Mississippi State University Cognitive Science Doctoral Program Handbook

2026-2027

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2
Core Cognitive Science Program Faculty 3
Useful Links 3
Program Requirements 3
Course Requirements 3
Research Requirements 4
Information on Committees 5
Requirement 1. Forming a Master's Committee and Establish First-Year Goals 6
Requirement 2. First-Year Project (FYP) Summary 8
Requirement 3. First-Year Project (FYP) Talk 9
Requirement 4. Master's Thesis Proposal and Second-Year Brownbag Talk 9
Requirement 5. Master's Thesis Defense and ACCESS talk 11
Requirement 6. Specialty Qualifying Exam and Formation of the Doctoral Committee 12
Requirement 7. Dissertation 15
Other Requirements and Additional Information 20
Teams Repository 20
Evaluation and Status in the Program 20
Annual Reports 21
Department Seminars/Events 23
Residency Requirement 23
Assistantship Funding and Outside Employment Policy 23
Honor Code 24
Mailing Lists 24
Handling Unexpected Graduate School Issues and Extraordinary Situations 24
Students Entering with a Master's Degree 24
Social Media Policy 25
Overview of Cognitive Science Program Requirements and Deadlines 26
Sample Schedule of Classes 27

Core Cognitive Science Program Faculty

- Dr. Abdul-Rahim Deeb (ad2531@msstate.edu)
- Dr. Mark Huff (mh3622@msstate.edu)
- Dr. Allison Jaeger (ajb1193@msstate.edu)
- Dr. Andrew Jarosz (Program Director, afj62@msstate.edu)
- Dr. Jarrod Moss (jarrod.moss@msstate.edu)
- Dr. Michael Pratte (prattems@psychology.msstate.edu)
- Dr. Thalia Vrantsidis (tv285@msstate.edu)
- Dr. Jonathon Whitlock (jw4234@msstate.edu)

Useful Links

Department Sharepoint (Useful departmental policies and links):
https://mstate.sharepoint.com/sites/PsychologyDepartmentUserCreated2

Graduate Handbook (Department-level student handbook):
https://www.psychology.msstate.edu/sites/www.psychology.msstate.edu/files/2025-09/PsychologyGradStudentHandbook_2025-2026.pdf

Program Requirements

Course Requirements

RESEARCH METHODS AND QUANTITATIVE CORE		
PSY 8214	Quantitative Methods in Psychology II	4
PSY 8803	Advanced Quantitative Methods for IO and General Psychology	3
PSY 8713	Issues and Methods in Cognitive Psychology	3
DISSERTATION HOURS		
PSY 9000	Dissertation Research/Dissertation in Psychology	21
COGNITIVE SCIENCE CORE (2 courses from this list)		6
PSY 8703	Advanced Cognitive Science	
PSY 8723	Cognitive Models of Skill	
PSY 8773	Computational Cognitive Neuroscience	
PSY 8673	Models of Cognition Seminar	
COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY CORE (4 courses from this list)		12
PSY 8743	Perception and Attention	

PSY 8753	Advanced Memory	
PSY 8763	Expertise and Cognitive Skill Acquisition	
PSY 8663	Individual Differences in Cognition	
PSY 8653	Applied Cognitive Reading Seminar	
PSY 8643	Psycholinguistics	
RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL SKILLS (3 courses from this list)		9
PSY 8683	Cognitive Science Research Skills	
PSY 8693	Advanced Cognitive Science Research Skills	
PSY 8783	Cognitive Science Professional Skills	
PSY 8793	Advanced Cognitive Science Professional Skills	
COGNITIVE SCIENCE SEMINAR		
PSY 8731	Applied Cognitive Science Research Seminar (ACCESS)	8
Total Hours		**66**

Research Requirements

The Cognitive Science program has a set of requirements designed to involve students in research upon entering the program and then facilitate their progress toward publishing their research and completing their dissertation. The purpose and evaluation criteria for these requirements are described below. Students should note that these are the minimum research requirements needed to complete the doctoral degree. Establishing a successful research career will require research products beyond the minimal set required to complete the degree. Most requirements have an associated deadline, but this is simply the latest date you can complete the requirement. You are encouraged to complete the requirements ahead of their deadlines. Under extreme circumstances, a thesis or dissertation committee may, with a majority vote, extend a deadline by up to three weeks. Any further extension requires a majority vote of the entire cognitive faculty. Deadlines external to the Psychology Department cannot be extended. It is expected that you will be in good communication with your advisor and your committee around deadlines.

The faculty cannot stress enough that students (and faculty) are often poor estimators of the time taken to produce research products. Especially as the requirements require more sophisticated writing (e.g., master's thesis and beyond), you are encouraged to start as early as possible. It can take months of revisions to achieve the publication-quality writing needed for these later requirements. Starting your thesis writing a month (or even two months) prior to the deadline is a good indicator that you will not pass your thesis requirement. Good writing takes time and many rounds of revision in consultation with your advisor.

Unless otherwise noted or superseded by other university requirements, all written products required by the program are to be formatted as if they were being submitted for review to a journal. The default journal format will be APA format with figures/tables inline. Dissertations and theses must be formatted per APA and library guidelines.

Unless otherwise specified, you should submit all documents to satisfy requirements to your committee via email. All forms should be filled out and signed electronically using a PDF signature (see instructions here). In case a form needs to be signed by the entire committee, the recommended procedure is for the student to sign the form (if required) and send to the advisor. Note that forms for recording the outcome of a proposal or defense meeting should never be handled by a student. The advisor will then circulate to the committee and obtain all signatures before forwarding to the program director. The recommended procedure is to send the document to the first committee member listed on the form and have each committee member sign in the order listed in the form before emailing it to the next committee member listed on the form. The final committee member will forward to the advisor and program director.

Failure to meet any deadlines or submit an acceptable research product for any of these requirements is grounds for a recommendation to the graduate school for dismissal from the program**. Note that any deadline that falls on a weekend or university holiday is to be considered due at the same time on the next business day (e.g., if a deadline on September 15 at 5pm would fall on a Sunday, then the actual deadline for that year is the Monday following that weekend at 5pm).** Unless otherwise specified or superseded by the Graduate Catalog, passing a requirement is determined by a majority vote of your committee. Note that the Graduate Catalog specifies that obtaining more than one failing vote for your master's thesis defense, dissertation proposal, or dissertation defense constitutes failure.

Information on Committees

You will form two committees during the program. The first committee will be your master's committee that will serve through your thesis defense. This committee must have at least three members of which at least half are cognitive science core faculty.

The second committee will be your dissertation committee that will serve following your thesis defense through completion of your dissertation defense. This committee must have at least four members of which at least half are cognitive science core faculty.

For both committees, more than 50% of doctoral committee members must hold a Graduate Faculty appointment at MSU (and be full-time). Please consult with your advisor, program director, and Graduate Coordinator before finalizing membership of your doctoral committee or at any time you consider changing composition of the committee.

The role of the committee is to provide guidance and feedback as you progress through the degree. As such, committee members are expected to provide timely feedback on written program requirements. In addition to the general expectations of committee members described in the graduate catalog and department handbook, committee members should provide prompt feedback within 10 business days of receiving a written document during the academic year (i.e., excluding weekends, holidays, breaks, and the summer months). If a committee member is unable to meet this deadline, then he or she should notify the committee chair upon receipt of the document to develop a plan for how to proceed. You should note that most faculty are only on nine-month contracts, and so they will not necessarily be available to perform committee-related duties from May 16-Augut 15. You should seek prior approval from your committee if you plan to have a proposal or defense in the summer months.

