



Department of Psychology
Montana State University
M.S. in Psychological Science
Graduate Student Handbook

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M.S. Program Objectives

The M.S. in Psychological Science is a two-year full-time program. Thus, we expect a serious commitment to graduate training. We are a research-based program in which our primary goal is to train students in research methodology and analysis to prepare them for a Ph.D. program.

To satisfy degree requirements, you must work intensively with your advisor to gain research skills and complete a research project culminating in a written master's thesis. Seven graduate courses are required.

We use an individualized mentorship approach in which students' acquire most of their research experience working one-on-one with faculty. The research enterprise in graduate school should be collaborative in the sense that research ideas are shared among faculty and students. Students are expected to share ownership of the research in which they are involved with faculty.

Pearls of Wisdom from Graduate Students

(Note that these comments were written by actual graduate students enrolled in our program)

Make sure you like theory and research because that is the focus of the program.

Talk to graduate students currently in the program: find out about classes, research, and what the best and worst aspects of the program are from the students' point of view.

Make sure you read everything carefully (*including departmental and graduate studies policies and procedures**)! You want to have an accurate picture of what you are getting into before you commit two years of your life to it. You also want to avoid hassles such as getting here and having to send back to your previous school for documents before the school will allow you register for classes.

Find out as much as you can about GTAs/GRAs: It can be difficult to plan for things such as living expenses and tuition that the GTA/GRA does not provide for.

Do not wait until the last minute to get started on your thesis! There are only four semesters to get everything finished. They go by faster than you think.

Graduate school is much different than being an undergrad. Graduate school is a full time commitment, and there are many more responsibilities. Be prepared to spend evenings and weekends working on research, writing, homework, and other responsibilities if necessary.

Make sure you choose an advisor who can meet your needs. You will be working closely with that person for two years, and you do not want to be working on something that does not hold your interest.

*Items in italics were added by faculty

A Week in the Life of a Typical Graduate Student at MSU

This program is a full-time commitment. Expect to spend a minimum of 40 hours per week working on the various responsibilities you have in the program. As such, it is not advisable for you to hold a job outside of the department.

Classes: Each class will involve 3 hours per week of in-class time, plus between 5 and 9 hours of additional work per week for each class. Expect to take two classes each semester the first year, then between one and two classes the remaining two semesters. Expect to research a topic and write a research proposal for nearly every class you take in the psychology department.

Research: Graduate students typically engage in the research process with their advisor. The amount of time you will spend each week on research will vary, but may include activities such as attending lab meetings, conducting literature searches, carrying out a first-year project, running experiments, analyzing data, and/or working with undergraduate research assistants. We aim to help you build and foster your research experience and other psychology related skills. Research experience does not necessarily mean you are given a grade (PSYX 570) or money (e.g., a GRA) – although it might. Rather, gaining research experience is part of the overall learning experience of graduate school.

GTA/GRA: Some graduate students will receive a graduate teaching assistantship or a graduate research assistantship, which will help pay for tuition and living expenses. Some GTA assignments will require the full 20 hours each week, whereas other assignments will be lighter, with more intense work during weeks of exams and finals. Every effort is made to keep GTA assignment workloads equitable within each student cohort. GTAs are competitive and are awarded to students on a semester-by-semester basis per budget constraints, and overall performance in the program (see the evaluation section of the handbook). If you are awarded a GTA you will be given a salary (and not hourly wages) because it is assumed that there is more to the “job” than simply being a TA. The spirit of the GTA is one that includes learning about the area of study (psychology) in ways determined by the thesis advisor and the class instructor.

Thesis: Every student is expected to research an area of interest, collect data, and write a thesis, which must be orally defended before receiving your degree. Depending on your advisor, you may be given the option of independently creating your own project, or you may be assigned a topic that the advisor is interested in researching. It is important that you choose an advisor with whom you share research interest(s), because you will be working on the project (and related research) for two years. Another important point is that this is only a two-year program; make sure that you begin to work on your thesis as soon as possible after entering the program if you want to graduate within the two-year time frame.

