); continue participation in a second research lab

Service: Chair a committee or volunteer to be clinical rep/referral liaison/buddy, etc.

Attend clinical lunch series & present your dissertation research

You've made it – head off to internship!

Additional Resources

- To find information about clinical requirements, training documents, and internship resources, look under the clinical section on the department's WIKI.
- Clinical students can access the "Clinical Psych Area" Canvas site to view various resources. There, they will find readings, information on assessment, clinic forms, clinic policies and procedures, practicum, internship, clinic related trainings, and the clinic library.

Cognitive

Cognitive area course requirements (Last updated August 2024)

The coursework in the cognitive program is intended to achieve two goals: (a) to develop quantitative and methodological skills that are essential for conducting psychological science and (b) to provide necessary expertise in the core cognitive areas. However, the required courses are kept to a minimum so that students - in collaboration with their advisors - can select the most appropriate courses for developing expertise that is relevant to the students' research agenda. In addition, since teaching is a powerful way to learn a topic, students should expect to be teaching assistants during their first two years for the undergraduate cognitive courses (i.e., Introduction to Cognition).

1. Survey Classes. The following survey class is required, as long as it is offered during the student's initial three years in the program: Advanced Cognition (7120). In addition, the student must take at least one other course bearing graduate credit in the cognitive area. The student may consult with the area head if in doubt as to whether that course would be considered in the area.
2. Research methods. A graduate research methods class is required.
3. Statistics. Students are required to take 7710 and 7720 (as per departmental course requirements) and at least one other quantitative course to be determined in consultation with their advisor and (if necessary) the Area Head.
4. Cognitive area meeting. It's required that students attend the weekly cognitive area meeting ("cognitive lunch") for every semester of their graduate career. In addition, students are required to give at least a joint presentation during their first year, and at least one solo presentation at the meeting every year thereafter.
5. Multiple lab experience. Students should either collaborate on a project with someone other than their advisor or attend the lab meetings of another lab for at least a semester.
6. Completing the departmental course requirements. This includes taking a year of statistics (7710, 7720), the Forum on Scientific and Professional Ethics (8040) and other courses from the cognitive area and other areas of psychology so as to reach a minimum total of 30 hours of graded coursework for the Masters and 42 hours for the Ph.D.
7. Multiple advisors: We believe it is important to have multiple advisors – after all, at some point you'll need letters of recommendation from multiple people. So, by the end of the your first semester, you must have identified a secondary advisor from any area (e.g., Neuro). Of course, your interests may change during the course of your time here and so it is easy to switch a secondary advisor (as well as your advisor) – it is just a matter of finding a new person who is willing to serve in this role.

Milestones

First Year General Exam: By August 15 at the end of Year 1, students will complete an exam on the central topics in cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience. If the student fails the exam then a makeup exam must be scheduled by December 15. If the student fails the exam a second time, the cognitive faculty will meet to evaluate the student's future in the program.

Predissertation: By August 15 at the end of Year 2, the student's master's thesis – a research article based on the research in Years 1-2 – must be approved by the advisor and a second reader.

Comprehensive Exam: By August 1 at the end of Year 3, the student's advisor must approve the proposal element (part #1, see below for description of parts #1 and #2) of this exam in order to advance the student to Ph.D. candidacy. If the student is unable to meet the August 1 deadline, then the student, their advisor, and the DGS have the option to develop an academic plan as a basis for a request for an extension from GSAS. This request should be completed by August 15. Requesting and receiving an extension is not automatic and will occur in situations when the advisor and the DGS feel extra time is warranted.

This comprehensive exam will be evaluated by the advisor and at least two other faculty members. Typically, one of the other faculty members will be in the same area as the student as well as the advisor and the third faculty member will come from a different area. At least two of the faculty must be regular members of the Psychology department. Note, it is not necessary for the entire exam committee to approve the qualifying exam materials by the August 1 deadline -- only the advisor must approve of part #1.

