

Chapter 8. Research Apprenticeship and the Semester Plan

An important component of research training in our doctoral program consists of three semesters of **Research Apprenticeship** (PSY 793). Enrollment in the 3-credit course Research Apprenticeship, which is intended to foster development of research competence in every student, typically begins in the second semester of the first year of the program.

The research apprenticeship model recognizes that students enter our doctoral training program with a broad range of research competencies. Some have more focused research questions, while others are open to a variety of possible research directions. Not only do students vary in how well thought out their research ideas are, they also bring to the program various technical skills including mastery of a significant literature, ability to formulate research questions and hypotheses, familiarity with data analytic strategies, and technical writing capabilities. The research apprenticeship is designed to individualize the research experience, providing faculty and peer support to those requiring or desiring more direction and encouraging greater independence for those already possessing basic skills and familiar with a faculty research area.

The Research Apprenticeship is also designed to foster professionally relevant research activity and competence. Through participation in ongoing research projects, students can expect to contribute to the science of psychology at a level commensurate with their competencies. The program strongly encourages communication of research through scholarly products such as convention presentations, journal submissions, book chapters, and other professional writings.

Some of the qualities of an apprenticeship training model that we hope to achieve include:

- (a) The development of a working relationship with a faculty mentor who is fully involved with and committed to a given research area or issue.
- (b) The development of a working relationship with advanced students who themselves are working in close alignment with the same mentor on the same or a related research agenda.
- (c) The student's training in a mentor's research program and investigative approaches in order to enhance the student's professional development and contribute, in turn, to the collective research effort.

The formal characteristics of the Research Apprenticeship are as follows:

- (1) During their first semester in the program, students are encouraged to talk with both core and non-core faculty about their current research interests. A pizza lunch is held every fall for all new graduate students, where department faculty present their research areas and current projects. Many students join and begin meeting with their faculty mentor's research team during that first semester, and may wish to begin background reading in that research area prior to officially registering for Research Apprenticeship (i.e., PSY 793) in the spring.

(2) By the end of the first semester, students are expected to have negotiated an agreement with a faculty member to supervise their research training via the Research Apprenticeship. Since a primary objective of the apprenticeship model is individualized training, the negotiated agreements will be varied. In general, the apprenticeship will require three semesters of work with 8 hours devoted per week. If a student has not negotiated an apprenticeship agreement with a faculty member by the end of the second week of the second semester, the core faculty will assign a research advisor to supervise the student's apprenticeship work.

(3) While it is generally expected and desirable that an apprentice relationship will continue for the three required semesters, the option to freely renegotiate this relationship is available to the student and/or the advisor at the end of the first semester. The **last two** semesters of the apprenticeship must be completed with the same advisor.

(4) The activities each semester are identified by the student and advisor at the beginning of each semester, and recorded on the Semester Plan. These activities may include participation in faculty-student research team meetings and engagement in all aspects of the research endeavor (literature search, review, and discussion; study design; obtaining IRB approval; data collection; data entry and analysis; report write-up; preparation of grant proposals; etc.). The student's level of participation will undoubtedly advance and become increasingly independent with the acquisition of specific skills over time. This is in keeping with one of the ultimate goals of apprenticeship training, to foster the skills necessary to design and conduct a dissertation-level research project. The student's research activities may center around the design, completion, and write-up of a new empirical study or build off of the advisor's programmatic research efforts. An independent, free-standing project must receive the explicit written approval of the faculty advisor, based on a written proposal submitted by the student. Until such time as the student has received approval for an independent project, it is assumed that the student's activities will be linked with a faculty's research study.

(5) The overall goal of the Research Apprenticeship is acquisition of the skills and competence required for undertaking high-quality research at the doctoral level. Recognizing the importance of writing skills, students are required to demonstrate their competence at preparing a professional manuscript. It can be an empirical paper or research report (as might appear in a refereed journal), a review paper (such as might appear in *Clinical Psychology Review*), or a theoretical exposition (as might appear in a scholarly book). The specific requirements for any written product are determined by the faculty advisor.

