



**Cognitive and Brain Sciences
Graduate Student Handbook
2026-2027**

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Introduction

This document explains the policies and procedures for Cognitive and Brain Sciences (CBS) psychology graduate students. It integrates Graduate School and departmental rules for the CBS Psychology training program but does not replace the Graduate School's documentation; students should also read the "General Graduate School Regulations" and are responsible for knowing and following Graduate School and departmental requirements. If you have questions after consulting this document, contact your advisor (for academic/research matters) or the Graduate Coordinator (for forms, deadlines, etc.).

Course Plan

You will make your course plan with your advisor's guidance and approval. Failure to follow this procedure may delay your progress, cause loss of funding, and/or result in termination from the program.

Core Statistics and Methodology Courses

Satisfactory completion of these courses—passing with a grade of at least a B by the end of your 2nd year—is required to qualify for advanced doctoral study. You must take one statistics course (Intermediate Statistics: PSYC 4111 or Advanced Statistics: PSYC 7111) and one methodology course (Methodology and Research: PSYC 7117). Your advisor may require additional statistics or methods courses (e.g., Measurement of Behavior: PSYC 7020).

Required Content Courses

Satisfactory completion of the required content course—passing with a grade of at least a B—by the end of your 4th year, or before degree completion, whichever comes first—is another PhD requirement. Each course is generally offered once a year. The required content course is:

- Neurocognitive Basis of Behavior (PSYC 7030)

**Your advisor may require you to also take the classes listed below.

- Sociocultural Basis of Behavior (PSYC 7040)
- History of Modern Psychology (PSYC 4008)

Professional Development Course

All full-time CBS graduate students must take PSYC 7930 each semester (1 credit hour), a professional development class centered on a weekly symposium ("Brown Bag"). As part of this course, you will give oral presentations on your research, and active participation as both presenter and audience member is expected. Brown Bag is typically held on Fridays at noon during the regular fall and spring semesters, with faculty and students presenting on a range of topics. This is an important part of CBS training and should help you develop strong professional oral communication skills by the end of your training. Brown Bag performance and participation will be tracked as part of the Professional Development course.

Cognitive and Brain Sciences Seminars

By completion of the Ph.D. degree, all CBS students must have taken at least five CBS seminars (earning a grade of at least a B), giving breadth and depth in Cognitive and Brain Sciences. Your advisor may require more than the minimum five as part of your individualized program of study. At least one seminar must be taken each year, and some years will require two to reach a total of five. Qualifying seminars include:

- Seminar in Experimental Psychology (7938, 7939)

- Current Problems in Developmental Psychology (7979)
- Behavioral Pharmacology (7947)
- Teaching of Psychology (7990)

The area requires students on an academic track to take **Teaching of Psychology (7990)**.

Other LSU graduate courses can qualify as one of the five seminars if their content relates to the student's training goals and their structure and rigor match the courses listed above. Students must get approval from their major professor before enrolling, then submit the Seminar Approval Form to their adviser and area head for final approval after completing the course. This procedure can be used for only one of the five required seminars; requests for additional seminars not on the list will be considered case-by-case.

You have **must complete these courses with a grade of B or higher**. Two failures (either in the same course or two different seminar courses) will result in dismissal from the doctoral program.

Research Courses

Students must take 2-6 credits of PSYC 4999 during their first year (1-3 credits each semester); discuss the exact number with your adviser to stay at full-time status but not above it. Students must also take a minimum of 6 credits of PSYC 8939 to complete the program (often more; 15 credits is the maximum). These courses provide a focused research experience and follow this format:

- At the beginning of the semester, the advisor and student will specify a project and a product (or products) to be turned in at the end of the semester. Early-stage research might involve materials development or pilot data collection, with the product being the materials themselves or a methods and results section; more mature research might involve data collection and analysis, with the product being a full research paper (introduction, methods, results, discussion). For unforeseeable problems, the advisor and student should agree on an alternate product.
- For any research course, there should be a syllabus outlining the work to be completed. Students can be given a "U" or an "F" if they have not completed their specified project or if the product is of sufficiently low quality. If there are extenuating circumstances, the advisor has the option of giving an incomplete as per university policy. If the work required to make up the incomplete is not completed within the university-specified period, the "I" will convert to an "F".

Course Waivers

If you have taken a course that you feel is similar in content to one of these courses, please see the Graduate Coordinator to obtain a Course Waiver Form. You will need to discuss this with your major professor, the instructor of the course, and the area head.

You may waive up to 12 credits total. Students may apply to waive one "research" CBS content-relevant graduate seminar and one Teaching of Psychology seminar. The maximum number of transferred seminars will be limited to one research seminar and one teaching course equivalent. Be aware that waived courses will not show up on your LSU transcript.

The procedure to waive a course is as follows:

- Discuss potential waiver with major professor.

- Obtain course waiver from the Graduate Coordinator.
- Provide form with syllabus to major professor.
- Provide form signed by major professor and syllabus to faculty member who teaches the course.
- Provide form signed by major professor and LSU instructor, as well as syllabus, to area head.
- Provide form signed by major professor, LSU instructor, and area head to Graduate Coordinator.

Course Hour Maximums

Most courses can be taken only once for degree credit. The following courses can be repeated but are limited in the number of hours that count toward the degree.