Feedback from the committee on any pass/fail requirement will be first conveyed to the chair of the committee so that the final pass/fail determination can then be conveyed to the student by the chair of the committee. Committee members should submit pass/fail feedback directly to the advisor but not to the student. More detailed feedback including suggestions, revisions, and comments should be conveyed from the committee members directly to the student after the student has been notified of the overall result.

Note that committee members generally are only expected to provide feedback on the penultimate version of any document. The committee may require revisions to a document resulting in a final version or they may accept the version submitted as the final version. Committee members generally do not provide feedback or comments on intermediate drafts.

All proposals you complete in the program to submit to your committee should clearly describe what work has already been done and what you are proposing to do. If you are proposing it, then you should not do the work before your committee members have had an opportunity to review it and provide feedback. Your committee might require changes to your research, and if you have already done part of what you are proposing, you will have to repeat this work with the committee's changes implemented.

You may switch advisors at some point in the program. You should consult with your current advisor and the program director prior to initiating any change. Switching advisors can often be difficult, and in the best-case scenario there is another faculty member who is doing research directly aligned with your new research interests who agrees to advise you. Choosing to advise a graduate student is a major decision for a faculty member, and a faculty member's willingness to do so can depend on a number of factors. Simply because you wish to switch advisors does not mean there is a faculty member in the program who is willing to advise you. You cannot continue in the program without an advisor.

Requirement 1. Forming a Master's Committee and Establish First-Year Goals

(Deadline: October 1 of 1st Semester)

Description

Incoming students will generally have been admitted to work with an advisor (or possibly co-advisors), but all students will have selected an advisor within the first week of their first semester. Your advisor, along with your committee, will provide guidance throughout your time in the program.

Your advisor has the general responsibility of discussing with you all matters involving the Department and the Office of Graduate Studies. Your advisor is in a sense your primary representative to the Psychology Department, although of course you are free to consult at any time with other members of the Department, your program faculty, the Program Director, and with the Graduate Coordinator and/or Department Head. Your primary advisor must be a core member of the core Cognitive Science faculty. You may select a co-advisor who is not a member of the core Cognitive Science faculty.

In consultation with your advisor, you should establish an initial research direction for your first-year research project and subsequently your master's thesis. Your committee members should be selected to provide additional expertise and advice on your research leading up to the thesis. Your advisor will help to identify potential faculty to serve as committee members. Your master's committee must have at least three members including your advisor. At least half of the

committee must be members of the Cognitive Science faculty. Please review additional information on committees in the earlier section on committees.

At the end of each academic year, you will submit an annual report form to the program faculty. The purpose of this form is to provide information that allows the program faculty to assess each student's progress in the program. One part of this form asks students to evaluate their progress on the annual goals they set on last year's report. You should establish some reasonable goals with your advisor and complete only the goal setting portion of the form. These are the goals you will assess your progress towards at the end of your second semester.

Evaluation Criteria

You will need to meet with potential committee members and be able to briefly describe the area of research you will be pursuing and a possible research question. It is not expected that you will have a detailed understanding of the relevant literature or a detailed research question and hypothesis at this time. The program faculty do expect you to be able to describe the general direction you expect your research to take in the first year so that they can determine in what manner their expertise can contribute to your project.

Procedures for Completing Requirement

1. Meet with potential committee members to describe your prospective research and see if they are willing to serve on your committee.
2. Fill out the M.S. committee request form available from the graduate school's website.
    a. Degree is M.S.
    b. Major is Psychology (there is no concentration)
    c. There is no minor
    d. List all committee member names as they appear in the graduate catalog here: http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/faculty/#collegeofartssciencestext
    For example, Jarrod Moss or Andrew F. Jarosz (using initials as listed in the catalog). See the list below for the correct listing of all program faculty.
    e. Your committee member's netID should be able to be found by looking them up in the directory at my.msstate.edu. Here is a list of the program faculty netIDs:
        i. Allison Jaeger Berena - ajb1193
        ii. Abdul-Rahim Deeb - ad2531
        iii. Mark Huff - mh3622
        iv. Andrew F. Jarosz - afj62
        v. Jarrod Moss - jrm631
        vi. Michael S. Pratte - msp311
        vii. Thalia Vrantsidis - tv285
        viii. Jonathon Whitlock - jw4234
    f. NG/G means graduate faculty (G) or not (NG). If the faculty member appears on the list of graduate faculty http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/faculty/#collegeofartssciencestext, then put G (all program faculty are graduate faculty). If they are outside the university or retired, then put NG. All cogsci program faculty are graduate faculty.

g. Appointing department is the department they appear under in the list of graduate faculty at http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/faculty/#collegeofartssciencestext. If they are not at MSU, then leave this field blank.
h. Your advisor is the major professor and other committee members are committee members. Unless you have two advisors, there is no co-major professor. There is no minor professor. Make sure you use the correct lines for the committee members (not the co-major or minor professor).
i. The graduate coordinator is Allison Jaeger Berena. There is no minor graduate coordinator.
j. Have your advisor check this form for accuracy before you circulate it to the committee for signatures. An error means that everyone has to sign it again (and that's annoying).
k. Digitally sign the form.
l. Get digital signatures from your committee and then send it to the program director. S/he will obtain the graduate coordinator's signature.

3. Complete the second page of the program's Annual Goal Evaluation form found on the Teams Repository. Send that to the program director via email along with your committee form. This OneDrive folder should have been shared with you upon your initial enrollment in the program. If you encounter problems accessing the OneDrive repository, then contact the program director.
You must submit the forms via email to the program director before 5pm on October 1 of your first semester. You should keep a copy of these signed forms for your records.

Requirement 2. First-Year Project (FYP) Summary

(Deadline: October 1 of 1st semester)

Description

During the first year, you must complete a research project. The purpose of this project is to involve you in the research process as early as possible. This project will ideally form the basis for your thesis research that you pursue in your second year. Your advisor should help you to select a suitable project, and this could include assigning you to a planned study in the lab. Projects might include conducting an experiment, developing a computational model of existing data, or learning a complex methodology (e.g., fMRI) via the analysis of an existing data set. One of your goals in conducting this project should be to do something that can be built upon to lead to a publishable master's thesis at the end of the second year. Ideally, the first-year research project leads to a publishable product, but publication of this work is not required to pass this requirement.

The goal of a doctoral program is to train you to be an independent researcher. As such, you should start to take initiative on developing and executing your project with frequent consultation with your advisor. A common mistake in graduate school is to rely on your advisor to direct the project. This is your research, and you should be taking steps to assume a leadership role in your research. You should discuss how you can best do that in the context of your project with your advisor.

Students work with their advisor to create a project summary. This summary is due to your committee by 5 p.m. on October 1, and you must cc the program director. This summary should take the form of an extended abstract in which you address the research question underlying the work (introduction), what specifically you will be doing (methods), and what your primary

analysis will be to answer the question (proposed analysis). The length of this summary may vary across projects but should be 2-3 pages.

Evaluation Criteria
The projects will be assessed primarily on the criteria that completion of the project will either develop a key research skill (i.e., analyzing neuroimaging data) or creation of a research product that has the potential to contribute to the field. In addition, the project will be judged on whether it is feasible to complete within the timeframe allotted for first-year projects. You need to be able to provide a presentation of your project's results toward the end of your second semester.

