

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY



GRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK

2025-2026

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KEY PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL

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APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

The Department of Psychology offers a doctoral degree in Applied Psychology. The objective of the program is to train psychologists for employment in business, industry, engineering, college, university, clinical, and other settings. Concentrations are offered in the areas of Cognitive Science and Clinical Psychology. 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.

GENERAL HANDBOOK AND POLICY INFORMATION

This handbook contains Mississippi State University Psychology Department policies of relevance to graduate students. They apply to both the Clinical Psychology and Cognitive Science programs of the Applied Psychology Ph.D. degree program. Each of the programs also maintains a program-level handbook. The policies and procedures in this handbook supersede program handbook policies if they are inconsistent. Similarly, policies and procedures of the College of Arts & Sciences, Graduate School, and the University supersede these policies if they are inconsistent. The Graduate Coordinator is responsible for updating this handbook on an annual basis. Department policies in this handbook are set by the Department's Graduate Committee with concurrence and approval of the Department Head.

All graduate students should be familiar with various regulations and requirements listed on-line by the Graduate School (<http://www.grad.msstate.edu> and <https://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/>).

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>

Department policies including links to this handbook and the program handbooks are posted at <https://mstate.sharepoint.com/sites/PsychologyDepartmentUserCreated2>. All graduate students should have access to this site. Please email the Department Head if you do not have access.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND PROGRAM STATUS EVALUATION

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

A course grade of C or lower represents unsatisfactory mastery of a course's material and students will be required to retake the course. Grades of C or lower may also trigger Academic Probation per the academic performance standards defined in the Graduate Catalog. 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. There are other conditions that lead to Academic Probation or Academic

Dismissal defined in the Graduate Catalog.

Students who meet all deadlines, maintain A/B grades in classes, and who meet expectations for professional/ethical behavior, comply with relevant policies, and are making satisfactory progress in research will be in good standing. Students who do not meet these requirements will receive notification of a change in status and be provided by a remediation plan to return to good standing unless the situation leading to a change in status meets the criteria for a recommendation for Academic Dismissal.

Each of the doctoral programs describe their requirements for maintaining good standing. The Graduate School's academic performance standards are described at <https://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/academic-policies/academic-requirements/>. Each program may define different levels of academic standing that range from good standing up to Department Probation. If a program recommends Department Probation, a committee composed of the Graduate Coordinator, Program Director for the program, and Department Head will determine whether a remediation plan is possible or whether a status change beyond the Department level is needed. Academic status beyond the Department level is Academic Probation or Academic Dismissal (as defined in the Graduate Catalog). Programs cannot directly change the status of a student beyond Department Probation.

Note that these statuses are for academic performance standards. University policies such as the Honor Code and Code of Student Conduct include procedures for disciplinary proceedings and penalties that go beyond academic performance standards.

Once Department Probation status is assigned by a program, the Department Head, Graduate Coordinator, and the relevant Program Director will solicit information from the student, advisor, committee members, program faculty, and other appropriate sources to determine whether a remediation plan is possible. An assessment of whether adequate academic progress can still be made toward degree completion will be the primary determinant of whether remediation is possible. For the clinical training aspects of the Clinical Psychology concentration, the licensed or license-eligible clinicians who are a part of the clinical program faculty will be responsible for an assessment of a student's ability to complete the clinical aspects of the program. If Department Probation is recommended for academic performance reasons concurrently with factors that go beyond academic performance, then other university policies may apply and will need to be considered and resolved prior to a determination of whether remediation is possible. If it is determined that remediation is not possible, then Academic Dismissal will be recommended to the Graduate School.

If remediation is possible, then the Department Head, Graduate Coordinator, and the relevant Program Director will draft the remediation plan. The student will be provided with the remediation plan, and the consequences for failing the remediation plan will be detailed in the plan. One consequence of failing a Department Probation remediation plan will be Academic Probation and loss of any assistantship. Failure to resolve a subsequent Academic Probation remediation plan will result in a recommendation for Academic Dismissal. Appeal procedures for Academic Probation and Academic Dismissal are provided in the Graduate Catalog.