There are two parts to this exam: (1) An NIH/NSF-style proposal: Written in the style of a NIH or NSF grant-application, this proposal must be approved by the advisor and second reader by August 1 at the end of Year 3. If you are eligible, we strongly recommend that you use this proposal to apply for a NIH NRSA; (2) An oral exam: By October 15 of Year 4, the student will complete an oral exam based on the proposal. The exam committee, chaired by the student's advisor, will consist of a minimum of three faculty. Two or more faculty will be members of the Psychology department and typically one of these three will be from outside of the student's area.

Once the committee has approved the Exam, the committee chair/advisor must send an email to the DGS (and copy Debbie Snow) indicating that you have successfully completed your Comprehensive Exam requirements, on what date, and who the committee members were.

Dissertation Proposal: In preparation for the dissertation project, students write a dissertation proposal that describes their research project. You should write the dissertation proposal in the form of a grant application to the National Institutes of Mental Health, one of the principal sources of funding in our field. The purpose of this requirement is to teach you how to write grants and to help you see what your options are now and later when you are a faculty member

and need to write one. For formatting instructions, see http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/writing_application.htm .

When the student and advisor agree that the proposal is ready to present, the student schedules a meeting of the dissertation committee and circulates the proposal at least one week prior to the meeting date. The proposal meeting is held prior to the completion of the dissertation research so that the committee can discuss, comment, and request revisions to the rationale, design, methods, or analysis plan for the project.

At least one week before the meeting the student must announce the date, time, and place of the proposal meeting to the Department by email to all faculty, postdocs, graduate students, and Debbie Snow (dsnow@virginia.edu). The student should make a copy of the proposal available to any department member that requests it. Failure to email the announcement on time will require rescheduling of the proposal meeting.

The Dissertation Committee meeting can result in approval of the proposal or a request for minor or major revisions. The Committee may decide to schedule additional meetings as necessary. When the committee is satisfied with the proposal, the advisor will notify the Director of Graduate Studies in writing.

Two Example Cognitive Grad Plans:

Example 1

Year 1 – Fall semester

PSYC 7559 (Cognitive Science)

PSYC 7501 (Contemporary issues: Cognitive)

PSYC 7710 (Quantitative Methods I)

PSYC 9501 (Topical Research)

Year 1 – Spring semester

PSYC 5710 (Machine learning & Data Mining)

PSYC 7615 (Grad research methods)

PSYC 7720 (Quantitative Methods II)

PSYC 8040 (Professional Ethics)

Year 2 – Fall Semester

PSYC 5260 (Brain Systems in Learning & memory)

PSYC 5559 (Cognitive Aging)

PSYC 8730 (Dynamical Systems Analysis)

PSYC 9501 (Topical Research) P SYC 9559 (Intro to Grad Teaching)

Year 2 – Spring Semester

PSYC 5325 (Cognitive Neuroscience)

PSYC 7760 (Intro to Applied Multivariate Methods)

PSYC 7120 (Advanced Cognition)

PSYC 8999 (Non-topical Research Master's Preparation)

Year 3 – Fall Semester

PSYC 8998 (Non-topical Research Master's Preparation)

Year 3 – Spring Semester

PSYC 8998 (Non-topical Research Master's Preparation)

Year 4 – Fall Semester

PSYC 9999 (Non-topical Research Doctoral)

Year 4 – Spring Semester

PSYC 9999 (Non-topical Research Doctoral)

Year 5 – Fall Semester

PSYC 9999 (Non-topical Research Doctoral)

Year 5 – Spring Semester

PSYC 9999 (Non-topical Research Doctoral)

Example 2

Year 1 – Fall semester

PSYC 7120 (Advanced Cognition)

PSYC 7501 (Contemporary issues: Cognitive)

PSYC 7710 (Quantitative Methods I)

PSYC 9501 (Topical Research)

Year 1 – Spring semester

PSYC 7605 (Grad class on cognition)

PSYC 7615 (Grad research methods)

PSYC 7720 (Quantitative Methods II)

PSYC 8040 (Professional Ethics)

Year 2 – Fall Semester

PSYC 7501 (Contemporary Issues: Cognitive)

PSYC 7760 (upper level quantitative class)

PSYC 9501 (Topical Research)

Year 2 – Spring Semester

PSYC 7501

PSYC 8559 (Grad class on cognition)