Common Graduate Student Experiences

Post-admissions Jitters

Upon arriving in graduate school, many students feel as though they are not as smart as their peers and certainly not smart enough or competent enough to finish the program. That is, students often feel that their acceptance into graduate school was a mistake and that everyone will soon discover that they are a fake. Take solace, almost everyone feels incompetent at some point in their graduate career. Graduate school is about learning new information and skills – if you already knew everything or if faculty expected you to know everything, there would be no reason for you to be here.

My thesis is uninteresting

The thesis project is a long process and many students lose interest or get frustrated with their projects at some point. This is normal. Keep in mind that you are becoming the foremost expert on your thesis topic! So do not give up! Persistence and perseverance are the key to success in graduate school.

Advice from Faculty

Choosing your advisor may be one of the most important decisions you can make – talk with all faculty members about their research models, advising styles, and their expectations before you declare a thesis advisor (see section entitled “choosing a thesis advisor”).

Always be on time (or even early) for all meetings and scheduled appointments. It conveys to others that you are committed to your graduate training and respectful of their time.

Take your responsibilities when participating in research seriously. Research is the primary focus for most of the faculty and should be your primary focus while completing your master’s.

Go above and beyond what you are asked to do as a graduate student. Anticipate the next step in the process. For example, if you are instructed to do a literature search by the next time you meet with your advisor, you may also want to read some of the papers you find so that you can discuss the topic at your next meeting. Work to become an important part of the research team by not only collecting data but by bringing new ideas and thoughts to your advisor.

Begin working on your thesis immediately upon arrival. This does not mean that by week two of your graduate career you are running subjects for your study, but it does mean that you are reading, discussing, and thinking about topics in which you are interested.

Treat your GTA/GRA assignment as you would a job. You are being paid for this work and your supervisor is your boss. Be respectful, courteous, and professional at all times. If you fail to perform your GTA/GRA duties to the satisfaction of your supervisor, your current and future funding could be in jeopardy.

Take coursework seriously and be sure to attend ALL classes. Often graduate classes meet only once a week and missing one class is like missing an entire week. If there is an unavoidable emergency that prevents you from attending class, be sure to speak with the instructor to find out how to catch up as soon as possible. Missing classes conveys the impression that you are not committed to your graduate work. Remember that departmental colloquia should be treated as a class. That is, you are required to attend these talks and you should notify the graduate coordinator if you cannot attend.

Attend ALL meetings. Whether they are research team meetings, meetings with your advisors, or meetings with undergraduate students, missing meetings implies that you do not respect those with whom you are meeting and that you are not committed to your graduate work.

Speak with the second year graduate students often. They are the best source of information for you.

Enjoy yourself! Psychology will hopefully become so engaging that it will merge together with your “real” life. But, when the going gets tough... find ways to make it more interesting. Listen to music, take your laptop to a coffee shop, read articles from a mountain top, form a study-group... whatever helps to give you that little push for getting your research done.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships and Tuition Waivers

Most master's programs do not offer students any assistantship funding or tuition waivers so we are quite pleased to offer both to our outstanding students who are making satisfactory progress in the program. A graduate teaching (or research) assistantship is typically a 20 hour a week assignment, on average. The specific job requirements of such an assistantship depends a great deal on the particular course/faculty assignment and may include (but are not limited to) proctoring exams, grading exams and/or papers, teaching labs or recitations, holding office hours, and organizing class materials. The exact class assignment you receive is determined by the Graduate Coordinator in consultation with the faculty.

Stipends are approximately \$10,000 per year and include some health insurance. However, the exact assistantship amount in any given academic year depends on budget funding for that year. We cannot typically guarantee stipend amounts for any particular year until the end of the fiscal year on June 30th.