Additional requirements for the Research Apprenticeship vary among students as well as among faculty advisors. However, the basic criterion is the acquisition of fundamental research skills and competence. Toward achieving this goal, faculty advisors, in consultation with the clinical faculty, may set specific requirements (beyond 8 hours per week and the written product) for satisfactory completion of the Research Apprenticeship. For example, a student who has difficulty writing may be required to complete successfully a writing course.

(6) For each of the three semesters of enrollment in Research Apprenticeship, a student's progress and performance is graded Pass/Fail. Satisfactory performance is assessed in relation to

the specific objectives negotiated between each student and advisor at the start of each semester. To ensure that the requirements for each semester are clear to both student and faculty mentor, students are required to **prepare a written statement of objectives for the semester using the Semester Plan** (see end of this chapter), which includes research goals as well as goals for clinical and professional development. A copy is submitted into the student's file. Adequate performance must be demonstrated to remain in good standing in the program. Note that although the semester plan is discussed here in relation to the Research Apprenticeship, the semester plan is to be completed by all students throughout the program at the beginning of each semester (except those in which the student is on internship).

(7) At the student's option and with the consent of the research advisor, students can finalize their Research Apprenticeship during the summer following the first year. It must be approved by the mentor and submitted to both the DCT and the department by the third week of the fall semester of the students' third year. The faculty mentor also submits a signed form that documents the completion of the Research Apprenticeship and eligibility of the student to register for the Comprehensive Examination.

(8) Students who enter the Clinical Ph.D. program with previous M.A.-level coursework (e.g., Statistics, Research Methods) and have established a relationship with a faculty mentor may be encouraged to register for the first of the three semesters of Research Apprenticeship (PSY 793) that fall, during their first semester in the program.

University Research Day and Presentations at Professional Conferences

Students who have completed their Research Apprenticeship project present it at the University's Research Day the following Spring semester. In other words, a student would generally present his or her research in the Spring of the third year. Students prepare a poster such as one they would present at a conference (in fact, the poster is often the same as one a student has presented at a conference).

This event serves as an opportunity to celebrate students' research accomplishments and learn about each others' research activities. The format is much like a scientific conference poster session. It is meant to be an experience where students have the opportunity to interact with faculty and peers and share the work they have done.

Students are also strongly encouraged to present their Research Apprenticeship project at professional conferences. By the time they complete the program, students are required to present at a professional conference and/or Research Day.

Semester Plan

The form on the next page is to be completed by all students with their advisors at the beginning of each semester. After it is completed and signed, a copy should be submitted to the DCT. The form should be completed no later than **the beginning of the third week of the semester**.

This procedure is designed to encourage students and faculty to discuss goals and expectations at the outset of each semester. It is intended to be used as a flexible tool to help students and faculty work more effectively together. As the semester progresses, the student and faculty member are free to modify goals and target dates as necessary. The form is intended to deal not just with goals related to research, but with all the student's professional goals for the semester.

Prior to completing this form, some important issues to discuss include but are not limited to the following:

- focus and goals for the current semester;
- frequency of meeting times throughout the semester;
- expectations the student and faculty member have of each other (e.g., topics on which the student requests advising; feedback process; turn-around time on written products);
- clarification of expectations for the written product associated with the research apprenticeship or dissertation (e.g., length, format of project, final due date);
- clarification of expectations for the final product from research apprenticeship or dissertation (e.g., when manuscript will be submitted for publication, who will write it, authorship, etc.).

SEMESTER PLAN

Student: _____

Academic Advisor: _____

Semester: _____

Specific goals for the semester (including research & practice)

Target date

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Professional development issues to discuss with advisor (e.g., where to do externship, research topics and funding to pursue, type of internship that will help meet goals)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

General description of research area

Overall research project goal

Student Signature

Advisor Signature

Date

Date

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAM

**Research Apprenticeship Completion And
Eligibility To Register For The Comprehensive Examination**

_____ (print name of student) has
completed the requirements for the Research Apprenticeship and is eligible to register for the
comprehensive examination.

Signature of Faculty

Date