Procedures for Completing Requirement
1. Email your first-year project summary to your committee by 5 p.m. on October 1 in your first semester and cc the program director.
2. Your committee will review these summaries within 1-2 weeks. Your committee will either approve the summary, request more details, or request revisions to the project. Your advisor will send an email summarizing any feedback and requests, and any requested revisions will be due within two weeks of the date this email is sent.

Requirement 3. First-Year Project (FYP) Talk

(Deadline: Scheduled date of your ACCESS talk during 2nd semester)

Description
After completing your FYP research, you will prepare a talk to be presented in your second semester during ACCESS, the cognitive science brownbag. This talk should provide an overview of your project, the research question being addressed, and your results. Generally, talks are 40-45 minutes with 15-20 minutes of time for questions in a 1-hour slot. You will schedule your talk with the instructor of ACCESS.

Evaluation Criteria
Based on the talk, the cognitive science program faculty will either approve or fail the project. Failure of the FYP is expected to be extremely rare and reserved for cases where the research originally summarized was not completed or was not presented. If you completed the project you proposed in your FYP summary and presented it, then you should expect to pass. Feedback on the content and style of your talk will be provided by the attendees of the talk.

Procedures for Completing Requirement
There are no additional procedures beyond completing the talk in ACCESS.

Requirement 4. Master's Thesis Proposal and Second-Year Brownbag Talk

(Deadlines: Successful proposal meeting completed by Dec. 10, revisions expected by Jan. 10)

Description
You are required to complete a master's Thesis demonstrating independent research expertise. Students entering with a master's degree should review the "Students Entering with a Master's Degree" section later in the handbook. Ideally, the master's thesis will continue the line of research initiated by the FYP, which would facilitate having a publishable product at the end of your second year. However, this is not a requirement. Although you will draw on the assistance of faculty and other university resources, the final thesis must represent your own work. Your successful proposal meeting must be completed by December 10 in your third semester. Any

revisions requested by the committee should be sent to the committee prior to 5pm on January 10 in your fourth semester. The revision deadline is a recommended deadline. Missing this deadline will not result in probation but will trigger advisory status.

You will present a talk in ACCESS at the beginning of your 3rd semester. The topic of your talk should be your thesis work. This talk must be completed before the university's fall break in October. The purpose of this talk is for you to describe the research question you will be addressing in your thesis including relevant motivation and background to get feedback from your committee before finishing your proposal document.

A thesis proposal including a review of relevant literature, a description of proposed methods, and planned analyses must be approved by your committee. As you are writing, keep in mind that your audience is your committee so that you are not writing for your specialized subfield of cognitive science. It is important that you meet with your committee members on a regular basis leading up to the preproposal meeting so that they have a clear idea of what you are going to propose prior to reading your document. Keeping your committee informed will maximize the chances that your proposal meeting goes well. The committee should receive a copy of the proposal at least two weeks before the scheduled proposal meeting date.

The proposal meeting is restricted to your committee. At the proposal meeting, you will start with a 15-minute overview of your proposed thesis work. The committee will ask questions during and after your presentation. The committee will then meet without you to determine the outcome of the proposal. There used to be a history of students providing refreshments for the attendees of the meeting, but the program has instituted a policy that prohibits students from providing food or drink. The purpose of this policy is that no student should feel compelled or burdened to provide this service.

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria for the proposal document include clear writing, a clear rationale for the hypothesis grounded in prior literature, and appropriate proposed methodology and analysis techniques.

The purpose of the proposal meeting is for you to explain and defend the proposed research described in the document. There are three possible outcomes for the meeting: pass, pass with revisions, and fail. The evaluation criteria for the proposal meeting are that you should be able to discuss your work and its relationship with the literature. In addition, you should be able to answer questions about the proposed work, discuss the design/methods of the project, and discuss its relationship with prior literature.

Procedures for Completing Requirement

1. At least **2 weeks** before your proposal meeting, you should notify the program director and graduate coordinator of the date, time, and location of your proposal meeting.
2. You should also distribute copies of the proposal to your committee at least two weeks before the proposal meeting. Also, send a copy of your proposal to the program director for the program's files.
3. Proposal meeting occurs.
4. The result of your proposal must be documented via submission of the examination results form. This form will be sent by the graduate coordinator to your advisor. It should be completed by your advisor and circulated by your advisor to the other members of the committee. We use the Written Comprehensive line of this form just for internal program documentation of the success or failure of the thesis proposal. Any revisions must be

documented on the form along with a deadline for completing the revisions. The form should be submitted by your advisor to the program director within a week of your proposal meeting. An unsuccessful proposal meeting will result in you being placed on advisory status, and an advisory plan should be formulated immediately.

5. Your successful (i.e., passing or passing contingent on revisions) proposal meeting should be completed prior to 5pm on December 10 in your third semester.
6. Any revisions requested by the committee should be sent to the committee (cc the program director) prior to 5pm on January 10 in your fourth semester.
7. Any necessary revisions to the research after your proposal should be approved by your committee.

Requirement 5. Master's Thesis Defense and ACCESS talk

(Thesis Defense Deadline: November 1 of 5th semester, Graduation Deadline: 6th semester)

Description

The defense meeting is an oral examination, scheduled for approximately 1.5 hours during which the student offers a presentation of the research for the first 15-20 minutes. The defense presentation is open to the public. At the defense meeting, you will start with a 15-20-minute presentation of your thesis work. During this presentation, only the committee will be allowed to ask questions. At the conclusion of the presentation, the committee will be allowed to ask additional questions. Once these have been answered, other audience members will have the opportunity to ask questions. At the conclusion of the public presentation, the audience will be asked to leave, and a follow-up defense meeting will occur, during which the committee may ask additional questions. In addition to the committee, this defense meeting is open to members of the graduate faculty affiliated with the program. The committee will then meet without you to determine the outcome of the defense.

There used to be a history of students providing refreshments for the attendees of the meeting, but the program has instituted a policy that prohibits students from providing food or drink. The purpose of this policy is that no student should feel compelled or burdened to provide this service.

At the completion of the master's defense, the committee will determine whether the thesis and defense are acceptable, acceptable with revisions, or failing. You are encouraged to review the requirements of master's thesis and defense in the department handbook and in the Graduate Catalog. You and your advisor should work with the Graduate Coordinator to ensure that the appropriate paperwork is done on time as described in the procedures below.

Evaluation Criteria

You are also encouraged to write the thesis in a manner that is appropriate for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. Evaluation criteria for the thesis document include publication-quality writing, clear rationale for the hypothesis grounded in prior literature, appropriate methodology and analysis techniques consistent with your proposal (or any committee-approved revisions that occur after the proposal), and a discussion that addresses the hypothesis with respect to theories described in prior literature. Evaluation criteria for the oral defense include your ability to answer questions about relevant background literature including relevant theories, ability to explain how your research question(s) addresses a gap in the field, and ability to discuss and defend your choice of research design and analysis methods.