Historically, we have been able to provide all *first-year students* with assistantships and tuition waivers (both in-state and out-of-state) for 6 credits in the fall semester and 6 credits in the spring semester for a total of 12 credits required for the first year of the program. In the past, we have typically been able to offer *second-year students* assistantships and in-state tuition waivers for the remaining 19 credits hours required by the program, but occasionally students have had to cover the out-of-state portion of tuition on their own. **Students are strongly encouraged to gain state residency as soon as possible.** Please note that these waivers only cover the cost of tuition - you will be responsible for paying any applicable university fees. The tuition waivers for any academic year are not allocated to the department until the middle of July so we are typically unable to commit to tuition waivers for second-year students until the August preceding any particular academic year.

Required Coursework

The Master of Science program requires a minimum of 31 credit hours of graduate level coursework. The required coursework is designed to provide students with a general overview of specific content areas, as well as with research methods and statistics in psychology.

Each student must take at least seven* of our psychology graduate courses (PSYX 500+; 21 credits) and maintain a 3.0 GPA. *Examples* of courses we typically offer include:

1. PSYX 501 (Advanced Research Design & Analysis 2)
2. PSYX 502 (Advanced Research Design & Analysis 1)
3. PSYX 539 (Physiological Processes)
4. PSYX 541 (Cognitive Processes)
5. PSYX 542 (Learning)
6. PSYX 543 (Memory)
7. PSYX 544 (Social Psychology)
8. PSYX 546 (Social Cognition)

* A student may substitute one of the above classes for another graduate level class (outside of the department) related to his or her psychology research. The student, in consultation with his or her advisor, should identify the class substitution and immediately notify the graduate student coordinator.

** Graduate students may also choose from an assortment of advanced undergraduate psychology classes (PSYX 3XX+) that are co-convened (i.e., cross listed as both a graduate and undergraduate class), with the thesis advisor's consent.

*** Note that *all* students are required to take PSYX 501 and PSYX 502 during the first year of the program. Students who have not taken undergraduate statistics in psychology and/or students who feel they could benefit from a refresher in statistics, are *strongly encouraged* to sit in on PSYX 223. Although you will not enroll in this class for credit or receive a grade, you should still plan on buying the text, doing the homework, and taking the exams. Your efforts will be communicated to your faculty advisor and considered in your “progress toward your degree.”

Each student must complete a thesis by the end of the second year in the program (10 thesis credits).

Students are required to attend department colloquia. Please treat the department colloquia as a class and notify the graduate coordinator as well as your advisor if for some reason you cannot attend. You will be expected to present once a year (spring of the first year and fall of the second year) and are required to submit to all faculty and students via email an abstract **24 hours prior to the presentation(s) (an email to the Graduate coordinator is sufficient as well)**. You should listen attentively, ask questions, and be supportive of your fellow presenters. Your participation in the colloquia is factored into your citizenship performance.

General timeline of events

Fall of year 1

Courses

Psyx 502

Psyx 223 (not for credit, on an as-needed basis)

1 additional course

Activity

Graduate orientation and beginning of the year picnic

Division of Graduate Education graduate student welcome dinner

Declare a thesis advisor and complete advisor form

Write-up current semester goals in coordination with your advisor

Meet with advisor to identify thesis topic

Review literature relevant to thesis topic

Turn in semester evaluation to thesis advisor

3 weeks before end of semester

Write-up spring semester goals in coordination with your advisor

When

August/September

August/September

October 1st of year 1

October 1st of year 1

Spring of Year 1

Courses

Psyx 501

1 additional course

Activity

File a “program of study” with the graduate office

Identify thesis committee members

Write thesis proposal

Get committee approval for thesis proposal

End of semester

Submit IRB or IACUK for research (if applicable)

Mid-semester

Write-up summer and fall semester goals in coordination with your advisor

Turn in semester evaluation to thesis advisor

3 weeks before end of semester

Summer of Year 1

Prepare thesis proposal and presentation
Continue research

Fall of Year 2Courses

2 courses
3 thesis credits (Psyx 590)

