

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY



**GRADUATE
STUDENT
HANDBOOK**

2023-2024



Mississippi State UNIVERSITY

Dear Graduate Student:

The faculty members of the MSU Psychology Department have prepared this handbook with the hope that it will help make your move to Mississippi State and your introduction to our graduate program as easy and painless as possible. We wrote the handbook to answer some frequently asked questions. In addition, important graduate policies are described to clarify issues about continuing in and graduating from our program. Some information about the university community and about Starkville also is provided.

No matter how comprehensive it is, a handbook cannot cover every situation that you will encounter. Feel free to talk to any of us if you need help or if you have any questions that are not answered in this handbook.

We are happy to have you with us and wish you good luck at MSU and in our graduate program.

Sincerely,

Mitchell E. Berman, Ph.D.
Professor and Department Head
Department of Psychology

Table of Contents

KEY PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL	5
APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAMS -	6
GENERAL POLICIES	6
ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE/PROGRAM STATUS EVALUATION	7
APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAMS OF STUDY	8
REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES FOR THESES/DISSERTATIONS	10
POLICIES	10
PROCEDURES	11
THESIS/DISSERTATION DEADLINES FOR DECEMBER, MAY, OR AUGUST GRADUATION	14
REGISTRATION OPTIONS FOR THOSE WHO ARE COMPLETING THEIR DISSERTATION EDITS	16
FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS	16
REGISTRATION INFORMATION	17
PETITIONS, APPEALS, LEAVES OF ABSENCE, AND GRIEVANCES	18
IMPAIRED STUDENTS	19
ACADEMIC DISHONESTY/MSU HONOR CODE	19
DEPARTMENT FACILITIES	20
RESEARCH WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS	21
TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT RULES	22

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Contact information for the full faculty is available in the lobby of Magruder Hall and on the Department of Psychology website.

APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

GENERAL POLICIES

The following are Mississippi State University Psychology Department policies of relevance to graduate students. Any exceptions to the policies will be made only with the concurrence of a majority of the voting faculty (and only if the exception is consistent with University policy).

- a. All graduate students should be familiar with various regulations and requirements listed on-line (<http://www.grad.msstate.edu>).
- b. There is a Graduate Assistant Handbook for those funded via a research, teaching or service assistantship. You should review it via the link provided at <https://www.grad.msstate.edu/faq>
- c. All first-time graduate students are required to attend and pass the Graduate Teaching Assistant Workshop put on by the Office of the Graduate School, which is held about a week before the beginning of each semester. The workshop focuses on the role of the classroom instructor and presents such topics as the role of the TA, syllabus construction, ethics in the classroom, assessing academic achievement, and academic support services. All graduate students are required to obtain Level 2 GTA training. Failure to complete and pass a required teaching workshop will render a student ineligible for a teaching assistantship. The Graduate Coordinator will register you and provide additional information about required training. In addition, we expect that you will complete the more demanding Level 3 GTA training available later in that week so that you could potentially be funded as an “Instructor of Record” in the future without having to go back through the entire training. To earn the higher level of certification, students must satisfy any Graduate School requirements (e.g., successfully prepare and deliver a 10-minute microteaching sample), including any that may be updated each year by the university. This is valuable certification to obtain, even for students who begin their career here on a research assistantship.
- d. A graduate degree is much more than courses and a thesis or dissertation. Developing research ideas, ethics, teaching ability, grants, and ‘professional style’ are all essential elements of being a professional psychologist. We encourage students to get involved, not just with an adviser, but also with other faculty inside and outside the Department, as well as with regional and national organizations such as the Southeastern Psychological Association (SEPA, www.sepaonline.com), the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT, www.abct.org), the American Psychological Association (APA, www.apa.org), and the Association for Psychological Science (APS,

www.psychologicalscience.org). For students in the cognitive science doctoral program, we encourage you to consider joining the Psychonomic Society (www.psychonomic.org), the Cognitive Science Society (www.cognitivesciencesociety.org), and/or the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society (HFES, www.hfes.org). Other organizations may be valuable –be sure to consult your DCT and research mentor(s) for advice about all these options.

- e. The Graduate Catalog, which is published by the Office of the Graduate School, also lists guidelines and rules that might not be included in this publication. Be sure to also be informed about their guidelines. The Graduate Catalog is available online at <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/> .

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE/PROGRAM STATUS EVALUATION

At least once per year the program faculty will evaluate the academic progress of each graduate student. Written feedback from the spring meeting will be given to each student and more frequent feedback may be provided to students needing it.