PSYC 8725 (Lifespan Development)

PSYC 9501 (Topical Research)

Year 3 – Fall Semester

PSYC 8998 (Non-topical Research Master's Preparation)

Year 3 – Spring Semester

PSYC 8998 (Non-topical Research Master's Preparation)

Year 4 – Fall Semester

PSYC 9999 (Non-topical Research Doctoral)

Year 4 – Spring Semester

PSYC 9999 (Non-topical Research Doctoral)

Year 5 – Fall Semester

PSYC 9999 (Non-topical Research Doctoral)

Year 5 – Spring Semester

PSYC 9999 (Non-topical Research Doctoral)

Community

Brief summary of the graduate program (last updated March 2026):

The community psychology program focuses on the role of broader societal contexts in shaping human behavior, with a particular emphasis on structural inequalities and their potential to undermine healthy human development. Our program deals directly with issues of diversity across a host of social identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) and processes of marginalization and oppression. Our program also attends explicitly to pre-existing strengths among marginalized communities and seeks to identify factors that foster resilience in the face of societal risk. The goal is to train researchers who adopt a value orientation that emphasizes discovering knowledge for the sake of understanding and using that knowledge for the sake of action. The program embraces a mentorship model and students are involved with research throughout their training. Students are expected to become knowledgeable about evaluation and field research methods. Included in the curriculum are required courses in foundations of community psychology, structural determinants of inequality, and a mandatory year-long practicum course in which students work on a project to help examine policy/research/action needs for a local agency and/or government. Potential career paths of graduates from the Community Psychology doctoral program include academic and non-academic positions such as Professors/Educators, Program Administrators, Consultants, and Evaluators/Analysts.

Students complete “official” course work by the end of their second year. Although there is less flexibility in the first year, the second year is flexible by design so that students may pursue courses both within the department and outside of it that fit with their specific research and career interests. Required courses include:

First Year: Fall Semester

PSYC 7480: Critical Perspectives of Psychological Research	3 credits (graded)
PSYC 7710: Quantitative Methods I	4 credits (graded)
PSYC 9560: Teaching Psych-Review Sessions (dept-wide requirement)	1 credit (graded)
PSYC 7503: Continuing Issues: Community Psych (Lunch)	2 credits (not graded)
EDLF 7402: Program Evaluation	3 credits (graded)
PSYC 9501: Topical Research (with student’s research advisor)	1 credit (graded)

First Year: Spring Semester

PSYC 7485: Structural Determinants of Inequality	3 credits (graded)
PSYC 7720: Quantitative Methods II	4 credits (graded)
PSYC 7503: Continuing Issues: Community Psych (Lunch)	2 credits (not graded)
PSYC 8040: Forum on Scientific and Professional Ethics (dept-wide requirement)	1 credit (graded)
PSYC 9501: Topical Research	1-3 credits (graded)
Elective- optional	1-3 credits (can be graded or not g

Second Year: Fall Semester

PSYC 7481: Practicum in Community Psychology & Prevention Science	3 credits (graded)
PSYC 7503: Continuing Issues: Community Psych (Lunch)	2 credits (not graded)
PSYC 9501: Topical Research	1 credit (graded)
2-3 Electives (student selects with advisor)	6-9 credits (graded)

Second Year: Spring Semester

PSYC 7481: Practicum in Community Psychology & Prevention Science	3 credits (graded)
PSYC 7503: Continuing Issues: Community Psych (Lunch)	2 credits (not graded)
PSYC 9501: Topical Research	1 credit (graded)
2-3 Electives (student selects with advisor)	6-9 credits (graded)

Electives may include courses in the Psychology Department; however, students are also encouraged to pursue courses in other departments (e.g., Sociology Department, Women, Gender, & Sexuality Department) or schools (e.g., School of Education and Human Development). Some students may choose to pursue the certification in Quantitative Psychology.