Procedures for Completing Requirement

1. Approximately 3-4 weeks before you anticipate being ready to defend, you should work with your committee to schedule the defense meeting. Note that your defense must occur during a semester you are enrolled. Most cognitive science students are enrolled in spring and fall semesters but not summer, maymester, or winter session. Refer to the academic calendar for details about when each semester starts and ends (first day of classes until last day of exams).
2. At least **2 weeks** before your defense meeting, you must notify the program director and Graduate Coordinator of the date, time, and location of your defense meeting as well as send them a flyer announcing your meeting (see the program's Teams Repository for a template). At the same time, you should send your thesis to your committee if you have not already done so.
3. The defense meeting occurs.
4. The result of your defense must be documented via submission of the examination results form. This form will be sent by the graduate coordinator to your advisor. It should be completed by your advisor and circulated by your advisor to the other members of the committee. Remember to review Office of the Graduate School policies, in addition to the ones given in this handbook and the department handbook, regarding the thesis and its submission.
5. If the initial defense is not successful, policies in the Graduate Catalog will be followed. Note that failing the initial master's thesis defense does not alter any remaining deadlines for program requirements. An unsuccessful defense meeting will result in you being placed on advisory status, and an advisory plan should be formulated immediately. In egregious cases where a student clearly was not adequately prepared for their defense (e.g., an incomplete document is circulated to the committee), the committee may vote to place you directly on probation.
6. *Submission of the Thesis.* Following a successful master's defense, students submit their completed thesis for review and signatures to the Graduate Coordinator, who will approve and send the document on to the Dean. Once the dean signs off, the student will ultimately submit the thesis electronically to the graduate school. Only final documents with full internal and external approvals should be submitted. For a copy of the guidelines and to submit an electronic Thesis or Dissertation, visit http://lib.msstate.edu/thesis/process/. You must complete the requirements for graduation with the M.S. in time to graduate the semester after you successfully defend (i.e., your sixth semester). Relevant deadlines are set by the graduate school, dean, and graduate coordinator. Review the emails sent to you by the graduate coordinator for details.
7. *Graduation Requirement from Library's Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review.* Students 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 http://lib.msstate.edu/thesis/process/.

Requirement 6. Specialty Qualifying Exam and Formation of the Doctoral Committee

(Dissertation committee deadline: November 15 of 5th semester)

(Deadline: April 1 of 6th semester; Revision Deadline: May 15 of 6th semester)

Description
After submission of your thesis document for your defense, you should form a doctoral committee. The doctoral committee is comprised of at least four members of the graduate faculty. It is chosen by you in consultation with your advisor. Most members are likely to be members of the Cognitive Science Program. The committee chair (your advisor) must be a core faculty member of the Cognitive Science Program. At least half of your committee must be core faculty in the Cognitive Science Program. In addition, any rules outlined in the Graduate Catalog for committee composition must be followed (e.g., more than 50% of committee must be MSU Graduate Faculty). The committee should be constructed so that experts in all aspects of your study will serve as members. If changes in the approved committee become necessary, procedures described in the Graduate Catalog must be followed. Submit your complete committee request form with signatures to the program director by 5pm on November 15.

The specialty exam consists of a written review paper in the style of a *Psychological Bulletin* review article. The specialty paper is a critical literature review to help you select an appropriate dissertation research question. Please see the writing tips under the dissertation proposal topic below. It is very important that you have a specific scope and research question (i.e., central theme) in mind as you write this kind of review paper. Students will develop their topic with the advice and consent of the doctoral committee.

The first step in developing your specialty exam is to assemble a list of articles on the topic you and your advisor have decided upon. It is normal for the topic to be refined as you conduct your literature search. A 2–4-page prospectus should be developed to accompany the list of articles. The prospectus should describe the topic to be addressed in the paper and how the articles fit into this topic. The accompanying reading list should be organized into groups in such a way that the relevance of the readings to the topics discussed in your prospectus is apparent. You should have read at least 50% of the papers on your list by the time the prospectus is submitted. The deadline for the prospectus is January 15 of your sixth semester. The committee will review the prospectus and submit any feedback or revisions to the list of papers by January 31. This list is simply a starting point and can be added to as the review paper develops. Some papers in the list may also turn out not to be as relevant as expected. It is best to consult with your committee as soon as possible if you determine that a significant departure from the initial list is necessary. The prospectus is intended to help you by receiving feedback on your initial thoughts about the literature. It is a feedback mechanism and is not evaluated (i.e., pass/fail).

The next step in drafting the specialty paper is to read all the articles, make notes, and write the paper. While the advisor and committee are available for discussion of the ideas in the paper, the paper should not be reviewed or edited by the committee prior to submission. The paper should be formatted in APA format as if it were being submitted to *Psychological Bulletin* and include all elements of such a paper (e.g., abstract). The paper should be fewer than 12,000 words in length, excluding the references and the abstract. Note that successful specialty exams have generally been in the 9000-10,000 word range. The exam is due by 5 p.m. on April 1 in your sixth semester. Your committee will evaluate the paper and provide feedback by April 15. There are two possible outcomes: pass or needs revisions.

If the paper is judged to need revisions, your committee will provide feedback to you in the form of a detailed letter similar to that which might accompany a revise and resubmit letter from a journal. You are welcome to meet with your committee to discuss their feedback to be sure you understand what is required in the revision of the paper. You will be allowed to revise the paper with a deadline of 5 p.m. on May 15 in your sixth semester. Failure to pass the exam after the revision will result in you being placed on probation with a remediation plan requiring

submission of a passing paper no later than 5pm on August 15 at the start of your seventh semester. The committee will provide a revision letter as part of the remediation plan stating what revisions need to be addressed in order to pass. Failure to satisfy the remediation plan will result in a recommendation for dismissal from the program at the end of the semester.

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria are 1) that research must be integrated around a central theme, 2) must provide a comprehensive, up-to-date, and critical review, and 3) suggest avenues for future research.

Procedures for Completing Requirement

1. Fill out the Ph.D. committee request form available from the graduate school's website.
    a. Degree is Ph.D.
    b. Major is Applied Psychology and the concentration is Cognitive Science
    c. There is no minor
    d. List all committee member names as they appear in the graduate catalog here: http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/faculty/#collegeofartssciencestext
    For example, Jarrod Moss or Andrew F. Jarosz (using initials as listed in the catalog). See the list below for the correct listing of all program faculty.
    e. Your committee member's netID should be able to be found by looking them up in the directory at my.msstate.edu. Here is a list of the program faculty netIDs:

        i. Allison Jaeger Berena – ajb1193
        ii. Andrew F. Jarosz - afj62
        iii. Jarrod Moss - jrm631
        iv. Michael S. Pratte - msp311
        v. Thalia Vrantsidis – tv285
        vi. Jonathon Whitlock - jw4234

    f. NG/G means graduate faculty (G) or not (NG). If the faculty member appears on the list of graduate faculty http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/faculty/#collegeofartssciencestext, then put G (all program faculty are graduate faculty). If they are outside the university or retired, then put NG. All cogsci program faculty are graduate faculty.
    g. Appointing department is the department they appear under in the list of graduate faculty at http://catalog.msstate.edu/graduate/faculty/#collegeofartssciencestext. If they are not at MSU, then leave this field blank.
    h. Your advisor is major professor and other committee members are committee members. Unless you have two advisors, there is no co-major professor. There is no minor professor. Make sure you use the correct lines for the committee members (not the co-major or minor professor).
    i. The graduate coordinator is Allison Jaeger Berena. There is no minor graduate coordinator.
    j. Have your advisor check this form for accuracy before you circulate it to the committee for signatures. An error means that everyone has to sign it again (and that's annoying).
    k. Digitally sign the form.

    l. Get digital signatures from your committee and then send it to the program director. S/he will obtain the graduate coordinator's signature.
2. Submit your complete committee request form with signatures to the program director by 5pm on November 15 of your fifth semester.
3. Submit your prospectus and reading list prior to 5pm on January 15 of your sixth semester.
4. Submit your specialty exam by 5pm on April 1 of your sixth semester.
5. Follow deadlines described above for any necessary revisions.