Status in the Program

Students who meet all deadlines, maintain A/B grades in classes, and who meet expectations for professional/ethical behavior and are making satisfactory progress in research will be in good standing. Students who do not meet these requirements will receive notification of unsatisfactory progress or notification of being placed on probation. Unsatisfactory progress indicates that the student has not been progressing on program requirements or their research program at the rate expected. These students remain in good standing, but these students will be required to submit a plan for resolving the source of the unsatisfactory progress. The form for this plan can be found on the program webpage and must be signed by the student's committee. Failure to successfully complete the plan by the agreed upon date or to have a revised plan approved prior to the end of the initial plan will at a minimum result in the student being placed on probation.

Students placed on probation are required to submit a detailed plan for completing the requirements to remove probationary status; the plan will have to be approved by the advisor and program faculty within 30 days of the student being notified of probationary status. Failure to develop an approved plan by that date will result in a recommendation for dismissal from the program. Students on probation may be a lower priority in consideration for funding. Note that the Graduate Catalog indicates a student cannot take a preliminary/comprehensive examination or defend/submit a thesis/dissertation during the probationary period. Also, if a student fails to complete requirements outlined in a remediation plan by the end of the probationary period, the student shall be dismissed. A course grade of C or lower represents unsatisfactory mastery of a course's material and students will be required to retake the course. Note also that the Graduate

School will automatically place on probation any students whose GPA falls below 3.00, or will dismiss any student who receives a third course grade lower than a B.

Unsatisfactory performance in the doctoral program in Applied Psychology is further defined as any of the following:

- ❑ Earning two grades of C or lower in graduate courses in a semester
- ❑ Earning three grades of C or lower
- ❑ In the Cognitive Science doctoral concentration: not passing the first-year proposal, first-year project, master's proposal, master's thesis, specialty exam by the deadline specified in the program's handbook
- ❑ In the Clinical Psychology doctoral concentration: failing the manuscript submission exam twice, failing the dissertation proposal twice, or, potentially, not being certified as ready for internship by the clinical faculty by the end of one's fifth year of study, not successfully completing the internship year.
- ❑ Unsatisfactory evaluation of a thesis or dissertation, or
- ❑ Failing a required component of study
- ❑ Failing to meet expectations for professional/ethical behavior
- ❑ Note that earning an "unsatisfactory" grade for a pass/fail course including thesis or dissertation hours will be treated like earning a C or less in a graduate course by the department.

Any one of these or a combination will constitute the basis for review for possible dismissal. The graduate coordinator and the student's program faculty will review the record and recommend a final course of action: immediate dismissal or the establishment of a probationary period in which corrective action must take place. Appeal of the dismissal can be made by submitting a written appeal statement to the department head. If the dismissal is upheld by the department head upon the student's appeal, the student can then submit a written appeal to the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Please see the Graduate Catalog for more information.

APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAMS OF STUDY

The Department of Psychology offers a doctoral degree in Applied Psychology. The objective of the program is to train applied psychologists for employment in business, industry, engineering, college, university, clinical, and other applied settings. Concentrations are offered in the areas of Cognitive Science and Clinical. The Cognitive Science concentration focuses on the interplay and applications of cognitive psychology, computational models of cognition, the varying cognitive abilities of individuals, and demands for people to use technology more easily and efficiently. The Clinical Psychology concentration focuses on the study and application of psychological science involving both normal and pathological human behavior, drawing from the cognitive, social, and biological arenas as well as computer science and advanced technologies.

Please see handbooks from each program for information specific to each concentration. Your progress towards completion of required courses for your degree can be checked on BANNER by running a CAPP check. If needed, see your program director or the Graduate Coordinator for assistance.

REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURES FOR THESES AND DISSERTATIONS

Completion includes successfully getting the thesis document approved by the Graduate Coordinator, signed by the Dean, and accepted by the OGS and the library. Completion includes fulfilling all degree requirements, including all requirements for graduation.

Policies

I. *Roles and responsibilities.*

A. The responsibilities of the *student* include

- a. working with the thesis/dissertation chair and committee to develop an original and complete research project;
- b. working with the chair and committee to determine what is expected of the student;
- c. recognizing that it is ultimately the student's responsibility to make changes requested to the satisfaction of the thesis chair and committee;
- d. having thorough familiarity with all phases and components of the thesis/dissertation project and the relevant literature;
- e. copy editing their own document in accordance with departmental requirements, the Office of the Graduate School (OGS) requirements, the departmental webpage, and other appropriate sources;
- f. using the APA-style and library-format compliant template provided by the library and available on the Department website;
- g. awareness of, and adherence to, timetables and deadlines;
- h. adherence to reading time requirements; and
- i. compliance with other requirements specified on the departmental webpage or required by the graduate coordinator.