Course	Maximum Credit Hours
PSYC 4999: Independent Reading and Research in Psychology	6
PSYC 7690: Teaching of Psychology Practicum	4
PSYC 7938: Seminar in Experimental Psychology	12
PSYC 7939: Seminar in Experimental Psychology	12
PSYC 7990: Teaching of Psychology	4
PSYC 8000: Thesis Research	6
PSYC 8939: Independent Research: Experimental Psychology	15
PSYC 9000: Dissertation Research	12

First-Year Project

- This project is designed to get you off and running in the research area. You can expect to get a lot of guidance on your first-year project from your supervising faculty member.
- The first-year project may be an expanded seminar class project or an outgrowth of research you do as a research assistant for a faculty member. You will enroll in 4999 course credit (1-3) with your supervising faculty member both semesters of your first year to track progress. The project is proposed during Brown Bag at the end of your first semester and presented in Brown Bag at the end of the first year; the final write-up goes to your project supervisor for evaluation, due **noon of the last class day of your second semester**. This project will be used by the CBS faculty, along with your course work and yearly evaluation form, to evaluate your progress for the year.
- See the Graduate Coordinator for the departmental form that will require your advisor's signature.

Advisory Committee

- At the end of your first semester, you should form your advisory committee, which follows your training throughout your graduate career (membership can change as appropriate). Ask two professors in addition to your major professor to be on your advisory committee; at least one must be another CBS faculty member, and at least one member must be a full member of the Graduate School.

- A note about committees: A student need not retain the same committee for all phases of graduate work. That is, the master's committee may differ from the general exam committee, which may differ from the dissertation committee.
- In the case that your major professor is unavailable for an extended amount of time (e.g., medical leave, sabbatical, etc.), you can arrange for a member of your advisory committee to serve as your primary advisor until your major professor returns.

Thesis/Master's Degree

To obtain the master's degree, you must fulfill the Graduate School requirements, including a thesis, and the following course requirements.

Thesis Course Requirements

At least 36 hours of graduate credit must be earned, with at least 15 hours at the 7000 level or above. Within this total: (1) 6 hours of PSYC 8000 are required for the thesis project (only 6 hours of PSYC 8000 count toward the 36), (2) 6 hours must come from the Cognitive Brain Science Seminars, (3) 3 hours must come from the Core Statistics classes ([PSYC 4111](#) or [PSYC 7111](#)), and (4) 3 hours must be Methodology and Research (PSYC 7117).

Thesis Waiver

If a student has earned a master's degree in Psychology from another university, they may submit their thesis to the department for possible acceptance in place of the department's master's thesis requirement. The student must present their thesis work in Brown Bag during their first semester and request a thesis waiver form from the Graduate Coordinator. The CBS faculty will vote on whether to approve the thesis, after which the waiver form must be signed by the student's major professor, area head, and the Director of Graduate Training.

Proposal

1) Deadlines/Timelines:

- You are to consult with your major professor in regard to forming your committee and report the names of the committee to the Graduate Coordinator, in writing, at least 4 weeks prior to the proposal meeting. (The members of your advisory committee generally are the members of your thesis committee. The committee may change with the permission of your major professor.)
- Two weeks prior to your proposal meeting, give your committee members an electronic copy of your proposal.
- Ideally, you should successfully propose by the end of your 3rd semester. You **MUST** propose by the 10th class day of your 4th semester and you must successfully pass your proposal by April 1 of your 4th semester.
- Students are not allowed to propose and defend their thesis or dissertation during the same semester. A semester begins on the first day of orientation. The day prior to graduation is the final day of the semester for these major exams.
- Failure to comply with these guidelines and deadlines will result in loss of financial support for at least 1 semester. In addition, you may be terminated from the doctoral program at the program area faculty's discretion.

- 2) Registration Rules: You must register for thesis hours (PSYC 8000) any semester you are working on the project. This would include the semester you propose and the semester you defend.
- 3) Committee: Your committee must have at least 3 members. Your committee chair is your major professor. At least 2 members of your committee must be from your specialty area and 1 member must be a full member of the Graduate Faculty. The 3rd member should be from the Psychology department or a department pertinent to the project. Any changes to the committee for any reason must be approved by your committee chair and must be reported to the Graduate Coordinator, in writing, immediately. All committees are subject to approval by the department chair.
- 4) Data Collection: You may not begin collecting data with human participants until your project has been approved by the IRB committee (Institutional Review Board). This process may take some time depending on the status of your project (e.g., expedited versus full review). Work with your advisor to submit the IRB forms.
If your participants are college students, you must obtain a number for your study from the subject pool manager once your project is approved. This number is how the department will keep track of your project. You determine how many credit points your study will be worth to a participant based on time of participation. Each ½ hour of participation = 1 credit point.
- 5) General Information: You will need to see the Graduate Coordinator for the necessary paperwork for your proposal.
You will need to find an agreeable time and date for you and your committee members. You and your committee members are to schedule proposal and defense meetings for a minimum of 90 minutes. Once this has been done, inform the Graduate Coordinator of the date and time of your meeting. She will help you with booking a room and equipment you may need (multi-media etc.).

Defense

- 1) Deadlines/Timelines:
 - You must successfully defend your thesis by the last day of the semester (the day prior to commencement day) of your 5th semester. Failure to comply with these guidelines and deadlines will result in loss of financial support for at least 1 semester. In addition, you may be terminated from the doctoral program at the program area faculty's discretion.
 - At least three weeks prior to a meeting, you complete the Graduate Milestones Survey on the Graduate Student Resources page of the department's website. This will go to the graduate coordinator, who will provide you with all forms needed for the meeting and for obtaining approval of your committee from the Graduate School.
 - Other deadlines may apply if you plan on graduating the semester you defend. An Application for the Master's Degree will need to be submitted by the semester

deadline date. See the Graduate School calendar for those dates. Please also see “Graduation Time Limits” for more details.