Requirement 7. Dissertation

Description

There are two options for the dissertation: traditional and integrated. The traditional option generally includes separate chapters addressing an introduction to the research question being addressed, one or more studies addressing that question, discussion, and conclusions. While initial pilot studies may have been conducted and included in a traditional dissertation proposal, there is no requirement that any of this prior work has been published. The integrated option is intended to help students think programmatically about their work from early in their career and to allow maximal impact on their publication record. The integrated option dissertation will include at least three published papers that can be integrated into a coherent program of research.

The requirements for a dissertation proposal and defense under both formats are described in requirements 7a and 7b below. The following information about the integrated option describes how it differs from the traditional format.

The integrated format will consist of three journal papers with the student as first author that reflect a programmatic line of research. The integrated dissertation document will contain (1) an integrative introduction that introduces the program of research and ends with an Aims section that integrates the journal papers into the coherent program of research, (2) separate chapters for each of the journal papers, and (3) an integrative discussion chapter that integrates the findings across all included papers, discusses the theoretical implications of the results, and suggests avenues for future research. Note that this discussion should not simply restate the discussion points of the included papers but should draw conclusions and theoretical implications for the entire body of work included in the dissertation. The integrative introduction and discussion should be suitable for a job-talk audience. This is, you should target people who are knowledgeable in your field but not experts in your area. Provide enough background information that a psychology faculty could assess the merit of your work and weigh your theoretical contribution based on what is provided in the dissertation.

The papers included in the integrated option must meet the following criteria:

- All included papers are first authored by the student
- All included papers represent work initiated and completed while enrolled in the cognitive science doctoral program at Mississippi State University
- At least one of the included papers must be accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal at the time of the dissertation proposal
- One paper may include work included in the master's thesis
- At least one of the to-be-included papers must not have been published
- At least half of the committee must not be co-authors on any of the included papers

The judgment as to whether any of the papers are suitable rests with the dissertation committee. It is within the committee's authority to reject any already published paper at the time of the dissertation proposal. The judgment about whether the combined papers (published and to-be-included) are substantial and programmatic enough to qualify as a dissertation is also made by the committee at the time of the proposal.

Requirement 7a. Dissertation Proposal (Comprehensive Exam)
(Recommended completion date (see below): Last day of classes of 8th semester)

Description
During your 7th or 8th semester, you will present a dissertation topic talk in ACCESS. Your committee should be scheduled to meet shortly after this talk. The purpose of this talk is for you to describe the research question you will be addressing in your dissertation including relevant motivation and background in order to get feedback from your committee before writing your proposal document. You should describe the research question you plan to address in your dissertation along with any pilot work and the methods you have considered to address the question. You and your committee will then meet and discuss the topic and provide feedback to help guide you as you continue to work on your dissertation proposal.

Supervision of the dissertation research is carried out by your dissertation advisor and your doctoral committee. For the traditional dissertation option, prepare a written statement of your dissertation proposal in consultation with your doctoral advisor. The length of the statement will vary with the nature of the problem, the hypotheses under investigation, the design of the research, and the proposed methods of analysis. In addition to preparing a proposal document, there will be a proposal meeting. This meeting should be held before the last day of classes in your 8th semester. However, this is a recommended guideline, and not a deadline. This means that if you do miss this proposal date, you will be placed on advisory status rather than immediately being placed on probation.

The purpose of the proposal meeting is for you to explain and defend the proposed research described in the document. There are three possible outcomes for the meeting: pass, pass with revisions, and fail. Your advisor will communicate the outcome of the proposal to the program director as soon as possible following the meeting. There used to be a history of students providing refreshments for the attendees of the meeting, but the program has instituted a policy that prohibits students from providing food or drink. The purpose of this policy is that no student should feel compelled or burdened to provide this service.

The proposal meeting is restricted to your committee. At the proposal meeting, you will start with a 15-minute overview of your proposed thesis work. The committee will ask questions during and after your presentation. The committee will then meet without you to determine the outcome of the proposal.

The doctoral committee serves in an advisory capacity throughout the course of your research. It is convened whenever departures from the approved design are contemplated or if other special circumstances make a meeting desirable. Of course, the committee members are available for consultation and discussion as your project progresses.

Evaluation Criteria
A successful proposal document for the traditional option will include an introduction to the research question you are investigating in the dissertation including a review of relevant literature, a description of proposed methods, and planned analyses. The successful completion

of the dissertation should result in a contribution to the discipline. One way of thinking about this criterion is whether completion of the work would result in at least one publication. The best studies make a scientific contribution regardless of the outcome.

For the integrated option dissertation proposal, the proposal document must include the integrated introduction ending with the Aims section described earlier, any published papers, and a complete introduction, method, and planned analyses sections for any unpublished papers to be included in the final document. At least one of the papers should not be published, and the committee is free to request modifications to any part of the proposed paper(s) including changes to the design of any empirical work included in the paper(s). In the case of the integrated option, one purpose of the proposal meeting described below should be an initial evaluation about whether the included published papers will be accepted as part of the dissertation.

The evaluation criteria for the proposal meeting are that you should be able to discuss your work and its relationship with the literature. In addition, you should be able to answer questions about the proposed work, discuss the design/methods of the project, and discuss its relationship with prior literature.

Procedures for Completing Requirement

1. After preparing your proposal document, set up a proposal meeting with your doctoral committee to review the proposal and decide on any changes. This proposal meeting will constitute the Comprehensive Examination as described in the Graduate Catalog.
2. At least **2 weeks** before your proposal meeting, you should notify the program director and graduate coordinator of the date, time, and location of your proposal meeting.
3. You should also distribute copies of the proposal to your committee at least two weeks before the proposal meeting. Also, send a copy of your proposal to the program director for the program's files.
4. Proposal meeting occurs.
5. The result of your proposal must be documented via submission of the examination results form. This form will be sent by the graduate coordinator to your advisor. It should be completed by your advisor and circulated by your advisor to the other members of the committee. Any revisions must be documented on the form along with a deadline for completing the revisions. The form should be submitted by your advisor to the program director within a week of your proposal meeting. An unsuccessful proposal meeting will result in you being placed on advisory status, and an advisory plan should be formulated immediately.Any revisions agreed on by the committee should be written up by you and circulated to the committee in a document that is sent to the committee. The committee should indicate their approval of the revisions, and then the final proposal along with any revisions should be sent to the program director. As noted, your committee may request revisions to your proposed work, and it is therefore to your advantage not to commence the proposed research until your committee has approved your proposal and any revisions. Your committee is under no obligation to accept any proposed research you have already conducted.
6. Your successful (i.e., passing or passing contingent on revisions) proposal meeting should be completed prior to 5pm on the last day of classes in your eight semester.Any necessary revisions to the research after your proposal should be approved by your committee.

7. **Dissertation writing tips.** Listed below are some links to resources concerned with writing a dissertation. Here is a summary of some key points, but you are encouraged to review these resources in detail.