Activity

	<u>When</u>
Thesis proposal presentation	Fall of year 2
Collect and analyze thesis data	
Begin writing methods and results sections	
Look into applying to Ph. D. programs	December/January
Write-up spring semester goals in coordination with your advisor	
Turn in semester evaluation to thesis advisor	3 weeks before end of semester

Spring of Year 2Courses

1 required course
7 thesis credits (PSYX 590)

Activity

	<u>When</u>
Write results and discussion.	
Make many revisions to thesis paper	
Turn in final draft of thesis to committee	April 1 the latest
Oral Defense of thesis and oral comprehensive exam	at least 1 week prior to deadline set by DGE

Office of Graduate Studies Requirements

Each student must file his or her official program of study with the Dean of Graduate Studies prior to the end of the second semester of registration. For other important graduate school deadlines refer to www.montana.edu/wwwdg/catalog.shtml

Other M.S. requirements including GPA and graduation requirements are stated in the College of Graduate Studies catalog at the above web address. Please read this information carefully and refer to it often.

Policies Regarding the First Year Research Presentation

In collaboration with the thesis advisor, each first year student must present an ongoing research project, first year project, or preliminary thesis idea in the spring semester of the first year. These presentations will take place during the first several weeks of the psychology department colloquia from 12:00pm-1:00pm on Fridays. Students should submit to the Graduate Coordinator an abstract of the presentation 24 hours prior to the scheduled presentation date.

Policies Regarding the Thesis Proposal Presentation

Each student must present his/her thesis proposal in the fall semester of the second year. These presentations will take place during the final weeks of the psychology department colloquia from 12:00pm-1:00pm on Fridays. Students who are not yet at the proposal stage will present their thesis work at whatever stage of completion they have achieved by the time they are scheduled to present. Students should submit an abstract of the thesis proposal one week prior to the scheduled presentation date. This description should include rationale/hypotheses, method, expected results (including specific planned analyses), and implications of these results. The purpose of this proposal presentation is to provide a forum for students to get feedback about their thesis ideas from faculty and other students early in the thesis process. This proposal presentation will also allow students to practice their presentational skills and keep all members of the department current with respect to ongoing research in the department.

Policies Regarding Oral Comprehensive Examination

Each student must take and pass an oral comprehensive examination. This oral exam will take place immediately following the thesis defense. At the completion of the thesis defense, all persons except the candidate and committee members will be excused from the room. The committee members will administer the oral comprehensive exam. Following the exam, the candidate will be excused and the committee members will determine whether the student earned a pass or fail on the examination. The candidate will be notified of her/his grade immediately. Students who do not pass this exam the first time must re-take the examination minimally 2 months after the failed examination. Students who do not pass the second oral examination will be dismissed from the program without a M.S. degree.

The oral comprehensive exam will serve as a test of general knowledge as well as thesis knowledge. Students will be expected to demonstrate an adequate knowledge of general psychology at the master's level in addition to specific areas of thesis expertise. Students are expected to review their coursework, understand the core foundations of psychology as a science, and answer questions that naturally arise during the examination demonstrating that they can synthesize their knowledge of psychology and apply it to diverse settings.

Policies Regarding MS Thesis Project

A master's thesis is an empirical study (e.g., an experiment or a series of experiments), the purpose of which is that students demonstrate their ability to carry out a scientific investigation and write an acceptable thesis. The thesis project is designed to facilitate a number of skills that are beneficial in either applied or academic settings: Familiarity with a scientific literature, critical thinking skills that help to identify weaknesses in the literature, formulation of hypotheses, formulation of appropriate methodology to answer research questions, collecting and analyzing data, critical and thoughtful interpretation of results/implications for literature, and effective written and oral communication skills.