B. The responsibilities of the *thesis/dissertation chair* include

- a. working with the student and thesis committee to develop an original and complete research project;
- b. to determine that the thesis/dissertation is of adequate quality for a proposal or defense;
- c. providing reasonable guidance to the student in the development of proposal, IRB requirements, design of study, data collection procedures, data analysis, and preparation of defense draft of thesis;
- d. providing guidance in selection of committee members;
- e. ensuring that modifications suggested by the committee (considered by the

- chair to be reasonable suggestions) are made by the student;
 - f. monitoring post-defense revisions made by the student (e.g., in response to graduate coordinator or OGS);
 - g. providing reasonable assistance in copy editing (but not rewriting) the proposal and defense drafts; and
 - h. providing a thorough reading of the proposal and defense drafts for major and minor flaws.
- C. The responsibilities of the *thesis/dissertation committee* include
- a. working with the student and thesis/dissertation chair to develop an original and complete research project;
 - b. thorough reading of proposal and defense drafts for major and minor flaws as “cold” readers of what should be a nearly complete product; and
 - c. indicating to the chair if the thesis/dissertation is ready for proposal/defense meeting, and if not, providing general comments for improvement to the chair and student.
- D. The responsibilities of the *graduate coordinator* include
- a. providing a “good read” to identify deviations from departmental and OGS standards and APA formatting; and
 - b. if discrepancies with these standards are detected, provide general notes rather than detailed corrections and return thesis/dissertation to the chair and student; and
 - c. respect academic freedom of the chair and committee, particularly with respect to substantive issues related to the thesis/dissertation.
- II. *External review of thesis/dissertation.* The student is ultimately responsible for proofing the thesis and ensuring that it complies with APA and OGS style requirements. Should the student or chair feel that assistance is needed in this process, an external review is strongly recommended, particularly prior to the pre-defense meeting. In such cases, the student should arrange for an external review reader as available through the library, OGS, or by appropriate individuals outside the university. Use of available software to achieve APA style compliance also should be considered.
- III. *Special circumstances perceived by student.* Often, students may perceive themselves to be in “special circumstances” due to situations related to personal finance, employment, medical or health concerns, or other circumstances; and believe that policies and procedures should be modified to respond to their special circumstances. In general, it is the responsibility of the student to meet deadlines and quality standards, and to engage in appropriate planning and time management to avoid such circumstances.

- IV. *Committee composition and balance.* Committee chairs should work to ensure that the committee has a composition suitable to maintain content and technical quality of the thesis/dissertation. Such efforts might include (but not be limited to) selecting committee members with strengths in methodology, statistics, or other appropriate specializations.
- V. *Committee membership.* Although ordinarily the membership of a student's thesis/dissertation committee, once established, remains unchanged through the thesis defense, it is possible for changes to occur. After consulting with the thesis/dissertation chair, the student may decide to reconstitute his or her committee (i.e., to drop and replace members). Also, the student may decide to seek a new thesis chair. Changes to the committee initiated by the student must be justified and approved by the department head and graduate coordinator. Faculty members are also free to resign as chairs or members of thesis/dissertation committees. The OGS requires submission of a "Request for Change of Committee Members" form. This form is available on the www.grad.msstate.edu/forms website. Please note that it is not common for an advisor change to occur during a thesis or dissertation project. Typically, a change would come after completing a thesis and before proposing a dissertation. In any case, students are expected typically to first pursue a satisfactory resolution with their advisor/committee members, and next to work with their program director, the Graduate Coordinator, and the Department Head should they wish to pursue a mentor change. If the student is not satisfied with the resolution produced by these consultations, the student may contact the Graduate School Dean for additional guidance.
- VI. *Thesis/Dissertation as requirement.* The thesis/dissertation is a requirement for completion of the MS and PHD degree programs. Enrollment in the program and completion of course work is not a guarantee of program completion/graduation. What a student might consider acceptable for a thesis/dissertation may not be passing as judged by the chair and committee. Departmental degree program policy requires satisfactory completion of the thesis/dissertation.

Procedures

- I. *Preproposal meeting.* When the chair and student decide that the thesis/dissertation is ready to propose, a preproposal meeting may be scheduled with the entire committee. The purposes of the preproposal meeting is to give the committee members an opportunity to review the proposal and to help determine if the proposal is developed to the extent that it is appropriate to propose. The main difference between the preproposal and proposal meeting is in the adequacy of the preparation of the proposal. It is expected that the preproposal meeting will begin with a conference between the chair and the committee to determine if the thesis/dissertation draft is suitable for proposal. If there is complete consensus that the draft is suitable for proposal, the preproposal meeting may be upgraded to an official proposal meeting and conducted accordingly.

An appropriately developed proposal should have, at a minimum, well-written and appropriately formatted Introduction and Method chapters, as well as a properly formatted Reference section. Page numbers, section headings, tables, margins, and so forth should be formatted in a manner consistent with APA and OGS guidelines. Students ordinarily provide the committee members with a copy of measures to be used. Consult with the chair and committee members regarding their expectations.