- Two weeks prior to your defense, give your committee members an electronic copy of your thesis.
- 2) Registration Rules: You must register for thesis hours (PSYC 8000) any semester you are working on the project. This includes the semester you propose and the semester you defend. Although you do not have to be registered for thesis hours the semester you meet with the Graduate School editor, you do have to be registered for a minimum of 1 credit hour with the university. (If you are registered as “degree only” you are not eligible to meet with the editor.) You must have a minimum total of 6 thesis credit hours to defend your thesis.
- 3) General Information:
- Your thesis must be submitted to the Graduate School in their required format (i.e., electronically). This format may be obtained from the Graduate School office in 114 David Boyd Hall or on the Graduate School’s web page. Pay close attention to this format or you will end up with a lot of revisions. You cannot hand in your final thesis to the Graduate School editor until the semester you graduate.
 - There are three possible outcomes during the defense meeting: P (Pass), F (Fail), and R (Retake). The grade must be filed within two weeks of the scheduled exam date, and failure to turn in a grade defaults to an F. If a student passes (P) and revisions are needed and can be completed within two weeks of the scheduled exam date, then a grade of P may be assigned. However, if revisions are needed that take longer than two weeks to complete, a grade of R (Retake) must be assigned. If a grade of R is assigned, a full committee meeting may be scheduled for the Retake attempt to occur, at the discretion of the committee. The final grade from the Retake, P or F, must be filed with the Graduate School by the end of the next regular semester. If a grade of F is assigned, the result is that the student will be terminated from the program. The student has the right to petition for reconsideration.

Intermediate Project

- A research project, under the direction of a faculty research supervisor, is required.
- The purpose of this project is to provide breadth of training by expanding your experience into a new area. If you have completed a significant project with someone other than your major professor (i.e., master’s degree), it is appropriate to have your major professor supervise your project. Otherwise, it is suggested that someone other than your major professor supervise your intermediate project.
- This project must be approved in consultation with your major professor.
- This project should be of publishable quality and must be written up in the form of a draft publication. This could include a research study, a literature review, or a proceedings for example.
- Course credit for this project will be obtained by signing up for independent research hours in the related area.

- Please see the Graduate Coordinator for the necessary form once the project is complete.
- You can perform this research any time after earning your master's degree.
- You should complete the intermediate project before proposing for your General Exam. However, in unusual circumstances and with approval of your advisory committee, you can propose your general exam before completion of your intermediate project. However, you must finish the intermediate project before you can defend your General Exam.
- If you enter the CBS PhD program with a Master's degree from another program, your intermediate project will include an oral proposal and a written and oral defense with your advisory committee.

Minor

- A minor is not required but is a possibility for CBS students. Possible minors include aging studies, computer science, experimental statistics, linguistics, etc. A contract must be written with your minor professor to define the course work and project required. The major professor must approve the minor.
- You should discuss the requirements for the minor degree with your minor professor. Once the requirements are agreed upon, the requirements should be put in writing and signed by you and the minor professor. You should give this written agreement to the Graduate Coordinator.
- Depending on minor field, you are usually required to complete a minimum of 9-12 credit hours for your minor, which may include a minor project.
- The minor must be complete prior to the General Exam.

General Exam

The Graduate School requires every Ph.D. student to demonstrate proficiency in their area of study; the General Examination is where this is demonstrated. If a minor degree is being awarded, the student must also show proficiency in that area, so the minor requirements must be met at the time of the General Exam and the minor professor must be present at the General Exam.

You have two options for completion of the general exam: a literature review paper or a written/typed exam. **Both options involve an approximately 2-hour oral defense after the student has turned in the paper or exam.** The goal of the assignment (both options) is to ensure that you have the ability to: 1) analyze an area(s) of literature 2) integrate and synthesize ideas and concepts from multiple sources, 3) argue persuasively and clearly communicate your understanding of important issues orally and in writing, and 4) think critically. The choice of the option is to be made in consultation with your advisor.

- A. **A Literature Review Paper** – This paper is of the type that would be typically submitted to journals such as *Psychological Bulletin*. The paper will be on a topic in the student's area of research specialization. However, this paper should not simply be the introduction for a student's dissertation. Rather, it should typically be broader in scope. However, the topic can be related to the dissertation topic or on a completely different topic. The breadth of literature covered will be decided in consultation with the student's advisor and committee. Students should keep in mind that a literature review does not involve simply rehashing prior research, but

- encompasses a *research synthesis* (e.g., Cooper, 2003, Psychological Bulletin) that leads to new insights. A complete draft is due to the student's advisor three weeks prior to the final submission deadline. Feedback will be provided within a week. Once this feedback is received (two weeks before submission deadline), final revisions will be completely independent. There should be no discussions about the paper with the committee or anyone else until the oral defense date.
- B. **A Written/Typed Examination** – Together with each committee member, the student will create a reading list. When the student is ready to begin the exam, s/he will receive **two** questions from each committee member, with the content based on the general theme of the agreed-upon reading list. The exam will be “open book,” spanning two weeks from receipt of the questions to the time when the student turns in typed, written answers. “Open book” indicates that you can continue to reference the articles on your reading list and any notes you created prior to the start of the exam period. Once the questions are received, there should be no discussions about the questions with the committee or anyone else, including Gen AI, until the oral defense date. Students should answer 4 out of the 6 questions, with the understanding that s/he must answer at least one question per committee member and at least one question covering research methodology. There is no length requirement for each answer, and students are not restricted to use only the sources outlined in the reading list. The student should satisfactorily address each component of the selected questions in separate APA style research papers, complete with references cited in the document.