From third year on, students are expected to take 12 research credits each semester, continue to attend the Contemporary Issues (Community lunch) weekly meetings, and engage in the community doing both research and action. All schedules must be arranged in conjunction with the student's primary advisor. Other program requirements include the pre-dissertation project, comprehensive exam {consisting of 1) an in-depth review paper, grant application, or a publishable, first-authored, empirical paper, as well as 2) a detailed class syllabus, and 3) a constructive review of a research paper}, and the dissertation. Students also are expected to make presentations at national conferences on a regular basis, submit their work for peer-reviewed publication, and apply for fellowships or pursue grant funding for their research. Students should aim to complete all requirements for the Ph.D. in five years. Every student has an individualized program of courses, placements, and research.

MILESTONE DEADLINES

Pre-dissertation:

The pre-dissertation must be signed off by the advisor and submitted to the second reader by September 1 after students' second year. If not complete, an extension should be requested in consultation with the advisor. The primary advisor should send an e-mail to Debbie Snow to notify her once the pre-dissertation has been approved by the primary advisor and the second reader.

Comprehensive Exams:

Students are expected to do the work required for the Comprehensive Exam during their third year of graduate study. All three parts are expected to be finished by August 1 following the completion of the student's third year in the program.

Students' comprehensive exam committees consist of their advisor and 2 other faculty from the department. Students should choose two other members of their Comprehensive Exam Committee in consultation with their primary advisor. One of these members ordinarily will be from within the core community area faculty, and the other ordinarily will be from another area within the Department of Psychology (to ensure breadth of coverage). This committee will be responsible for supervising all three parts of the exam process.

Students have until Oct. 1 for their committee to sign off (i.e., primary advisor must sign off by August 1 and other two committee members by Oct. 1). This difference in dates for sign-offs is to help students not miss being advanced to candidacy by the graduate school if a committee member is slow to approve the comps materials. The primary advisor should send an e-mail to Debbie Snow to notify her that the student has submitted the comprehensive exam materials to their committee.

Note, students will not be able to propose their dissertations until the full committee has signed off on the comps materials. Primary advisers and committee members will email the DGS to notify them when they sign off on a student's comps materials (deadline for primary advisors is August 1 before the start of students' fourth year and deadline for other committee members is October 1 during the start of students' fourth year).

Dissertation:

The student works with their advisor to identify a committee. The committee is typically composed of 3 faculty members from the Psychology Department (usually faculty who also served on the qualifying exam committee) and one UVA faculty member outside the department. All committee members must be tenured or tenure-track faculty. Prior to November 1 during students' 5th year in the program, the committee will meet with the student to discuss and approve the student's dissertation proposal (which will have been submitted to the committee two weeks prior to the oral defense). Completion of the dissertation is marked by the committee's approval of the student's written dissertation as well as the student's passing of a final oral defense of the dissertation.

Developmental

For up-to-date information about the Developmental area's requirements and expectations, visit:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Q3PgRkf449_S7LMIM83G1ZOOOnAnhVKEBvcO6VXjuF2I/edit?usp=sharing

Quantitative

For up-to-date information about the Quantitative area's requirements and expectations, visit:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/10zvGfBT-ylcA6dzE0AsHG6Pd1wSbLKMMxipIHMzi7Uc/edit?usp=sharing>.

Social

The UVa Social Psychology Doctoral Program aims to help you develop your potential as an independent, creative, and critical theorist and researcher. We have built a curriculum that scaffolds several core learning objectives in Social Psychology while providing flexibility to explore and broaden your expertise. For the social area requirements and program description, please [click here](#) (or you can copy and paste this link into a browser: <https://virginia.box.com/s/jqi431d88dvnwyh1ggvxy3vptwt5obq>).

Systems and Behavioral Neuroscience

(Last updated: November 2025)

At the time of graduation, a typical student has published at least 1 first authored experimental paper, 1-2 non-first-authored papers, and 1-2 other papers in preparation for the outcome of the dissertation research. Students typically attend 1-2 national meetings per year to present first-authored posters. Students are encouraged to apply for graduate fellowships from NSF or NIH.

Program Requirements

Predissertation: As of Fall 2023, there is no separate predissertation requirement in the SBN area. Students fulfill the requirements for a masters degree through the qualifying exam process.