Each student should read the requirements outlined in the Division of Graduate Education dissertation/thesis guide regarding writing and submitting a master's thesis. Students should also work closely with the DGE staff when writing the thesis to minimize formatting problems. All graduate students must submit their final thesis or dissertation in electronic format instead of turning in paper copies. For more information on this process go to www.montana.edu/etd, contact the Division of Graduate Education at 994-4145, or email gradstudy@montana.edu.

General Steps to complete a thesis project are as follows:

1. Select a thesis advisor (i.e., chair of your thesis committee). Must be a psychology tenured or tenure-track faculty member. Deadline: October 1st of your first year.
2. Select a thesis committee (two additional faculty members, one can be outside of psychology) per advisor's consultation.
3. Select a thesis topic. Schedule regular thesis meetings with advisor per advisor's recommendation.
4. Write a thesis proposal. Format/style and content of thesis proposal should follow American Psychological Association guidelines. At minimum, thesis proposal should include a title page, abstract, introduction, method, anticipated results, discussion, and references section. Meet with thesis advisor for feedback on proposal.
5. Submit thesis proposal to thesis advisor for approval. Students must allow at least one week for feedback on proposal. Revision and resubmission should be expected.
6. Once approved by the thesis advisor, the student submits thesis proposal to committee members for feedback. Students must allow at least one week for feedback on proposal. At this point it **is necessary** to get approval of the institutional review board for the use of human subjects (IRB) or animals (IACUC) – the project must have approval before the project can be approved by the thesis committee.
7. Once approved by the thesis advisor and committee members, the proposed project can commence.
8. Write a draft of the thesis when the project is completed.
9. Submit drafts of thesis to advisor for feedback and approval. Students must allow at least one week for feedback on each draft. Revision and resubmission should be expected.
10. Once approved by thesis advisor, submit the thesis to committee members and seek feedback. Students must allow at least one week for feedback.
11. Schedule an oral thesis defense date with advisor and committee members. Refer to the College of Graduate Studies on-line catalog for important deadlines. It is the student's responsibility to schedule a room on a time and day when all committee members can attend. Notice of the oral defense and a copy of the finished thesis must be distributed to all committee members a minimum of 14 days in advance of the defense.
12. Orally defend thesis and, if necessary, make additional revisions. Passage of the oral defense is determined by a unanimous vote of the committee. Failure of the oral examination will require the student to schedule another exam at a later date (not sooner than 2 months) to be determined by the thesis advisor.
13. Obtain necessary signatures.
14. Submit final copies of thesis to advisor, committee members, and Division of Graduate Education. All graduate students must submit their final thesis or dissertation in electronic format instead of turning in paper copies. For more information on this simple process go to www.montana.edu/etd, contact the

DGE at 994-4145, or email gradstudy@montana.edu.

Student responsibilities

1. Read the online catalog and meet all relevant deadlines
2. Make sure all official transcripts (reflecting degree conferral) and GRE scores are on file with the Division of Graduate Education.
3. Notify the psychology department and the office of registrar of any changes in name or address, including updating your contact information on MyInfo.
4. Keep an overall GPA, semester GPA, and program of study GPA of 3.0 or higher
5. Effectively and satisfactorily fulfill course requirements and your semester goals
6. Obtain approval for transfer credits from other institutions
7. File your program of study and committee form
8. File the paperwork and obtain IRB/IACUC approval
9. Conduct your thesis research
10. Write your thesis in appropriate form, successfully defend the thesis and pass oral comprehensive examination.
11. Know the steps required to complete the thesis
12. Obtain forms and signatures for all steps of the thesis
13. Submit the application for advanced degree before the deadline
14. Provide the Division of Graduate Education with two final copies of your thesis.