- One of the most difficult sections to write effectively is often the literature review.
    - Your intended audience is a researcher with graduate training in psychology or cognitive science but not necessarily in your specialized subfield. You therefore need to explain the literature at the correct level of detail for that audience.
    - Length == Importance. The amount of space you devote to explaining a prior paper should be correlated with the importance of that study or theory to your research question. If you are explaining the details of a theory or experiment, then it should be critical for the development of your specific research question.
    - Your goal is to provide the comprehensive background as motivation for your specific research question. It is not to provide an exhaustive history of study in this field. If a study/theory does not play much of a role in your research question, question how much space to spend on it (if any).
    - Use figures and tables as much as appropriate.
- Experiments and Results
    - Explain the choices that you made.
    - Someone should be able to replicate your study based on your Method section.
    - Explain the rationale for your choice of analysis techniques.
    - Use acronyms sparingly and only when they enhance readability. Remember that the audience is not in your specialized subfield.
    - Use figures as much as possible.
- Discussion
    - This is perhaps one of the most crucial parts of a doctoral dissertation where you demonstrate your ability to reason about your results in relation to current theories.
- Resources
    - http://people.kmi.open.ac.uk/stefan/thesis-writing.pdf
    - Excerpts from Hofstee, E. (2006). Constructing a good dissertation. *Johannesburg: EPE*.
        - http://www.exactica.co.za/book-chapters.php
        - http://www.exactica.co.za/dn/exactica-book-literature-review.pdf

Requirement 7b. Dissertation Defense
(Recommended completion date: Within one year of completing the dissertation proposal)

Description
The Dissertation Defense is held upon completion of your dissertation research and your dissertation document. The examination is administered by your doctoral committee. This should be completed within one year of your dissertation proposal. Failure to do so will result in your being placed on an advisory plan.

Once you and your advisor have agreed that the dissertation document has been completed, you may schedule a time for the defense. This defense meeting is an oral examination, scheduled for approximately 2 hours during which the student offers a presentation of the research for the first 20 minutes. The defense presentation is open to the public. At the defense meeting, you will start with a 20-minute presentation of your thesis work. During this presentation, only the committee will be allowed to ask questions. At the conclusion of the

presentation, the committee will be allowed to ask additional questions. Once these have been answered, other audience members will have the opportunity to ask questions. At the conclusion of the public presentation, the audience will be asked to leave, and a follow-up defense meeting will occur, during which the committee may ask additional questions. In addition to the committee, this defense meeting is open to members of the graduate faculty affiliated with the program. The committee will then meet without you to determine the outcome of the defense.

There used to be a history of students providing refreshments for the attendees of the meeting, but the program has instituted a policy that prohibits students from providing food or drink. The purpose of this policy is that no student should feel compelled or burdened to provide this service.

At the completion of the defense, the committee will determine whether the dissertation and defense are acceptable, acceptable with revisions, or failing. You are encouraged to review the requirements of the dissertation and defense in the department handbook and in the Graduate Catalog. You and your advisor should work with the Graduate Coordinator to ensure that the appropriate paperwork is done on time as described in the procedures below.

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria for the dissertation document include publication-quality writing, clear rationale for the hypotheses grounded in prior literature, appropriate methodology and analysis techniques consistent with your proposal (or any committee-approved revisions that occur after the proposal), and a discussion that addresses the hypothesis with respect to theories described in prior literature. Evaluation criteria for the oral defense include your ability to answer questions about relevant background literature including relevant theories, ability to explain how your research question(s) addresses a gap in the field, and ability to discuss and defend your choice of research design and analysis methods.

For the integrated dissertation option, the included papers that were not published at the time of the proposal meeting must have been submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. These papers are not required to be accepted for publication prior to your defense. The judgment about the acceptability of the papers and the results of the defense will be made by the dissertation committee.

Procedures for Completing Requirement

1. At least **3 weeks** before your defense meeting, you should notify the program director and Graduate Coordinator of the date, time, and location of your exam and send a flyer announcing your meeting (see the program's Teams Repository for a template. You should also distribute copies of the dissertation to your doctoral committee at this time.
2. The defense meeting occurs.
3. The result of your proposal must be documented via submission of the examination results form. This form will be sent by the graduate coordinator to your advisor. It should be completed by your advisor and circulated by your advisor to the other members of the committee. Remember to review Office of the Graduate School policies, in addition to the ones given in this handbook and the department handbook, regarding the thesis and its submission.
4. If the initial defense is not successful, policies in the Graduate Catalog will be followed. An unsuccessful defense meeting will result in you being placed on advisory status or probation, and an advisory plan or probation remediation plan should be formulated immediately.

5. Submission of the Dissertation. Following the defense, students submit their completed dissertation for review and signatures to the Graduate Coordinator, who will approve and send the document on to the Dean. Once the dean signs off, the student will ultimately submit the dissertation electronically to the graduate school. Only final documents with full internal and external approvals should be submitted to the library. For a copy of the guidelines and to submit an electronic Thesis or Dissertation, visit http://lib.msstate.edu/thesis/process/. Relevant deadlines are set by the graduate school, dean, and graduate coordinator. Review the emails sent to you by the graduate coordinator for details. The submission process adds multiple weeks to the timeline, and you should plan carefully so that you graduate when you expect to.
6. Graduation Requirement from Library's Office of Thesis and Dissertation Format Review. Students 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 http://lib.msstate.edu/thesis/process/.

Other Requirements and Additional Information

Teams Repository

You should have access to a repository on Teams using your @msstate.edu account. This repository includes several resources that might be helpful during graduate school including many of the program forms mentioned in this handbook. The link is: CogsciRepository

Applied Cognitive Science Research Seminar (ACCESS/brownbag)

Each semester you will need to enroll in the PSY 8731 Applied Cognitive Science Research Seminar (ACCESS). ACCESS meets once a week, with presentations from program faculty, external faculty members, and students. In your second semester, you will present your first-year project proposal. At the beginning of your third semester, you will present your master's thesis topic. In your fifth semester, you will present your master's thesis work or some other research. In your seventh or eighth semester, you will present your dissertation topic. Including these requirements, all students in the program will present at least once in ACCESS each academic year. All student presentations will be evaluated by the audience in order to provide constructive feedback on how to improve. Students will meet with their advisor or the ACCESS instructor to discuss evaluations as soon after the talk as possible. All students are required to attend and participate in ACCESS until graduation. All full-time students in the program are required to enroll in ACCESS each semester.

Graduate students are expected to participate in the seminar, not simply to attend. Participation includes asking questions of the presenter, participating in debates about issues, providing constructive feedback on evaluations, and making presentations. Participation is an important part of your professional training: Professional jobs often demand good speaking skills and the ability to think critically (both positively and negatively) about research. These skills will be honed through your participation in the research seminar.

Evaluation and Status in the Program

There are three levels of standing in the program: good standing, advisory, and probation. Good standing means that you have met all relevant requirements of the program. Advisory status is a warning status that program expectations may not be or have not been met in the anticipated time frame. University probation is defined in the Graduate Catalog and carries additional

consequences including the inability to propose or defend a thesis/dissertation and potential loss of an assistantship.

Many program requirements have deadlines. Some have recommended completion dates instead of deadlines. If a deadline is missed without significant extenuating circumstances (e.g., extended illness), then the student will be placed on probation. In addition, failing the Specialty Exam will result in probation. A letter will be sent to the student explaining the detailed remediation plan that must be followed to get off of probation. Failure to adhere to a probation remediation plan may result in a recommendation for dismissal from the program.

In all other cases including missing a recommended completion date, the program will usually place the student advisory status and require successful completion of an advisory plan. In addition, the cognitive science faculty may decide that a student's progress to date does not put that student on track to complete a requirement by the expected completion date. Note that there can be a number of circumstances that lead to advisory status. In some cases, the circumstances may be beyond a student's control. The advisory plan is intended to ensure that you have a clear plan, appropriate feedback, and the tools you need to succeed.