If any member of the committee feels that the thesis/dissertation draft is not ready for proposal, the preproposal meeting continues. During the preproposal meeting, at the discretion of the chair and committee, there may be informal discussion during which committee members provide appropriate feedback or comments regarding improvements or changes needed to make the draft ready for formal proposal.

At the end of the meeting the committee may select any of the following decisions concerning the proposal: (a) accept the proposal as presented or with minor revisions, (b) accept the thesis/dissertation topic as a legitimate area for study, but proposal needs major revisions, (c) reject the proposal as an unacceptable area of study for the thesis/dissertation, or (d) other decision as appropriate and approved by the chair and committee. In outcomes (b) or (c), another preproposal meeting must be scheduled

Note: The expectation is that students will not begin to collect data prior to successful completion of their thesis/dissertation proposal meeting (as well as gaining IRB approval for any human subjects research). Although components of ongoing research programs may serve as thesis/dissertation projects, faculty are under no obligation to accept a proposal where data collection has already begun. This recommendation is not intended to exclude projects using archival database sources. Rather it is intended to allow committee members the opportunity to provide meaningful input early in the thesis/dissertation process. Once the student and the chair have determined that part of an ongoing research project might serve as a thesis/dissertation topic, committee members should be notified, and the preproposal meeting should be held as soon as possible.

- II. *Predefense meeting.* When the chair and student decide that the thesis/dissertation is ready for defense, a predefense meeting will be scheduled with the entire committee. The purpose of the predefense meeting is to give the committee members an opportunity to review the thesis/dissertation and provide input as to whether the thesis/dissertation is truly ready for defense. The main difference between the predefense and defense meeting is in the adequacy of the preparation of the thesis/dissertation draft. If the thesis/dissertation draft is adequately developed and appropriately formatted (as judged by the committee), the predefense meeting becomes the defense meeting. To be ready for defense, a thesis/dissertation should contain all relevant sections (e.g., cover sheet, table of contents, list of tables, abstract, the four chapters, references, appendices) presented in

the appropriate format (i.e., consistent with APA and OGS guidelines).

It is expected that the predefense meeting will begin with a conference between the chair and the committee to determine if the thesis/dissertation is truly ready to defend. If there is complete consensus that the thesis/dissertation is ready, the defense may take place. If any member of the committee feels that the thesis/dissertation is not ready, the defense may not continue. Rather, the meeting may continue as a predefense meeting or the chair may decide to receive written feedback from the committee regarding modifications needed for the thesis/dissertation to be ready for defense. At the discretion of the chair and committee, the meeting may continue as a predefense meeting where committee members provide appropriate feedback or comments regarding improvements or changes needed to make the thesis/dissertation ready to defend. When the recommended changes have been made and approved by the chair, another predefense meeting may be scheduled.

- III. *Notification from thesis/dissertation chair to graduate coordinator.* It is understood that the graduate coordinator will not review a thesis/dissertation until the thesis/dissertation chair indicates, in writing, that the chair believes the thesis/dissertation is ready for the graduate coordinator's review. If the graduate coordinator identifies problems with the document, the graduate coordinator will return the thesis/dissertation to the thesis/dissertation chair and to the student. Prior to each subsequent review conducted by the graduate coordinator, the graduate coordinator will require written notification from the thesis/dissertation chair that the chair believes the thesis/dissertation is ready for review.

Use of the "Thesis/Dissertation Requirements Checklist" (available from Graduate Coordinator). The Thesis/Dissertation Requirements Checklist should be used to document adherence to APA and OGS style and to technical requirements for theses. The purpose of the checklist is to address problems with OGS and APA style, writing style, and other technical writing issues rather than substantive issues and methodology. This checklist is available on the Department of Psychology website. When students submit each draft of their thesis/dissertation to the graduate coordinator, students will check off every item, procure their committee chair's signature, and submit this form along with their document to the Graduate Coordinator. If the graduate coordinator finds lack of compliance, the thesis/dissertation and marked checklist will be returned to the chair. (Policy updated 8/2012). Using the library's template for psychology students will help but students are advised to regularly consult with the latest edition of the APA Publication Manual as well.

- a. The *Guidelines for Preparing Dissertations and Theses* for thesis/dissertation research credit will govern the development of the required thesis/dissertation project. This booklet is maintained by the Graduate School and the staff in the Office of ETD Formatting and Submissions. The guidelines come in a PDF available on-line at <https://guides.library.msstate.edu/graduate/td> . Download both the standards and the APA template (currently identified on the library site as the ETD template- Microsoft Word for the "College of Education/Department of Psychology") as you prepare your document.