PSY 9000 RESEARCH HOURS

PSY 9000 credit hours are graded on an Unsatisfactory/Satisfactory basis, and the instructor assigned for those hours is the student's advisor in the graduate program. Within two weeks of the

start of classes during each semester, any student enrolled in PSY 9000 must meet with their advisor and agree on the research/thesis/dissertation goals for the semester. The goals should be documented in writing in an email sent by the student to the advisor. Periodically throughout the semester, updates on progress toward the goals should be provided by the student to the advisor, and a final update should be provided at the end of the semester prior to the last day of final examinations. This final update will provide the basis for the advisor to assign a grade. In some cases, a program or department remediation plan will specify the minimum progress that needs to be made to earn a grade of Satisfactory (S). Note that a grade of Unsatisfactory (U) is considered a failing grade.

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 Graduate School and the library. Completion includes fulfilling all degree requirements, including all requirements for graduation.

1) *Roles and responsibilities.*

- a) The responsibilities of the *student* include
 - i) Identifying and securing an appropriate committee, in consultation with their thesis/dissertation chair
 - ii) working with the thesis/dissertation chair and committee to develop an original and complete research project;
 - iii) working with the chair and committee to determine what is expected of the student;
 - iv) recognizing that it is ultimately the student's responsibility to make changes requested to the satisfaction of the thesis/dissertation chair and committee;
 - v) having thorough familiarity with all phases and components of the thesis/dissertation project and the relevant literature;
 - vi) 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;
 - vii) using the APA-style and library-format compliant template provided by the library and available on the Department website;
 - viii) awareness of, and adherence to, timetables and deadlines;
 - ix) adherence to reading time requirements; and
 - x) compliance with other requirements specified on the departmental webpage or required by the graduate coordinator.
- b) The responsibilities of the *thesis/dissertation chair* include
 - i) working with the student and committee to develop an original and complete research project;
 - ii) to determine that the thesis/dissertation is of adequate quality for a proposal or defense;
 - iii) 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;
 - iv) providing guidance in selection of committee members;
 - v) ensuring that modifications suggested by the committee (considered by the chair to be reasonable suggestions) are made by the student;
 - vi) monitoring post-defense revisions made by the student (e.g., in response to graduate

- coordinator or OGS);
 - vii) providing reasonable assistance in copy editing (but not rewriting) the proposal and defense drafts; and
 - viii) providing a thorough reading of the proposal and defense drafts for major and minor flaws.
 - c) The responsibilities of the *thesis/dissertation committee* include
 - i) working with the student and thesis/dissertation chair to develop an original and complete research project;
 - ii) thorough reading of proposal and defense drafts for major and minor flaws as “cold” readers of what should be a nearly complete product; and
 - iii) 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
 - i) providing a “good read” to identify deviations from departmental and OGS standards and APA formatting; and
 - ii) if discrepancies with these standards are detected, provide general notes rather than detailed corrections and return thesis/dissertation to the chair and student; and
 - iii) respect academic freedom of the chair and committee, particularly with respect to substantive issues related to the thesis/dissertation.
- 2) *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.
 - 3) *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.
 - 4) *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.
 - 5) *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 their committee (i.e., to drop and replace members). Also, the student may decide to seek a new chair. Changes to the committee initiated by the student must be justified and approved by the chair 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 at <https://www.grad.msstate.edu/students/forms>. 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.

- 6) *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 considered passing as judged by the chair and committee. Departmental degree program policy requires satisfactory completion of the thesis/dissertation.

Procedure

A satisfactorily 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 formatting. Consult with the chair and committee members regarding their expectations.

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.

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 expectation 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.

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 including a review of APA formatting. 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. 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.

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 (<https://www.psychology.msstate.edu/>) or on the department’s internal website for policies (<https://mstate.sharepoint.com/sites/PsychologyDepartmentUserCreated2>). 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 2 weeks before the library's deadlines. The Graduate Coordinator asks that students submit their documents for one final departmental level review 2-3 weeks before that. The exact dates will be announced by the graduate coordinator each semester. This means that students who expect to make a library deadline, **must** plan to defend no later than 7-8 weeks before the library's deadline to allow for revisions requested by the committee and review at all levels before the library.