Regardless of the option chosen, the process begins with the student developing a reading list (or lists, if choosing the exam option). Students taking the paper option must also put together a prospectus describing the nature of the questions to be asked in their paper. Specifically, this will take the form of a categorized and organized bibliography, supplemented with information that indicates the scope of the student's search of the literature (e.g., search terms used, databases queried). One or more example proposals are available from Dr. Beck. The examples are provided for illustration purposes only and are not meant to restrict students from using other types of organization for their paper. This requirement is designed to ensure that the scope of the paper is appropriate and will make it easier for committee members to provide useful feedback.

Once the lists are created, students taking the exam option will meet individually with committee members to obtain suggestions for additional readings or other modifications.

Once the prospectus and organized bibliography has been created, students taking the paper option will forward these materials to all committee members and schedule a meeting for final approval of the project. Once the committee approves the prospectus plan, students will have four months to turn in the paper. During this time period, the student has the option of getting feedback from his or her advisor on **one** draft of their paper (whether this is a partial or complete draft).

- 1) Deadlines/Timeline: This exam is generally taken by 3rd or 4th year students.
 - You must complete all qualifying core courses and all five CBS seminars (the last seminar may be taken concurrently) prior to attempting the General Exam.

- The student will begin to develop their reading lists for the literature review paper or the written exam. The members of the committee work together with the student to establish the reading list.
 - The General Exam proposal meeting and defense meeting can be scheduled any time during the academic year. However, there is a strict 4-month (120 days) timeline between the proposal meeting and the day 1) the final paper must be turned in to the committee or 2) the exam must be completed. For example, a student who defended his or her prospectus on September 10 would have to turn in their paper or complete their exam on January 10. Failing to complete the exam or turn in the paper by the deadline will result in failure of the exam. The student will have an oral defense of the product within 4 weeks after turning in the paper or completing the exam. However, students are encouraged to defend within two weeks of completion. The student will not receive feedback on the product before the oral defense.
 - If you choose the exam option, one of your lists must cover the area of methodology or methodology must be covered in each list. Possible areas for the reading list include, but not limited to: memory, aging, cognitive development, emotion, human learning, neuroscience, perception, problem solving, attention, decision-making, and language.
 - You cannot propose your dissertation until you have successfully passed your General Exam, and you cannot defend your dissertation until 3 calendar months after passing your General Examination. Three calendar months is the minimum required by the Graduate School. This is not a realistic timeline for students in the CBS area. Most CBS area students take closer to one year between the General Exam Defense and the Dissertation Defense.
- 2) Committee: Your committee will consist of at least 3 members: your major professor, your minor professor (if applicable), and 1-2 other professors pertinent to your education. At least 2 committee members must be from the Cognitive and Brain Sciences area and at least 2 members must be a full member of the Graduate Faculty. The Graduate School will appoint the 4th member, your Dean's Representative, for your defense meeting (The Graduate School will make sure this person is available for the date and time of your meeting/exam). This person is also assigned to your future dissertation committee. Any changes to the committee for any reason must be approved by your committee chair and are to be reported to the Graduate Coordinator, in writing, immediately. All committees are subject to approval by the department chair.
- 3) General Information:
- Students are strongly discouraged from scheduling general exam committee meetings during the winter break or during the summer.
 - You and your committee members are to schedule the oral defense meeting for a minimum of 2 hours.
 - At least four weeks prior to a meeting, you complete the Graduate Milestones Survey on the Graduate Student Resources page of the department's website. This will go to the graduate coordinator, who will provide you with all forms needed for the meeting and for obtaining approval of your committee from the Graduate

School. This includes appointing the Graduate School Representative to your committee.

- Only one dissenting vote is allowed for a student to successfully pass the General Exam regardless of the number of committee members. The same outcomes that apply to the Master's thesis defense apply here, grades of Pass (P), Fail (F), and Retake (R).
 - A grade of P indicates that the student has successfully passed the entire exam and is not required to retake any or all of the exam.
 - A grade of F indicates that the student has failed the entire exam and is not permitted to retake any or all of the exam. An F results in the student being terminated from the program at the end of the regular semester in which the exam is taken. The committee is required to provide the student feedback on why the exam was failed.
 - An R indicates that the student has failed part or all of the exam and will be permitted to take part or all of the exam one additional time. The committee will provide the student feedback on the specific weaknesses that should be corrected. The committee determines when the retake will be given, but it must be completed no later than the end of the next regular semester. The committee may decide that a second oral examination is needed or may decide to defer the oral meeting. For the exam retake, the only grades that can be reported are P or F. The student has the right to petition for reconsideration.

Dissertation

All doctoral students must fulfill the Graduate School requirement of completing a written dissertation with an oral defense. All dissertation work must be proposed and defended. There are two options for composing a dissertation. In one case, the dissertation will be comprised of new work that has not been previously written up or published. Alternatively, the dissertation may be the presentation and generative synthesis of 3 “publishable units”. A publishable unit refers to a body of work that could in principle stand alone as a peer reviewed publication in a journal of sufficient quality (as determined by your committee) within the student's domain of expertise. A publishable unit may or may not be accepted for publication, but must be a high-quality piece of experimentation, analysis, and exposition that the committee determines merits publication. The exception is master's thesis work, which **must** be published in order to count as a publishable unit toward the dissertation. To contribute to the dissertation, a publishable unit **must** be related to a student's graduate training and have substantial contributions or guidance from an LSU Psychology faculty member within the Cognition and Behavior Sciences area.