Qualifying Exam: Before the beginning of the third year in the program, PhD students in the Systems and Behavioral Neuroscience area must complete at least 30 hours of graded, graduate-level coursework and pass a qualifying examination comprising a written document and an oral defense. Successful completion of the qualifying exam satisfies the department's requirements for a master's degree and advances the student to candidacy.

The purpose of the qualifying exam is to assess whether the student is prepared to do research at the level required to obtain a PhD. Students must demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of the concepts and methodologies of the disciplines comprising their major research interest; an authoritative and up-to-date grasp of the literature in their area of specialization; and the ability to discuss in detail the experimental design, rationale, and methodology of their research.

The qualifying exam is administered by a committee consisting of the student's advisor and two or more other tenured or tenure-track faculty. At least two of the committee members must hold primary appointments in the Psychology Department, and one member must come from outside the SBN area or outside the department. A committee member other than the student's advisor must be designated as the chair of the committee.

Students may choose to structure the written component of the exam as a traditional thesis or as a research proposal.

- The research proposal describes the student's research plans with the style and content of an NIH (F31) fellowship application. The document must include a *specific aims page* describing the goals of the proposed research project; a 6-page *research plan* giving the scientific background and significance of the proposed study, relevant preliminary results (with figures) from the student's research, and a detailed description of the planned experiments including rationale and expected outcomes; and a list of all *references cited* in the text.
- The thesis is a report on the student's research with the style and content of a journal article. The document must include an *abstract*, an *introduction* describing the scientific background and

significance of the work, a complete and detailed *methods section*, a *results section* with figures, a *discussion* summarizing and interpreting the results and their significance for the field, and a list of all *references cited* in the text. It may include negative and preliminary results but must otherwise meet the standards of a published manuscript.

Prior to scheduling the oral examination, the proposal or thesis must be evaluated by the chair and one other member of the qualifying committee. Following review of the document, the chair will give the student a written evaluation of the proposal or thesis, detailing the overall strengths and weaknesses of the document, and if necessary, outlining any revisions needed before submission to the full committee. It is the student's responsibility to ensure sufficient time for this initial review (2 weeks) and the completion of any required revisions (2 weeks).

If the initial review is satisfactory, the student will schedule an oral presentation and defense of the thesis or proposal with the full committee. At the chair's discretion, the student may be required to resubmit the written document for further review before scheduling the exam. The final version of the written document must be distributed to the committee at least two weeks before the exam. Questions at the exam will test the student's mastery of the topics covered in the written document as well as general knowledge in the field of systems and behavioral neuroscience.

Possible outcomes of the qualifying examination:

- Student passes and advances to candidacy.
- Student's performance is judged unsatisfactory and is allowed to re-take the oral exam within a specified period.
- Student's performance is judged unsatisfactory (on initial or second examination) and is required to leave the program. If the written document is acceptable, the student will leave with a Masters of Arts.

Timeline for Qualifying Exam:

- November: informational meeting with area faculty
- March: student invites faculty members to serve on the committee, designates a chair, and sets a tentative schedule with the committee.
- At least six weeks before the oral examination: proposal or thesis submitted to chair.
- At least two weeks before the oral examination: final proposal or thesis submitted to committee.
- No later than 2 weeks before the beginning of the 3rd year: oral examination.

Dissertation Proposal: The next step is for students to produce a Dissertation proposal. This proposal, written with the guidance of the student's faculty advisor, will demonstrate the student's depth of understanding of the issue to be examined in the dissertation work. Proposals usually have a first chapter providing background information about the topic to be examined, questions in the area needing to be addressed, how these questions might be answered, and what advances in our understanding they might yield. The next chapters outline the experiments proposed written in journal format (abstract, introduction, methods, result and discussion) as they would appear when submitted for publication.

Dissertation Defense: The final step is the Dissertation Defense. The final Dissertation document usually resembles the Dissertation proposal with all the data and interpretation included, and a final chapter outlining the importance of the collective work. The Dissertation Committee is typically composed of the Neurobiology and Behavior faculty plus a member outside of the Psychology Department who serves as the “Dean's Representative”.