You can also get to these materials from the webpages for the Thesis and Dissertation Formatting office at library.msstate.edu. A copy of the *Psychology Graduate Student Handbook* (the document you are now reading), and other official statements of departmental policy will be made available to all students enrolled in the graduate program but can also be found in the graduate section of the departmental webpage (www.psychology.msstate.edu). Again, note that the library has a special template with APA style modifications approved for use with Psychology theses and dissertations – you should use it when writing your documents – it will save you LOTS of formatting woes – we promise! The Graduate Coordinator also helps provide access to helpful handouts and Internet resources. Watch the Department of Psychology website for a new webpage with all forms and guidelines for preparing thesis/dissertation documents and for graduation procedures. Important information about thesis/dissertation deadlines is emailed at least once/semester by the Graduate Coordinator and the Office of the Graduate School staff – be sure you don't delete these by accident.

Thesis/Dissertation Deadlines for December, May, or August Graduation

Note: The university expects defense meetings to occur during the calendar dates of a semester (that includes final exam week). They do not allow students to defend between semesters when school is not officially in session.

The library's deadlines for submitted theses/dissertations are posted at this website:

<http://lib.msstate.edu/thesis/>

The Graduate Coordinator and dean's office will send out an email each semester about internal deadlines that you must meet in order to have a document ready for library submission deadlines.

In general, the dean's office asks for documents to be submitted to their office 1 week before the library's deadlines. The Graduate Coordinator asks that students submit their documents for one final departmental level review 1 week before that. This means that students who expect to make a library deadline, must plan to defend no later than 4-8 weeks before the library's deadline. Students must plan to allow time for completing any edits/revisions requested at their defense, and allowing time for their committee to approve them. The closer the defense is to the dean's deadline, the more important it is for the student to have a library version of their document ready for the final editing process. Keep the Graduate Coordinator informed if you expect to be submitting close to these deadlines.

These deadlines are adjusted each year, but are good broad targets. See the library website and the Graduate Coordinator emails for specific dates each year:

- a. For December graduation (either M.S. or Ph.D.):
 - i. November first week for initial submission to the library
 - ii. Last week of October (anticipated) for initial submission to the dean
 - iii. Third week of October for submission to the graduate coordinator

- iv. This means students who want to graduate in December will want to defend by mid to late September to allow a couple of weeks to finalize any requested edits from their advisor/committee. That also means that their document would have to be ready by early September to distribute to their committee members (remember to provide committee members with 2 weeks to review a final document before defense meetings)
- b. Projected dates for May graduation (either M.S. or Ph.D.):
 - i. March 3rd week for initial submission to the library
 - ii. March 2nd week (anticipated) for initial submission to the dean
 - iii. March 1st week for submission to the Graduate Coordinator (don't expect much during spring break, please)
 - iv. This means students who want to graduate in May will want to defend by late January or early February to allow a couple of weeks to finalize edits requested by their committee. That also means that their document would have to be ready by mid-January to distribute to their committee members (provide committee member with 2 weeks to review a final document before defense meetings)
- c. Projected dates for August graduation (either M.S. or Ph.D.):
 - i. Last week of June (sometimes first week of July) for initial submission to the library
 - ii. June 18-25 (anticipated) for initial submission to the dean
 - iii. June 11-18 for submission to the Graduate Coordinator
 - iv. This means students who want to graduate in August will want to defend by mid-May to allow a couple of weeks to finalize edits for their committee. That also means that their document would have to be ready by about late April to distribute to their committee members (provide committee members with 2 weeks to review a final document before defense meetings)

Graduation Requirement from Library's Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review.

Student must enroll in a free, ungraded **LIB 9010** "ETD Formatting & Review" course on CANVAS the semester they intend to graduate with either their M.S. or Ph.D. degree. The course is hosted by the Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review – you can learn more about it at: <https://library.msstate.edu/thesis> Note that some students defend prior to the semester in which they will apply to graduate. The Graduate Coordinator and Library staff will work with you to help you complete requirements.

Registration Options for Those Who have Defended, but are Completing Dissertation Edits

From the Graduate Catalog:

Late Thesis/Dissertation Submission - (i.e., after Initial and Final Submission Deadlines published in the Graduate Calendar)

Graduate students who pass the thesis/dissertation defense by the end of a semester and meet all other graduation requirements except the deadlines for thesis/dissertation submission to the Library may adhere to the following procedure.

- Defend their thesis/dissertation no later than the end of the semester. End of semester is defined as the date/time grades are due to the Registrar's Office. This date is posted each semester on the Graduate Calendar. and the University Calendar.
- Enroll in a zero-credit hour course (GRD 9010 01) the following semester. The zero-credit hour course shall have an associated fee of \$100. Students are allowed to enroll in the zero-credit hour course only one time.
- Students enrolled in the zero-credit hour course must meet all of that semester's Library submission and graduation application deadlines.