Faculty responsibilities

1. Thesis advisors should be available to meet with students and provide guidance regarding the thesis project. Please note however, that the amount of guidance you receive is often directly related to the advisor's mentorship style. Be sure to keep this in mind when choosing a thesis advisor.
2. Thesis advisors are expected to promptly provide detailed written feedback at the end of each semester regarding the student's performance evaluation and progress towards the degree.
3. Thesis advisors are expected to offer reasonable opportunities for students to gain research experience. However, the amount and type of experience will differ depending on the student's needs, the advisor, and the situation.
4. Thesis advisors are expected to provide feedback to students regarding their thesis ideas, proposals, and final write-ups in a timely manner.

Advice for Creating and Completing the Thesis

Selecting a topic

Questions to ask yourself

What areas are interesting to me?

What research is my advisor conducting and is there an aspect that interests me?

What research is going on in the department and is there an aspect that interests me?

Is there an ongoing faculty project in which I am interested?

1. Survey the literature in PsycINFO/PUBMED
2. Browse recent journal to sharpen your interests
3. Attend department colloquia
4. Evaluate your personal timetable for completing your thesis taking into account your responsibilities, work habits, scope of project, interests – **then add a minimum of 4 months!**
5. Seek out faculty that are conducting research in your area of interest and talk with them.

Selecting a Thesis Advisor

Thesis advisors guide students in their own style and set his or her own expectations and requirements that are meant to facilitate the student's learning experience. These requirements are one source of evaluation for the GTA award and for evaluation of your performance in the program. As such, you want to be sure you select your thesis advisor very carefully! In your application to our program, you likely identified a faculty member you wanted to work with. Thus, in making an explicit choice to accept our invitation into our master's program you are assuming responsibility for selecting an advisor (and thus meet that faculty member's expectations). By accepting our invitation to come to Montana State University, we assume you have read over this handbook, learned more about the faculty that you wish to work with, and are aware of any supplemental advisor-specific research requirements (if applicable). In this way, you are making an informed decision to accept our requirements before you even begin your program of study here at Montana State University.

During the first few weeks of the program, you should plan to solidify your choice of thesis advisor. This will likely be the person you identified in your application, but it doesn't have to be. If this is the case you should use the first six weeks of the program to find an advisor. We suggest that you schedule appointments to meet with **every** faculty member whose interests overlap with yours and discuss their research, interests, mentoring style, and expectations. Also talk with faculty about your interests and goals. These interviews will help you and the potential-advisor decide if you are a both a good match and can agree upon the learning objectives. You may also want to consult with senior graduate students and talk with them about their experiences with advisors.

There seem to be two primary faculty approaches to directing thesis research. One group of faculty tend to be rather non-directive, encouraging students to develop their own ideas, whereas other faculty require that students carry out some research project that is of interest to the faculty member, often a component of a larger research program. Note that both approaches have pros and cons. Choosing your own topic may be more intrinsically interesting to you but because faculty often are not as fluent with literature outside their topic area, identifying a research question that contributes to knowledge in the area may be a frustrating and time consuming process. Alternatively, although working on a project that represents some component of ongoing research in a faculty member's lab may not be as intrinsically interesting to you, the process may be somewhat more convenient and time efficient. The advisor – advisee relationship can be difficult and you will be most satisfied with your experience if you choose an advisor whose goals are compatible with your own. It is wise to ask faculty explicitly during your scheduled meeting about their mentoring style. Be sure that you are clear what their advising style is and that you can function within that style.

One key role of the advisor is to work with you to jointly generate and agree upon semester goals. These goal statements can and should include the thesis-advisor's specific expectations for satisfactory progress in the program. These jointly-generated goals may include requirements that serve to create, maintain, or enhance your research experience. These semester expectations are seen as part of the overall learning experience of graduate school. The evaluation of these expectations comes in the form of the letter by the advisor at the end of each semester, which references these goal statements. You and your advisor should sign the goal statement. These goal statements are then used to determine whether and how students met the advisor's expectations at the end of the semester.