Roadmap for Degree Completion-SBN

SYSTEMS AND BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE PHD REQUIREMENTS

Requirement		Suggested semester for completion	Date completed
<i>Before Arrival</i>			
	R-Programming Online Module	Summer before 1 st Year	
	Statistics Bootcamp	Summer before 1 st Year	
	Psychology PhD Orientation	Summer before 1 st Year	
COMMON CORE COURSES (13 credits)			
Quantitative Sequence Core Courses	PSYC 7710 - Quantitative Methods I: Probability and Statistical Inference (4 credits)	1 st or 2 nd year Fall.	
	PSYC 7720 - Quantitative Methods II: Experimental Design (4 credit) Alternates: PSYC 5270 RM: Computational Neuroscience	1 st or 2 nd year Spring	
Graduate Ethics Core Course	PSYC 8040 - Forum on Scientific and Professional Ethics (1 credit) Alternates: BIMS 7100 / PHS 7840 Responsible Conduct of Research	1 st or 2 nd year Spring	
Teacher Training Core Courses	PSYC 9560 - Teaching Psychology-Review Sessions (1 graded credit)	1 st ,2 nd or 3 rd year.	
	PSYC 9561 - Teaching Psychology-Sections (1 graded credit)	1 st ,2 nd or 3 rd year	
	PSYC 9562 - Teaching Psychology-Courses (1 graded credit)	1 st ,2 nd or 3 rd year	
	PSYC 9605 – Oral Presentations of Research (1 graded credit)	1 st ,2 nd or 3 rd year	

	Alternates: BIOL8240 - Professional Skills for the Life Sciences BIOL8260 - Writing in Science BIOL8310 - Career Design for the Life Sciences		
TRACK-SPECIFIC CORE COURSES (9 Credits)			
	BIOL 7240 Foundations of Neuroscience I: Genetics, Development, Molecular-Cell Bio (6 credits)	Year 1, Fall	
	PSYC 7245 - Foundations of Systems, Behavioral, and Cognitive Neuroscience (3 credits)	Year 1, Spring	
RESEARCH AND THESIS CREDITS	<i>(S/U credits up to 12 credits per semester enrollment requirement- minimum of 40 credit hours, to fulfill 72 graduate credits)</i>		
	PSYC 7402 - Contemporary Issues: Neuroscience and Behavior (1credit)	Years 1-5 every semester.	
	PSYC 9501 – Topical Research (3 credits)	Year 1-2	
	PSYC 8998/8999 – Non-topical Research, Preparation for Thesis (3 Credits)	Year 3-4	
	PSYC 9998/9999 – Non-topical Research, Preparation for Doctoral Research (3 credits)	Year 5	
ELECTIVES	<i>(to fulfil 36 graded credits requirements- years 1-4). Students take other courses to fulfill 34 graded credit requirements for PhD. Courses from other schools or departments' graduate course offerings (including BIMS graduate programs; A&S Departments of Biology, Statistics, Environmental Science, etc) can be accepted.</i>		
	PSYC 5265 Functional Neuroanatomy PSYC 5280 Neuropsychopharmacology PSYC5500 Advanced Readings in Gene Regulation PSYC 5270. Computational Neuroscience PSYC 7215 Computational Methods in Psychology and Neuroscience. PSYC 7559 Advanced Readings in Epigenetics PSYC 5999 Topics in Evolutionary Neuroscience PSYC 7250 Brain System Involved in Memory PSYC 5559 Neurobiology of Speech and Language PSYC 9502 - Topical Research (variable 1-12 graded credits) BIOL 5070 Practical Aspects of Light Microscopy in the Biological Sciences BIOL 7320 Signal Transduction: How cells talk to each other	Year 1-4	
OTHER REQUIREMENTS and MILESTONES			
	A short presentation	Year 1 Spring	
	Qualifying Exam- proposal	Year 2 Spring	

	Qualifying Exam - oral	no later than 2 weeks before the beginning of the 3 rd year	
	Area Lunch Presentations	Years 2, 3, 4, and 5	
	Annual thesis committee meetings	Years 3, 4 and 5	
	Thesis Defense	Year 5 or 6	