Once your dissertation is accepted by the Library and the Graduate School completes their audit of your degree, you can be issued a letter via the Graduate School indicated you have completed all of your degree requirements. This letter is useful for SOME employers who need proof of your degree. Other employers will need your official diploma upon the August/December/May official graduation date, depending on their administrative/accreditation needs.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Types of Assistantships:

The doctoral program intends to provide academic-year support to all doctoral students in good standing through their fifth year for the Cognitive Science doctoral students and through their fourth year for the Clinical doctoral students. The exact form of support is determined by the Department. Students remaining enrolled beyond these time periods are placed on "limited status" and have no support guarantee, though support is sometimes available on a case-by-case basis. A wide variety of assistantships, traineeships, and fellowships are available for students in the doctoral program. In addition to departmental teaching assistantships and research assistantships, other types of aid include American Psychological Association Fellowships for minority students, external research assistantships, and tuition and fee waivers. **Note: PLEASE speak with your program director, the Graduate Coordinator, and Department Head if you are considering an assistantship outside the department and wish to be approved for it. A considerable amount of advance notice is required for the department to appropriately staff its many teaching, research, and service duties.**

Research Assistantships- Research assistantships are usually paid from funds obtained by faculty members in support of their research. Therefore, appointments are arranged through

discussions between faculty members and graduate students. See your advisor or Program Coordinator for procedures used. Students are expected to participate actively in the research program in which they are appointed and to perform the duties assigned by their supervisor. Performance in these positions will be evaluated and will contribute to annual evaluations of graduate students.

Research Assistantships are also available outside of the Department. A single paper application for any open positions can be obtained at Student Affairs. Download the application at <http://www.saffairs.msstate.edu/pdfs/gradapp.pdf> and deliver to the Student Affairs Office. Additional information about assistantships outside the Department can be obtained by contacting your advisor and/or the Graduate Coordinator.

Teaching Assistantships- Teaching assistantships are coordinated by the Department Head in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator, Program Coordinators, teaching faculty, and graduate students. If you wish to have a teaching assistantship in any given academic year, you should discuss your plans with your advisor and/or Program Coordinator. Employment as a Teaching Assistant carries an obligation to perform such duties as are assigned by the supervisor. Performance in these positions will be evaluated and will contribute to annual evaluations of graduate students.

Stipends for assistantships may vary from year to year but are intended to be competitive with stipends available at other large universities. See your advisor or the Program Coordinator for current amounts.

Teaching assistants work 20 hours per week for the Department, with specific assignment determined by the Department Head. An effort will be made to accommodate requests for particular kinds of work experiences, but the primary function of the assistantship is to provide limited financial support to the student while at the same time accomplishing necessary research, teaching, and other tasks for the Department. All TAs will be expected to help with proctoring duties. Expectations typically vary from semester to semester.

Note that some TAs will serve as Instructors of Record (IOR). Those teaching their own section of a course will need to pick a mentor who will conduct observations each semester they teach. That mentor will also approve syllabi, oversee mid-semester evaluations about 5-7 weeks into the semester (required for first semester instructors, recommended for IORs who teach again), conduct an in-person observation, provide written comments for the student's annual program evaluation, consult on issues during the semester, and perform other tasks, as requested by the Department Head, that support the instructional efforts of the department. IORs are required to forward results of their end of semester evaluations to their mentor, advisor, program director, Graduate Coordinator, and Department Head.

Tuition and Fee Waivers

Students who hold a 50% teaching and/or research assistantship through the Psychology Department during the academic year will receive a partial tuition and partial fee waiver. All students are required to pay a modest sum each semester for specific student fees.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

The materials needed for consulting with your advisor include this handbook, information on each program's web page, any materials distributed through e-mail, seminar announcements, etc., and the Graduate School Catalog at <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/>.

STEPS IN REGISTRATION

1. Read this handbook and your program's handbook before you see your advisor.
2. Work out a program with your advisor. If you are a Teaching or Research Assistant, your program should take into account the demands of your job. In all cases, be sure that your own classes and those in which you are a Teaching Assistant do not conflict! Work with the Graduate Coordinator and your Program Director to resolve any conflicts.
3. Be released for registration by your Program Director.
4. Complete registration through BANNER via the <https://my.msstate.edu> website.

PETITIONS, APPEALS, LEAVES OF ABSENCE, and GRIEVANCES

Department Petitions

If you wish to be exempted from rules, regulations, or procedures of the MSU Department of Psychology, you may submit a petition. This merely consists of a written statement that justifies the request. Give the letter to your advisor, who will transmit it with his or her recommendation to the Program Director/Director of Clinical Training and the Graduate Coordinator.