When composing a dissertation from 3 publishable units, at a minimum the student will be required to write an introduction and conclusion chapter that situate the body of work in the field and synthesize it in a novel way to make a noteworthy scientific contribution. Regardless of which dissertation style a student opts to pursue, **a proposal is required for all dissertations**. The committee will determine what previously published or publishable work can be included in the dissertation, and what additional writing or experimentation will be required to satisfactorily complete the dissertation. In the case of a dissertation including 3 publishable units, the proposal will present a synthesis of the compiled body of published work and point to the key contributions that follow.

A publishable unit might be (1) An article or chapter that is accepted for publication or previously published in a peer-reviewed outlet that the student can demonstrate an intellectual stake in. For example, being author because of involvement in data collection or analysis, without a role in experiment planning, literature review, or the majority of writing may not constitute an intellectual stake. (2) An article or chapter that is prepared for submission, in a revise and resubmit state, or is being actively revised for submission to a new outlet. The following will not be considered a publishable unit: (1) a research or grant proposal (2) letters to the editor.

Proposal

1) Deadlines/Timeline:

- You are to consult with your major professor in regards to forming your dissertation committee and report the names to the Graduate Coordinator, in writing, at least 3 weeks prior to the exam.
- You cannot propose your dissertation until you have successfully completed your General Examination.
- Two weeks prior to your proposal meeting, give your committee members an electronic copy of your proposal.
- Most students generally propose in their 4th year.

2) Registration Rules: You must register for dissertation hours (PSYC 9000) any semester you are working on the project. This includes the semester you propose.

3) Committee: Your committee must have at least 4 members. Your committee chair is your major professor, your previously appointed Dean's Representative, and minor professor (if applicable) and 1 (2 if no minor professor) other members should be professors from the Psychology department or a department pertinent to the project. At least 2 members of your committee must be from your specialty area and at least 2 members must be a full member of the Graduate Faculty. As a departmental rule and as a courtesy, you are to invite the Dean's Representative to your proposal meeting. You are to accommodate him/her as well as the remaining members of your committee when scheduling the proposal. Any changes to the committee for any reason must be approved by your committee chair and are to be reported to the Graduate Coordinator, in writing, immediately. All committees are subject to approval by the department chair.

1) Data Collection: You may not begin collecting data with human participants until your project has been approved by the IRB (Institutional Review Board). This process may take some time depending on the status of your project (e.g., expedited versus full review).

If your participants are college students, you must obtain a number for your study from the subject pool manager once your project is approved. This number is how the department will keep track of your project. You determine how many credit points your study will be worth to a participant based on time of participation. Each ½ hour of participation = 1 credit point.

You may list your study on the online SONA system and students will sign up for your experiment through the system.

- 2) General Information: You will need to see the Graduate Coordinator for the necessary paperwork for your proposal.

You will need to find an agreeable time and date for you and your committee members. Once this has been done, inform the Graduate Coordinator of the date and time of your meeting. She will help you with booking a room and equipment you may need (multi-media etc.).

Only one dissenting vote is allowed for a student to successfully pass the dissertation proposal regardless of the number of committee members.

You and your committee members are to schedule the proposal and defense meetings for a minimum of 2 hours.

Defense

- 1) Deadlines/Timeline:

- You cannot propose your dissertation until you have successfully completed your General Examination. You cannot defend their dissertation until 3 calendar months have passed following their successful General Examination.
- Most students generally propose in their 4th year. Most students generally defend in their 5th year.
- You must communicate your defense date to the Graduate Coordinator at least 4 weeks prior to the add/drop deadline for the semester you will graduate.
- At least 3 weeks prior to a meeting, you complete the Graduate Milestones Survey on the Graduate Student Resources page of the department's website. This will go to the graduate coordinator, who will provide you with all forms needed for the meeting and for obtaining approval of your committee from the Graduate School. This includes appointing the Graduate School Representative to your committee.
- Other deadlines may apply if you plan on graduating the semester you defend. You will need to submit the Application for Doctoral Degree by deadline date for the semester in which you plan to graduate. See the Graduate School calendar for those dates. Please also see "[Graduation Time Limits](#)" for more details.
- Two weeks prior to your proposal meeting, give your committee members an electronic copy of your proposal.

- 2) Registration Rules: You must register for dissertation hours (PSYC 9000) any semester you are working on the project. This would include the semester you defend. Although you do not have to be registered for dissertation hours the semester you meet with the Graduate School editor, you do have to be registered for a minimum of 1 credit hour with the university. (If you are registered as "degree only" you are not eligible to meet with the editor.) You must have a minimum total of 12 dissertation credit hours to defend your dissertation.
- 3) Committee: Your committee should not change from your proposal to your defense except under extraordinary circumstances and with the approval of the committee chair and the chair of the department. Any changes to the committee for any reason must be

reported to the Graduate Coordinator, in writing, immediately. **The Dean's Representative must attend the defense meeting.**

4) General Information:

- You cannot submit your final dissertation to the Graduate School editor until the semester you graduate.
- Your dissertation must be submitted to the Graduate School in their required format (i.e., electronically). This format may be obtained from the Graduate School office in 114 David Boyd Hall or on the Graduate School's web page. Pay close attention to this format or you will end up with a lot of revisions.
- You will need to find an agreeable time and date for you and your committee members. Once this has been done, inform the Graduate Coordinator of the date and time of your meeting. She will help you with booking a room and equipment you may need (multi-media etc.).
- You and your committee members are to schedule the proposal and defense meetings for a minimum of 2 hours.
- Only one dissenting vote is allowed for a student to successfully pass the dissertation proposal or defense regardless of the number of committee members. In the event the defense exam is failed, you will be dismissed from the program. The committee must provide feedback regarding the decision.
 - A grade of R indicates that the student has not successfully completed or defended the thesis or dissertation and that additional work, which may include a second oral defense, is required and permitted. The committee will provide specific feedback on the remaining requirements. The final grade, P or F, must be filed with the Graduate School by the end of the next regular semester. For an exam retake, the only grades that can be reported are P or F.
 - It is the responsibility of the student to schedule the final defense with sufficient lead-time to meet the Graduate School deadlines for graduation in a given semester.
 - The oral defense and the dissertation are considered an integrated requirement. It is not possible to pass one and fail the other. The committee should not sign the dissertation signature page until all requirements, including successful oral defense, are completed, nor should it sign the oral defense report until the dissertation has been successfully defended.
 - The student has the right to petition for reconsideration.

Teaching as Instructor of Record

Any graduate student wishing to be appointed as an instructor of record on a graduate assistantship must fulfill the following requirements to apply:

- Earned their master's degree prior to the beginning of the appointment.
- Provided the Graduate Coordinator with an official transcript indicating your master's degree, even if from LSU.

- Completed PSYC 7990, Teaching of Psychology, or receive written approval for an equivalent course at another university.
- You need a teaching mentor while teaching the class. This can be a professor that taught the class previously, your major professor, or the professor teaching the Teaching of Psychology Practicum (PSYC 7690).
- Complete the Mentor for Instructor of Record form.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI)

The thesis, general examination, and dissertation represent the primary mechanism through which graduate students demonstrate their readiness to function as independent scientists, and there are certain competencies that this process must develop and evaluate which cannot be outsourced. Critically, Gen AI is best understood as a tool for augmenting and improving scientific practice, not as a substitute for the intellectual labor, critical thinking, and skill development that are the core purposes of graduate training. The thesis, general examination, and dissertation process is, by design, effortful. This effort is the mechanism through which expertise is built. The student, their faculty mentor, and their full committee share responsibility for determining which, if any, Gen AI applications are appropriate for a given project. Use of Gen AI must be discussed and approved by the committee before it is implemented and disclosed in the final document and defense meeting. This should include a list of all the types of Gen AI use.

Annual Evaluation Process

- You will receive feedback from the faculty on your progress, and you will also have the chance to provide feedback to the faculty about your training.
- Every year of your training, you will be asked to turn in the Student Annual Report Evaluation Form and your Research Evaluation form to your Advisory Committee. Please be sure to append a copy of your vita to these forms. Students, in consultation with their advisors, must specify specific research goals for the coming year. In addition, students must evaluate their progress toward the goals they specified in the previous evaluation.
- Every year of your training, you will be asked to fill out a Program Evaluation Form. This form is to be anonymous so that the faculty will not know who is providing the feedback.

Graduation Time Limits

Students entering with a B.A. or B.S. should optimally complete the Ph.D. in five years. The maximum time allowed from entrance to completion is 7 years; exceeding this requires special permission from the Dean of the Graduate School, which is not routinely given and requires exceptional circumstances. The Graduate School no longer formally recognizes a leave of absence. Failure to complete the program within seven years will result in termination.

***** Graduation Time Limit (For Master's and Ph.D.): *****

The Graduate School requires students to graduate within 1 semester of their dissertation defense. If this deadline is missed, the student will be required to re-defend in order to graduate.

Students who are dismissed from the doctoral program but are granted permission to attempt to complete the master's degree, are granted permission to remain for one additional year only. They must leave after this year even if the thesis or degree is not complete.

Retention in the Program

Compliance with the following will aid students with remaining in good standing with the program.

- Maintain semester and cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or better.
- Complete core courses with a grade of “B-” or better within the first 2 years, preferably, but no later than by the 4th year in the program.
- Ratings of “Satisfactory” on annual evaluations and/or successful completion of remediation plan(s).
- Successfully propose thesis preferably in the 3rd semester but no later than the 10th class day of the 4th semester.
- Successfully defend thesis no later than the last day of final exams of the 5th semester in the program.
- Successfully complete the general exam with no more than 2 attempts.
- Successfully complete internship (if applicable) within 7 years of entering the program.
- Successfully defend dissertation within 7 years of entering the program.

Graduate students **must be enrolled full-time** to remain in the program. In unusual circumstances, students may be enrolled part-time. This can only happen after the general exam has been successfully defended, and if the area has approved the student being enrolled part-time. In these cases, the student must submit a plan and detailed timeline for completion that is approved by the CBS faculty. The timeline should be included in your syllabus for PSYC 9000. If the timeline is not met, this could lead to a “U” in PSYC 9000 requiring a petition to the faculty for a revised timeline and triggering academic probation by the graduate school.

Stipend

Students in good standing typically receive funding for the first four years in the program. Starting in the fifth year, funding may or may not be available. If you are a full-time student your stipend will include a tuition waiver, if you are not full time, it will not include a tuition waiver. If funding is available for some fifth year and beyond students, but not all, decisions on who to fund will be determined based on students’ progress in the program. Preference will be given based on years in the program and completion of milestones. For example, a 6th year student who received funding in their 5th year is less likely to receive funding than a 5th year student who has completed their milestones in a timely fashion. If the 5th year student was off track with milestones, the student who has made the most progress in the program will be given the highest consideration for funding.