Students who have been notified of advisory status must enroll in a PSY 7000 DIS course in the subsequent semester. The DIS course should be designed to get the student back on track in accomplishing the relevant program requirement in a timely fashion. A template for the DIS syllabus is available from the program's Teams repository (see above). The finalized syllabus will be submitted to the student's committee for comments no later than 5pm on Tuesday of the first full week of classes. The committee should provide feedback within a week, and the final plan should be submitted to the program director prior to Friday at 5pm on the second full week of classes. A grade of B or lower in the DIS course will indicate failure to meet all of the plan's requirements. In this case, the program faculty will meet and make a recommendation at the end of each semester about whether to recommend another advisory plan or whether to place the student on probation. Completion of the program requirement that triggered the advisory status will result in the student being back in good standing.

Summary of the process for submitting an advisory plan:

1. As soon as you are notified that a plan will be required for the following semester, complete the DIS form in the advisor status folder on the Teams Repository and submit to Jonathan Black in the main office. This step will create the 1-hour PSY 7000 course for you to register for. Register for this course when Mr. Black notifies you that it is available.
2. Complete the DIS syllabus template and submit to your committee no later than Tuesday at 5pm of the first full week of classes for the semester. You should receive feedback from your committee within one week.
3. Submit the DIS syllabus to the program director prior to Friday at 5pm of the second full week of classes for the semester.

Annual Reports

Students will be evaluated on an annual basis by the program faculty. The purpose of this evaluation is more than simply to decide on the quality and work of each student; we also provide guidance to students as they work towards their doctoral degrees and career goals. At the faculty meeting, each student's advisor and/or the Program Director will summarize the student's status in the program. Faculty and other supervisors report on the student's performance, and a consensus is reached on feedback to be given to the student.

In order to facilitate the evaluation, students are required to provide the program faculty with an Annual Report to include information concerning progress through the program. This report is due no later than April 15 each year.

The annual review process:

1. Update your CV (or create one if you do not have one)
2. Update your Individual Development Plan (IDP; or create one if you do not have one)
3. Meet with your advisor to discuss your IDP and your annual goals.
4. Using the goal evaluation form provided on the program's Teams Repository, assess your goals from last year and list your goals for the next year.
5. Submit a copy of your CV, the goal evaluation form, and any teaching evaluations you have from the past two semesters (Spring and Fall for this academic year) to the program director via email by **April 15 at 5:00pm**.
6. Program faculty will meet and discuss the information you submit and your progress in the program
7. You will receive a letter from the program evaluating your progress along with any advice, recommendations, or remediation that the program faculty deemed appropriate

Our goal is to integrate some long-term planning into the annual review process so that the goals you set each year are in line with your future career plan. We would also like to encourage these kinds of discussions between you and your mentor(s) as they are important but also rarely occur on their own. We have decided to integrate the Individual Development Plan at https://myidp.sciencecareers.org/ into our annual review process for students. Here is a short article describing the IDP https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2012/09/you-need-game-plan

An excerpt from that article: "Constructing an IDP is a four-step process with myIDP. The first step is to evaluate your own skills, values, and interests. The second step is to use this self-assessment as a guide for exploring and evaluating career opportunities in your field and, ultimately, identifying your preferred career, as well as an alternative option that you think you'd be happy with. Step three is to set some specific goals to prepare you for the career paths to which you aspire. After discussing these goals and outlining strategies with your primary mentor, it's time to put the plan into place. You do this in step four."

We have in the past used https://myidp.sciencecareers.org to generate the IDPs. You may continue to do so if you want to. Alternatively, you may use the site https://www.imaginephd.com. Based on our review of these two sites, the ImaginePhD site seems more oriented toward humanities and social sciences while the myIDP site is more oriented toward STEM and biomedical fields. Both offer similar functionality allowing you to complete some short assessments on your skills and interests to see how they align with various career options. The main downsides of the myIDP site were its limited focus on a small range of career options relevant to our field, and the goals creation process is not all that nice (or very pretty when you export it). The ImaginePhD site seems to me to be an improvement on both of these limitations, so we recommend it if you do not already have an IDP set up in myIDP or if you are interested in a nonacademic career.

Importantly, this is not a process that you want to complete in one day. We recommend starting 2-3 weeks prior to April 15. If you are creating an initial IDP, then you will have to go through the assessments on either site to see how your skills/interests align with career options. These ideally help you to think about your goals. When creating a set of annual goals, we recommend

thinking about the larger annual goals you have (e.g., publish a paper, learn some skill). A recommendation is to have about 3-5 of these larger annual goals that you will be working on to further your career. We are not looking for detailed planning and a list of dozens of smaller goals that help you accomplish the larger goals.

The IDP should be discussed with your advisor, and it will play a role in the goals you formulate together. So, while you will not submit the assessments and career options to the program as part of the annual review, they play a key role in helping you to formulate appropriate goals that you will submit.

Department Seminars/Events

During the course of the year, the Psychology Department will sponsor a few seminars. All graduate students, regardless of status in the program, are expected to attend these presentations.

Residency Requirement

All doctoral students are required to remain in residence during the academic year as on-campus students throughout the program unless a leave of absence is requested and approved. An operational definition of on-campus is that you are on campus or available to be on campus on business days while the university is open. Exceptions to this policy may be approved by the program faculty under extraordinary circumstances for a limited amount of time. If such a circumstance arises, students should discuss the circumstance with their advisor and obtain approval from the program faculty prior to accepting any position.

Assistantship Funding and Outside Employment Policy

Our doctoral program is a full-time program. All students are currently funded on a graduate assistantship or equivalent 20 hour per week position at the university. It is expected that students will not obtain employment outside the university or for more than 20 hours per week within the university. Any such employment must be approved by the advisor, program faculty, graduate coordinator, and department head. If the student has assistantship funding, then the graduate school must also approve employment for additional work beyond a 20-hour assistantship. If such an opportunity for employment arises, students should discuss the opportunity with their advisor and obtain approval from the advisor, program faculty, graduate coordinator, and department head prior to accepting any position.

Most students are funded by assistantships through the Psychology Department. This includes teaching assistantships and research assistantships funded by grants housed in the department. You may opt to pursue funding from outside the department. Any such employment must be approved by the advisor, program faculty, graduate coordinator, and department head. Your supervisor in such a position must agree to provide an evaluation of your performance each semester for the employment to be approved.

These policies are designed to ensure that you have the time necessary to complete the program in the anticipated time while producing the research products needed to facilitate your future career. In addition, the department must be able to plan how our students will be funded and who will be assigned to teaching positions. Planning for teaching schedules routinely starts 6-9 months prior to the semester. Therefore, changes to assistantship funding after course schedules and teaching assignments have been set may not be possible.

Honor Code

All students are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the Mississippi State University Honor Code (www.honorcode.msstate.edu/), and University policies relating to students (www.msstate.edu/web/security/student_policies.html). Behavior inconsistent with the rules and principles set forth in these documents may result in the immediate dismissal of the student from the Psychology Graduate Program.

Mailing Lists

The program maintains three mailing lists: **cogsci@lists.msstate.edu**, **cogsci-program@lists.msstate.edu**, and **cogsci-jobs@lists.msstate.edu**. The cogsci list is for the general community who may be interested in talks and brownbags and includes all program faculty and students as well as others on campus. The cogsci-program list is only for program faculty and students and is intended for program-wide announcements. The cogsci-jobs list is intended for senior students who will be looking for positions. Faculty and students who are members of the jobs list can forward relevant job ads to the list for distribution.

Handling Unexpected Graduate School Issues and Extraordinary Situations

For any problems that arise related to the program, your advisor, your committee, or anything related to your graduate career at the university, please do not hesitate to get in contact with someone to help work through the problem. Within the department, you could consult with the program faculty including the program director, the graduate coordinator, or the department head. We encourage you to consult one of us as soon as possible to find a way to deal with the issue. If appropriate, we encourage you to attempt to rectify the situation within the department whenever possible.