Appeals of Division and Departmental Decisions

If a student has a grade-related grievance, the procedure for appeal is outlined in policies available on-line (www.msstate.edu/web/security/student_policies.html). If the grievance concerns other issues, the standard procedure is as follows:

- a. If you disagree with any faculty decision concerning you or your status in the Department, it is usually desirable to discuss the matter informally with the faculty involved, with the Program Coordinator, and/or the Graduate Coordinator.
- b. You may appeal any decision by writing a letter containing pertinent information to the Department Head.
- c. If resolution is still not achieved, take the grievance to the Departmental Grievance Committee to which all voting departmental faculty members are assigned; or
- d. If the matter is still unresolved, the Department Head will explain further steps.

The Office of the Graduate School has a Graduate Student Grievance Policy which is available at <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/other-information/student-grievances/>

Student Access to Academic File

Students may examine their own academic files simply by completing a request in the main departmental office (110 Magruder). Please submit your request at least 2 business days in advance. The Graduate Coordinator will remove from the folder any material—such as letters of

recommendation—that was provided on a confidential basis. Students may make copies of any documents contained in their folders.

Leave of Absence

Students may request a leave of absence by submitting a “Request for Leave of Absence” form available from <https://www.grad.msstate.edu/students/forms> to the Graduate Coordinator. Students are expected to keep their program director informed about their plans. Leaves are normally granted for up to a 1-year period. Extensions may be requested and will be considered by the program faculty and the Graduate School to determine if circumstances warrant an extension. Graduate students are required to give the Department and their program advanced notification concerning their RETURN from a leave of absence. If a student expects to return in the fall semester, he or she should provide the Graduate Coordinator with a formal letter indicating their intention to return from their leave. The letter is due to the Graduate Coordinator no later than the fifth day of the previous Spring semester; for the spring semester, no later than the fifth day of the previous Fall semester. The Department needs sufficient notification to complete student support plans and office assignments for each semester. Students who return from leave are not guaranteed resumption of support from the program. Although written notification that the student is not planning to return is requested, failure to provide a letter providing notification of return from leave by the stated deadlines will be taken as indication that the student does not plan to return from leave.

Grievances

Information on the Graduate Student Grievance Policy for academic and nonacademic issues is available in the Graduate Catalog available at the Office of the Graduate School and at <http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/other-information/student-grievances/>

IMPAIRED STUDENTS

The department would like to support students who go through episodes of impairment that affect their performance in their various roles (e.g., student, researcher, TA, clinician, other). The Counseling Center on campus provides free, brief therapy services to students. The department also has a confidential arrangement with the Dean of Students office to provide services off campus, as appropriate. Please do not hesitate to seek this assistance should you or a faculty member suggest it to you.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY/MSU HONOR CODE

Definition of Academic Dishonesty:

Academic dishonesty is the unauthorized giving, taking, or presenting of any information or material by a student with the intent of aiding himself/herself or another on any academic work that is to be considered in the determination of the course grade or completion of other academic requirements. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, deceptive acts such as the following:

1. Using unauthorized notes or materials (crib notes, books, etc.) as an aid during an examination;
2. Substituting the examination answers of another for the student's own; that is, copying another's examination paper;
3. Acquiring, receiving, and/or possessing an examination or assignment or any part thereof, at any time or in any manner, not prescribed by the instructor;
4. Submission by a student of any course materials or activities, not his/her own, to be evaluated by the instructor in determining the student's course grade, allowing such a submission to be made for the student, or making such a submission for another;
5. Using the ideas, organization, or words of others, whether it be from a book, article, paper, or file, in any assignment to be evaluated by the instructor without giving proper credit following accepted rules of citation (plagiarism).

Procedures for Dealing with Academic Dishonesty:

See the Mississippi State University Honor code – details are available at <http://www.honorcode.msstate.edu/policy/>

DEPARTMENT FACILITIES

Mail Boxes

Graduate student mailboxes are located in the department's main office (Magruder 110). These boxes provide a convenient means of getting in touch with you. Important messages will sometimes be left in your mail box, so please be sure to check its contents regularly.

Communication

At the beginning of each semester and from time to time during the year, you will receive notices and/or forms requesting information needed in the main office, 110 Magruder Hall. Please provide the requested information and submit the forms as soon as possible. Among the items we will need from every graduate student are a current address, telephone number, and campus e-mail address. If you move or get a new phone during the semester, please inform one of the departmental support staff right away. If you do not routinely use your campus e-mail for incoming messages, you must setup forwarding to route your e-mail to the mail host you prefer. You are also responsible for monitoring the size of your campus e-mail box so that it doesn't become full. If your e-mail box becomes full, important e-mail will be missed. Additionally, please periodically check your spam filter settings and spam folders. Be sure to set your spam filter to accept e-mail from *.msstate.edu domains.