Program Retention – Professional Behavior

A number of issues could result in a student being terminated from the program. If a student exhibits disruptive behavior, unethical behavior, or resistance to faculty direction or supervision such that the CBS Psychology Faculty unanimously conclude it is inappropriate to continue that individual’s training, the student will be notified in writing of termination from the program. The Faculty may also choose to initiate the “No clear path to completion” Graduate School policy.

Remediation Plan

In circumstances in which a student exhibits a substantial deficit in progress toward graduation with sufficient professional skills, the CBS Psychology faculty may choose to implement a remediation plan to address the deficit. While a remediation plan can occur at any

time, it will occur following an unsatisfactory yearly evaluation from your advisory committee. A remediation plan requires the review of the data indicating the deficit by at least two faculty and where timely and possible by the entire program faculty. The plan must specifically state the identified deficit, the outcome goal, and the specific measurable objectives that will demonstrate successful completion of the plan. The plan should also define the intervention services and activities that will be provided to the student to address the deficit. The plan should serve as a faculty model for best practice regarding intervention planning. This plan may be linked to the requirements on a syllabus for a research hour course for a pass/fail grade.

Once the plan has been developed it will be reviewed with the student by the student's major professor. The remediation plan will be shared with the Area Head and the Graduate Director and placed in the student's file. The student and major professor must meet regarding the plan at least twice per semester to review progress and may choose to meet more often. Successful completion of the plan requires review of the outcome data by the faculty who initiated the plan with consensus among the faculty that the objectives have been met. Nothing in the remediation plan process may conflict with the student's due process and appeal rights as outlined by current LSU documents and policy. If the stipulations of the remediation plan are not met, this may result in a failing grade in a research course, and/or the major professor may opt to consult with department leadership to initiate the "No clear path to completion" policy with the Graduate School.

Recommendations for Professional Behavior

Professional behavior is required. You represent the Psychology department and your research lab, so treat fellow graduate students, faculty, undergraduate students, and research participants with respect, and present yourself in a manner that does not distract from your responsibilities (e.g., collecting data in the lab, teaching a course, presenting in Brown Bag). Follow the professional behavior and appearance rules of your lab and GA assignments.

Grievance Policy and Procedures

Students may experience difficulties with procedures, policies, faculty, or fellow graduate students during the course of graduate training. The faculty are committed to making the training process to be as fair as possible, while also maintaining high standards for completion of a Ph.D. degree.

Concerns about the Program Curriculum/Training

If a student has feedback about curriculum or other training plans, discuss it with the course instructor (for a specific existing course) or the Area Head (for concerns not tied to an existing course); see PS48 for the university's general appeal process. Students can also share programmatic feedback with the Psychology Department's Committee on Diversity & Outreach in Psychology (CDOP) student members, who will present it to the Area Head, or through the annual student survey.

Concerns about Student Treatment

If a student believes they have been treated unfairly or inappropriately by faculty, staff, or other students, on an academic or interpersonal matter, the course of action should follow the APA's ethical principles: first discuss the problem with the person who is the source of the grievance and attempt a resolution. If unresolved, proceed through the following chain, moving to the next person as needed: (1) faculty advisor, (2) Area Head, (3) Director of Graduate Studies, (4) Chair of the Department of Psychology, (5) Dean of the Graduate

School. Students may also engage the university ombuds representative and are protected by University policies governing rights, appeals, and due process; see LSU Policy Statement 48 for the University-wide appeals process.

Even if the student is able to satisfactorily resolve the concern through discussion with the other person(s) involved, the Area Head should be informed of any serious incidences or infractions that have occurred (e.g., sexual or other forms of harassment).

There may be circumstances in which the student feels that they cannot discuss the issue with one of the parties described above (e.g., fear of retaliation from the other person; one of the persons in the chain above is the basis of concern); in such instances, the student is encouraged to discuss the matter with the next person in the chain outlined above. Our hope is that your time at LSU will be constructive and prepare you for your career free from such incidents; however, should they arise, we want you to have the freedom to address them with our support and without fear of retaliation.

Changes in Mentors within the CBS Program

The Psychology Department at LSU operates under a mentorship model. Therefore, students are admitted to the CBS program with a commitment to work with a specific core faculty member. This major professor is the student's primary advisor and primary research and career mentor. Changing mentors may make it more difficult for the student to accomplish their training goals and may complicate funding. For example, if the major professor holds a grant, contract from an external entity or a departmental line that has been the student's source of funding in the program the student may lose this funding.

All students must have a major professor to make progress in the CBS program. It is incumbent upon the student to identify another core faculty who is willing and able to serve as a major professor to remain in the program. Thus, changing major professors should only be done in very unusual circumstances. The student must first discuss any concerns with their major professor and if possible, the student and the major professor (perhaps with the help of an intermediary) have worked together to develop and implement a mentoring plan/agreement that could resolve the issues, and this process has made it clear that a change in major professors is in the best interest of the student and their training goals.

After discussing and attempting to resolve concerns with their major professor, students who are considering changing their mentor should first consult with the Area Head. If the Area Head is the student's mentor, the student should consult with the Director of Graduate Training or the Department Chair. The Area Head (or designee) will meet with the student to review their reasons for changing mentors and identify the potential effects on their training and funding. Should the student decide to continue to pursue a change in mentors, they must provide in written form to their mentor, the Area Head, and the Graduate Director responses to the following points:

1. the effects of the change on any ongoing research projects, including thesis and dissertation projects;
2. the effects of the change on the student's funding; and
3. the optimal time for the change.