Choosing advisor policy

1. During September of the first year, students are expected to meet with each faculty member whose interests overlap their own and discuss research interests, expectations, potential thesis ideas, and advisor styles/ mentoring models.
2. By October 1st of the first year, students must complete and submit a declaration of thesis advisor to the graduate coordinator

Switching Thesis Advisors

Occasionally there is good reason to switch thesis advisors. For example, if you have a change in research interests or career goals and another faculty member has more expertise than the one with whom you are currently working. However, keep in mind that when you switch advisors, you may well have to start the thesis process from the beginning, which can add a substantial amount of time to your program. Additionally, there may be professional commitments that you made to you current advisor that you will be asked to complete. It is the responsibility of the thesis advisor and the student to agree on these commitments when the student **starts** working with the advisor.

Change of thesis advisor policy

1. Student must complete a change of advisor petition and meet with the graduate coordinator.
 2. The graduate coordinator will meet with the student's current advisor, proposed new advisor, and the department head to discuss the merit of the request.
 3. The graduate coordinator will meet with the student to either approve or reject the request and will provide the student with an explanation.
 4. No psychology faculty will sign official College of Graduate Studies change of committee forms (regarding change of thesis chair) until this process is complete.
- Note that if your advisor is the graduate coordinator, you would submit and meet with the department head rather than the graduate coordinator.

Selecting a Thesis Committee

Select committee members that have expertise either in the theory or methodology of your thesis project. Be sure to meet with each potential committee member and obtain their consent to serve on your committee. Consult your major advisor for suggestions.

Thesis proposal

The thesis proposal is designed to outline exactly what you propose to do for your thesis study so that you and your committee can discuss the project in detail. Thesis proposals are written in future tense (will), whereas theses are written in the past tense (was). The proposal should be written in APA style whereas the thesis should be written in accordance with the College of Graduate Studies guidelines. You need to work closely with the College of Graduate Studies staff when you begin writing your thesis.

Abstract: In 150-250 words describe the problem, the methods, the predicted results (include proposed statistical tests), and conclusions you might expect.

Introduction: Sets up the purpose of the study. Describe previous research on the topic (including references) and identify the ways in which you will extend knowledge. What makes your research

unique in the face of what has already been done? Do include your hypotheses.

Method: Describes exactly how you plan to conduct the study in detail including a complete description of methodology and measures. Anyone who reads your methods section should be able to exactly replicate your study.

Expected results: Describe exactly how you will analyze the data including what statistical tests will be employed and which comparisons are of interest. Describe what results you expect to find from your proposed statistical tests.

Discussion: Describe how you think your study will turn out – What do you expect to find? What are the implications of your predicted findings? What would be the implications of your results and how would these results contribute to knowledge in the area?

References: Follow APA style.

M.S. Checklist Guideline

1. Select a thesis advisor/graduate committee chair
2. Select a thesis topic
3. Select a thesis committee and submit paperwork
4. Write proposal
5. Obtain advisor approval for proposal
6. Obtain IRB/IACUC approval
7. Obtain committee approval for proposal
8. Begin data collection
9. Thesis writing
10. Submit the application for advanced degree form
11. Obtain advisor approval of thesis
12. Schedule and complete an oral defense and comprehensive examination
13. Submit approved thesis to the Division of Graduate Education

We encourage all graduate students to attend the Division of Graduate Education workshops throughout the academic year. These workshops will help you with thesis formatting and other student issues.

Performance Evaluations

Each semester (optionally including summer at the discretion of the student's mentor), the psychology faculty will review and evaluate each student's performance in the MS program. Performance will be assessed by the psychology department faculty in the following 5 areas: (a) graduate courses, (b) research, (c) GTA or GRA performance, (d) progress toward the MS degree, and (e) citizenship. To facilitate the review, each student is required to submit a written self-evaluation of his or her performance each semester in these areas.

Graduate Courses:

You are expected to attend and actively participate in your graduate classes. You are expected to demonstrate good critical thinking skills, good communication skills (both written and spoken) and good collaboration skills. You should be respectful and polite to your fellow students and the faculty instructor at all times. You should maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA at all times.