Outside of the department, you can consult with the dean of students to find the appropriate channel to handle the problem. Please consult Academic Operating Policy (AOP) 12.37 for more details about graduate student grievances at https://www.policies.msstate.edu/policypdfs/1237.pdf

The policies and procedures described in this handbook are intended to cover the vast majority of anticipated circumstances. In exceptional situations, you are encouraged to discuss your situation with your advisor and the program director. The program faculty will review and handle rare exceptions to these policies on a case-by-case basis.

Students Entering with a Master's Degree

In some cases, students entering with a thesis-based master's degree can petition the core program faculty for credit for their prior coursework and master's thesis. Each case will be handled on a case-by-base basis, and each petition will be decided by a majority vote of the core program faculty. You should submit prior syllabi including course topics and readings for each course that you are petitioning to receive credit for. Work with your advisor to determine which course you are petitioning to waive from our curriculum.

In cases where a significant amount of coursework can be waived, students can also petition to waive the master's thesis requirement. For example, if you have sufficient coursework that is similar to our program's curriculum (e.g., four courses) then you could consider waiving the master's thesis requirement. Our research requirements described below assume that you are dual enrolled in the Psychology Master's degree. Waiving the master's thesis is equivalent to waiving the second year of program requirements, and your expected program completion time

would be four years. Petition forms for coursework and waiving the master's requirement are available from the Teams Repository. Waiver requests are due by Oct. 1 of your first semester in the program.

Social Media Policy

In an increasingly technologically connected and public world, students are encouraged to remain mindful of your behavior and its consequences online, including the use of personal website, social networking, blogs, listservs, and email. It is likely that future employers may be interested in searching or accessing online information about you. Although all of the information that may exist about you may not be within your control, students are urged to exercise caution and restraint and to utilize privacy safeguards when possible. Activities online, including those that you may consider purely personal in nature, may unfortunately reflect upon your professional life. You are encouraged to consider the following cautions and suggestions.

With social networking sites such as Facebook, utilize privacy settings to limit access to your pages and personal information. Online photo and video sharing, including within social networking sites, should be considered very public venues; use discretion when posting such information. With email, keep in mind that everything you write may exist perpetually or be retrievable, so be thoughtful about what you write. Emails sent via the MSU email system are considered public records and the property of MSU. Participation in listservs and forums include the peril of inadvertently writing things to a much more public audience than intended, so be cautious with posts to such forums. Email is not an appropriate venue to discuss confidential information, so if such communications are necessary, make sure any information is not identifiable.

It is not the intention of the program to interfere in your personal life or to limit your ability to enjoy the benefits of online activities, express your personality or opinions, or have a little fun. However, as with off-line activity, we encourage you to be mindful of the implications and make efforts to protect your professional image and reputation. Where your connection to MSU is apparent, make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of MSU. If the program becomes aware of online activity that represents a violation of university policies; the APA Code of Ethics; or local, state, or federal laws, such information will be reported to the appropriate university channels.

Overview of Cognitive Science Program Requirements and Deadlines

All deadlines assume starting program in a fall semester – in case of rare exceptions to this assumption, see program director. **This table is a summary of major deadlines, and there may be additional deadlines in the handbook that are not summarized in this table.** You are responsible for complying with all details and deadlines described in the handbook.

Milestone	Deadline/Expected Completion Date	Form/Completion Requirement
First Year		
Master's committee formed and first-year goals	Oct. 1	Committee Form (M.S.) Goals section of annual report
FYP proposal summary	Oct. 1	Email to committee (cc director)
FYP talk	Brownbag talk schedule in second semester	
Annual review	April 15	Annual review form
Second Year		
Thesis topic talk	Brownbag talk scheduled early in 3rd semester	
Master's thesis proposal	Successful proposal meeting by December 10, revisions due by January 10	Proposal/notifications due three weeks prior to proposal meeting
Annual review	April 15	Annual review form
Third Year		
Master's thesis defense	Defense held prior to Nov. 1	Thesis/notifications due three weeks prior to defense meeting
Doctoral committee formed	Nov. 15	Doctoral committee form
Specialty exam prospectus	Jan. 15	Sent to committee (cc director)
Thesis submitted to library	In time to graduate with MS in spring semester	
Specialty exam	April 1	Specialty paper (cc director)
Annual review	April 15	Annual review form
Fourth Year		
Dissertation topic talk	Fall or early spring semester	
Annual review	April 15	Annual review form
Dissertation proposal	Final day of classes in spring semester	Proposal/notifications due three weeks prior to proposal meeting Exam Results Form
Fifth Year		
Annual review	April 15	Annual review form
ACCESS presentation	Required annually	
Dissertation defense	Final day of classes in spring semester	Dissertation/notifications due three weeks prior to defense meeting Exam Results Form

Sample Schedule of Classes

This is a planned sequence of courses that is subject to change. It is included here to provide a guideline for what you should plan to register for each semester. Always consult with your advisor prior to registering each semester. Courses listed in parentheses are examples of courses that you will take to satisfy the requirements based on anticipated course offerings. You should always register for 13 hours of course work each semester.

Students entering in even years (e.g., 2026)	**Students entering in odd years (e.g., 2027)**
First year – Fall 1. QM II 2. Research Skills 3. ACCESS 4. Thesis hours (5)	First year – Fall 1. QM II 2. Professional Skills 3. ACCESS 4. Thesis hours (5)
First year – Spring 1. Issues/Methods 2. ACCESS 3. QM III 4. Thesis hours (6)	First year – Spring 1. Issues/Methods 2. ACCESS 3. QM III 4. Thesis hours (6)
Second year – Fall 1. Professional Skills 2. ACCESS 3. Thesis hours (9)	Second year – Fall 1. Cog Psych Core 1 (Adv. Memory) 2. Research Skills 3. ACCESS 4. Thesis hours (6)
Second year – Spring 1. Cogsci Core 1 (Cog Models Skill) 2. Cog Psych Core 1 (Skill Acq.) 3. ACCESS 4. Thesis hours (6)	Second year – Spring 1. Cog Psych Core 2 (Perception) 2. ACCESS 3. Thesis hours (9)
Third year – Fall 1. Cog Psych Core 2 (Adv. Memory) 2. Cogsci Core 2 (Models Seminar) 3. ACCESS 4. Thesis hours (6)	Third year – Fall 1. Cog Psych Core 3 (Explanation) 2. ACCESS 3. Thesis hours (9)
Third year – Spring 1. Advanced Professional Skills 2. Cog Psych Core 3 (Perception) 3. ACCESS 4. Dissertation hours (6)	Third year – Spring 1. Cogsci Core 1 (Cog Models Skill) 2. Cog Psych Core 4 (Skill Acq.) 3. ACCESS 4. Dissertation hours (6)
Fourth year – Fall 1. Cog Psych Core 4 (Explanation) 2. ACCESS 3. Dissertation hours (9)	Fourth year – Fall 1. Cogsci Core 2 (Models Seminar) 2. ACCESS 3. Dissertation hours (9)
Fourth year – Spring 1. ACCESS 2. Dissertation hours (12)	Fourth year – Spring (dissertation proposal) 1. Advanced Professional Skills 2. ACCESS 3. Dissertation hours (9)
Remaining semesters 1. ACCESS 2. Dissertation hours (12)	Remaining semesters 1. ACCESS 2. Dissertation hours (12)