Photocopies

Photocopies may be made using the departmental machine. The library also has copiers available. The departmental staff will make copies of instructional material used in classes. See one of the departmental support staff for information on submitting an instructional request.

(Normally this will be done at the behest of one of the faculty, as you assist him or her in preparing course materials.) Students are expected to comply with copyright and fair use laws.

RESEARCH WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS

Research with human subjects is governed by federal requirements. All research must receive prior approval by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) and all researchers (even your research assistants) must receive IRB approved training in conducting human subject research. The local review board has set up a series of procedures needed for approval to conduct research with human subjects. *Failure to follow these procedures is serious. Not only will it jeopardize your own access to human subjects and your standing as a graduate student, it can potentially impact all human subject research at the entire University. For these reasons, you should work closely with your advisor to make sure you have followed all necessary steps before running human subjects.*

ALL GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE PROGRAM MUST COMPLETE training through the IRB to conduct human subjects research. Additionally, you must be recertified every 3 years at MSU. You can sign up for the training at <http://www.orc.msstate.edu/irb/> - do it soon!

Second, you must follow a submission process to obtain permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to run your study. Securing a written response from the IRB is required, even if your study will be exempt. You need the IRB approval/waiver letter in the appendices of your thesis/dissertation before the graduate coordinator/dean/library will approve it.

Third, if you wish to use the Psychology Research Program to recruit participants, you should work with your advisor to request the appropriate number of credit hours through the PRP and to set up your study's PRP page. See below for more details. This involves planning ahead! Requests for PRP access are often expected in early August for fall semesters and early December for spring semesters.

The IRB submission steps are briefly outlined below but it is expected you will go through this process with your advisor. Please note that it may take several weeks for the Institutional Review Board to consider your request, so you will need to submit the necessary paperwork well in advance of the date you intend to start your project.

Institutional Review Board

Before you begin the approval process by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), you must have a well-defined project. Make sure that your research design has been reviewed and approved by your faculty sponsor. Although we strongly encourage both independent efforts and initiative, some departmental faculty member must be aware of any research that involves human subjects. At that point, you will be ready to seek IRB approval (assuming you have completed the mandatory IRB Human Subjects Training mentioned above).

Step 1: Obtain and complete an IRB (Human Subjects) application form, including an "IRB Application" form, from the IRB web site (<http://orc.msstate.edu/> - then look for a link to "myProtocol"). Applications must be submitted digitally. If you have any questions about the IRB form, you should discuss them with your faculty sponsor. There are a variety of extant pamphlets and web pages that explain everything you need to know about MSU IRB policies and procedures. In addition, the University IRB Administrator can provide that information.

Step 2: Have your IRB form reviewed by your faculty sponsor, who will sign it as PI to indicate his/her approval.

Step 3: A policy was implemented by the IRB requiring that all student research be submitted by your advisor or faculty sponsor who will serve as PI for the proposal. You and your advisor must submit your IRB form to the University IRB Administrator in the Office of Sponsored Programs through their website.

Step 4: For grant funded projects, please submit your proposal, along with a Scientific or Scholarly Validity Review Form, to the Department Head.

At this point, the IRB will begin consideration of your proposed project. Depending on the type of research, full consideration can take several weeks. You *cannot* begin to use human subjects until you have received final approval from the University IRB Administrator in writing. If your research involves minimal risks, approval may take only a few days. If your research involves more than minimal risks, uses children, or otherwise requires a full review, the process could take from 2 to 4 weeks, possibly longer. The IRB Administrator may require some additional information from you or may suggest that you attend a meeting of the full IRB board to discuss your research. It is possible that your request will be returned unapproved until changes in your proposed procedures are implemented. **In any event, you cannot begin to run or even recruit participants for your research until you have received final approval from the University IRB Administrator.**

Note: Please keep a copy of the email indicating IRB approval of your project. You can also download it anytime later from the <https://orc.msstate.edu> “myProtocol” site where IRB proposals are submitted. You are required to include a copy of your approval in the appendix of your thesis/dissertation and you may need it for other purposes (funding sources, etc.). Most students place the IRB approval (or waiver) letter into their library document as the final appendix.

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT RULES

Do NOT book airfare/hotels or travel without prior approval through the CONCUR system or you will not get reimbursed (even if money has been allocated).

The department administrative assistant (Ms. Marlo Anderson) and your mentor will provide information on using MSU’s “CONCUR” system for documenting travel and seeking reimbursement with MSU funds for your professional travel (e.g. to conferences). It is ESSENTIAL that you file requests early and that you book your travel/hotel through CONCUR. You will be provided important information throughout the year regarding the processes involved. Simply stated: **You can’t get money from the department, college or university if you don’t use CONCUR to make your reservations.**

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