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 graduate coordinator'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:

- 1) For December graduation (either M.S. or Ph.D.):
 - a) Students who wish to graduate in December will want to defend by early September to allow a couple of weeks to finalize any requested edits from their advisor/committee. That means that their document would have to be ready by mid-August to distribute to their committee members (remember to provide committee members with 2 weeks to review a final document before defense meetings)
 - b) Last week of September for submission to the graduate coordinator
 - c) Mid-October (anticipated) for initial submission to the dean
 - d) November- first week for initial submission to the library
- 2) Projected dates for May graduation (either M.S. or Ph.D.):
 - a) Students who wish 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 means that their document would have to be ready by mid-January to distribute to their committee members (provide committee members with 2 weeks to review a final document before defense meetings)
 - b) Last week of February for submission to the Graduate Coordinator (don't expect much during spring break, please)
 - c) March third week (anticipated) for initial submission to the dean
 - d) April first week for initial submission to the library
- 3) Projected dates for August graduation (either M.S. or Ph.D.):
 - a) Students who wish to graduate in August will want to defend by mid-May to allow a couple of weeks to finalize edits for their committee. That 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)
 - b) Last week of May for submission to the Graduate Coordinator
 - c) Third week of June for initial submission to the dean
 - d) First week of July for initial submission to the library

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 enroll in this course. However, it is the students' responsibility to ensure that their final thesis/dissertation is formatted correctly for the library submission; the Graduate Coordinator and Library staff will look them over to check for compliance and will return the document to the student if it is not satisfactory. Not submitting your thesis/dissertation in the appropriate format could result in delays or missed deadlines which could impact your ability to graduate in a given semester.

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

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 the 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 and required certification to obtain, even for students who begin their career here on a research assistantship.

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 fifth year (or the year they apply for internship, whichever comes first) for the Clinical Psychology doctoral students. Support is contingent on good performance in assistantship positions, and performance in these positions will be evaluated and will contribute to annual evaluations of graduate students. Poor performance may result in loss of the assistantship and support in future semesters.

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 Program Director for current amounts. Assistantships also cover 100% of assessed tuition. Other benefits are described at <https://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/graduate-assistantships>.

The exact form of support is determined by the Department. Students remaining enrolled beyond these time periods 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, external research assistantships, grant funding, 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. Departmental travel funds are only available to students funded on assistantships in the department unless an exception is made by the Department Head.**

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 Director 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.

Teaching Assistantships- Teaching assistantships are coordinated by the Department Head in consultation with the Graduate Coordinator and Program Directors. Employment as a Teaching Assistant carries an obligation to perform such duties as are assigned by the supervisor.

Teaching assistants work 20 hours per week for the Department, with specific assignments determined by the Department Head. An effort will be made to accommodate requests for particular kinds of work experience, 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, 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.

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

Program directors will provide information on courses to register for each semester and will release you for registration. You will then 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 their recommendation to the Program Director and the Graduate Coordinator. The Program Director, Graduate Coordinator, and Department head will render a decision within two weeks when the university is open.

Grievances

The standard procedure is as follows:

- 1) If you disagree with any faculty decision concerning you or your status in the Department, including course requirements or grading, it is usually desirable to discuss the matter informally with the faculty involved first.
- 2) If the matter remains unresolved, then discuss the issue with the Program Director.
- 3) If the matter remains unresolved, then discuss the issue with the Graduate Coordinator.
- 4) If the matter remains unresolved, then discuss the issue with the Department Head.
- 5) If the matter remains unresolved, then further appeals may be pursued via the procedures outlines in [AOP 12.37: GRADUATE STUDENT ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES](#)

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/>.

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> 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.

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).

See the [Mississippi State University Honor code operations manual](#) for more detailed definitions and procedures.

DEPARTMENT FACILITIES AND COMMUNICATION

Mailboxes and Communication

Graduate student mailboxes are located in the department's main office (Rice Hall 113). 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 at least once per week.

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 your email or mailbox. 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 the department business manager right away.

You are expected to monitor your official university email. All e-mail communication from the department will go to that address

Photocopies

Photocopies may be made using the department copier in Rice Hall 113. For assistance, see one of the student workers in the lobby or room 116. The department's administrative assistant can also aid with the copier if there are no student workers available. 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 <https://www.orc.msstate.edu/compliance/human-subjects/training> - 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.