The major professor will then inform the CBS faculty of the potential change in mentor in a timely manner. The Graduate School will be informed that the student does not have a formal adviser, and the student will be placed on “no clear path to completion” with the graduate school. A meeting of the CBS faculty will then be convened, if deemed necessary by the Area Head (or designee). The student will meet with other core faculty to determine who can serve as their major professor. The student will have one full semester after they leave a major professor to find a new major professor in the CBS program. The student can choose to continue with their current major professor or have the Area Head act as a temporary major professor during this transition period. While the student is entitled to mentorship during this transitional semester, they are still subject to the policies of our department to stay in good standing. If the student’s training or mentoring goals do not align with other CBS faculty or no other faculty member is willing to mentor the student, the student should pursue transferring to a different doctoral program or pursue graduate training at a different university.

No Clear Path to Completion

The Graduate School has a policy to address situations in which students do not have a clear path to completion. Here is the policy: “In rare circumstances, degree programs may request that the Graduate School place students who cannot identify a major professor or form a graduate committee on a status called ‘No Clear Path to Degree Completion.’ This may also occur following the resignation of a major professor and/or committee members due to concerns about the student’s professional conduct or ability to engage effectively with faculty advisors. This status is distinct from academic standing, which is based on academic progress. After being placed on this status, students will be given until the end of the next full semester (fall or spring) to identify a major professor or form a committee. During that time, the program is expected to make reasonable efforts to work collaboratively with the student to resolve the situation, and these efforts must be reported to the Graduate School; however, the responsibility for finding a major professor and forming a committee remains with the student. If the issue is not resolved by the end of that semester, the program may request that the student be dismissed from the degree program.”

****Please also review the other parts of the Grievance Policy and Procedure section of the CBS area handbook in cases where those are relevant.**

Graduate Student Travel Awards

The Graduate Student Association offers a travel award reimbursing approved travel expenses for qualified students presenting research results at professional conferences (attendance alone does not qualify). Conferences must be widely recognized; university-sponsored events do not qualify. Reimbursement follows both travel and a completed Expense Report. Allotments are limited and vary by travel type; see the grad school web page for amounts. Master’s Degree students are permitted one award during their academic career, and Doctoral Students are permitted three awards during their academic career. Students who transition from Master’s to Doctoral programs can receive no more than three awards total. For pre-award questions (eligibility, applications), email GSA@lsu.edu. For post-award questions

about expense reports, email the graduate school. Additional supplemental travel funding may be available from HSS; links are on the LSU Psychology Graduate Students web page.

Eligibility

To be eligible for funding, a student must:

1. Be presenting work completed while enrolled at LSU.
2. Be listed as first author of the abstract. Consideration will be given to students who have been invited to exhibit or perform their artistic work.
3. Be enrolled full time during the semester of travel as well as the Fall/Spring semester immediately preceding travel. The student is required to be enrolled full-time and maintain full-time enrollment during the semester of travel. In addition, since all research for the presentation must have been conducted while enrolled at LSU, the student is also required to have been enrolled full-time for at least one regular semester (fall or spring) of graduate study at LSU immediately preceding travel.
4. Note: Summer enrollment is not required, but if travel is being requested for conferences during the summer, the student must have been enrolled full-time in the previous spring semester and either the summer or upcoming fall semester.
5. Be in good academic standing.
6. Book airfares through the state travel agency.

Final Note

This document was created to help you understand the guidelines required by the Graduate School and the department. Read it carefully. You should not expect faculty or staff to spend time explaining what is in this document. However, it is unrealistic to think that one such document can be all-inclusive. Questions always come up and when they do, please do not hesitate to contact your advisor (for academic/research matters etc.) or the Graduate Coordinator (for forms, deadlines, etc.). It is our job to help you.

Recommended Timetable**

<i>Semester</i>	<i>Course Work</i>	<i>Research</i>
Fall/1 st Year	Core Stat or Methods Course 1 Seminar or other course Professional Development (7930) First Year Project Course (4999)	
Spring/ 1 st Year	Core Stat or Methods Course 2 Required Content Course 1 Seminar or other course First Year Project Course (4999) Professional Development (7930)	1 st Year Project Due
Fall/2 nd Year	Core Stat, Methods Course 2, or Content Course Seminar Professional Development (7930) Research Hours (8000 or 8939)	Propose Master's Thesis
Spring/2 nd Year	Content Course Seminar or 7990 Research Hours (8000 or 8939) Professional Development (7930)	
Fall/3 rd Year	Seminar or 7990 Professional Development (7930) Research Hours (8000 or 8939) Content Course	Complete and defend Master's Thesis
Spring/3 rd Year	Seminar or 7990 Optional course Professional Development (7930) Research Hours (8939)	Complete Intermediate Project
Fall/4 th Year	Research Hours (8939) Professional Development (7930)	Propose and pass General Exam
Spring/4 th Year	Research Hours (9000) Professional Development (7930)	Propose Doctoral Dissertation
Fall/5 th Year	Research Hours (9000) Professional Development (7930)	
Spring/ 5 th Year	Research Hours (9000) Professional Development (7930)	Complete and Defend Doctoral Dissertation

**This timeline can be shortened for those entering the program with a Master's degree. The Master's Thesis may be waived if the CBS faculty approves the previous thesis and up to 12 credit hours in course work may be waived.

** If seminars or content courses are not offered during a given semester, fill in with 8939, 8000, and 9000.

** Only a total of 6 hours of PSYC 4999 can be counted for graduate credit.

**Following this timeline, upon PhD graduation you will have 60+ hours.

Note. Editing assistance in formatting and making the language more concise in this document was provided by Claude Sonnet 5 (Anthropic, 2026).