Research:

You are expected to maintain an active research program under the guidance of your thesis advisor. This may include activities such as: attending lab meetings, reading journal articles, conducting a first year project, coordinating lab activities, presenting at conferences, setting up new studies, writing manuscripts, etc. We also encourage you to seek out research opportunities with other faculty, as this is a great way to get a wide variety of research experience.

GTA performance (if applicable):

There are several types of GTA duties including: grading for an instructor, leading PSYX 223 lab sessions, teaching PSYX 100 labs, coordinating the subject pool, and acting as a PSYX 100 lab leader. All duties are equally important and you should take this role very seriously. You should treat your GTA assignment as you would any other job. You are expected to be prepared for class, to hold class for the full time period, to keep up with tasks and assignments, and to work with students and the faculty instructor in a respectful and professional manner. You are expected to be organized, responsive to students, and in communication with the course instructor at all times. GTAs should contact the professors and discuss with them their grading responsibilities. GTAs are encouraged to solicit advice and evaluation from the course instructor at any time. Recitation and PSYX 223 GTA's are also encouraged to seek informal feedback from students early in the semester and to strive to respond to the feedback during the balance of the course. At the end of each semester, all graders will be evaluated by their course instructors. In addition, PSYX100 recitation and PSYX 223 GTA's will be formerly evaluated by their students via a survey, KNAPP form, or otherwise at both the middle of the semester and at the end of the semester. These data will be provided to the course instructor and the thesis advisor for review. In the event of unsatisfactory GTA performance, disciplinary action may be taken.

Progress toward the degree:

Progress toward the degree will depend in large part up on the specific nature of your thesis. You and your thesis advisor will work to set thesis related goals for each semester. However, progress toward the degree also includes completing all paperwork on time and taking and passing required classes.

Citizenship:

Citizenship refers to the contributions that you make to the department in terms of being available, being physically present in the lab or your office, attending department colloquia, participating in department social activities, and interacting positively with undergraduate students, other graduate students, and faculty. You are required to post your office hours on your door every semester. Disruptive, insulting, or aggressive behavior will not be tolerated.

Evaluation Protocol

Evaluation in the areas listed above will be used as a major criterion for making decisions about who receives a subsequent graduate assistantship. It is important for students to understand that continued financial support is contingent upon satisfactory performance in the program. Failure to make satisfactory progress, as determined by the psychology faculty and the Division of Graduate Education, may result in the loss of financial assistance or even suspension from the program.

Semester Evaluation Policy

1. Students are expected to submit a personal statement, vita/resume, and any available teaching evaluations to their advisor three weeks prior to the end of the semester, or per the deadline set by the Graduate Coordinator. In this statement, students should address their progress on all five dimensions described above (a) graduate courses, (b) research, (c) GTA or GRA performance , (d) progress toward the MS degree, and (c) citizenship. Students should also address progress on the specific goals formulated during the previous semester.
2. Students should meet with their advisor when they submit these materials in order to formulate new goals for the following semester. At this time you and your advisor should complete the semester goals form.
3. The graduate faculty will meet one week prior to the end of classes and provide you with written feedback no later than one week after finals week. You will sign the letter you receive in acknowledgement of receipt and return it to your advisor, who will provide you with a copy. You will have the option to meet with you advisor to review your evaluation if you wish. You may also write a formal “letter of reply” to address any portion of your evaluation letter that you see fit. This letter of reply is intended to facilitate a dialogue between you and your advisor.
4. In this written feedback, you will receive several numerical ratings of your performance on 5 point scales (1 = unacceptable, 2 = did not meet expectations, 3 = met expectations, 4 = exceeded expectations, 5 = extraordinary performance). You will receive a performance rating on each of the five dimensions described above (a) graduate courses, (b) research, (c) GTA or GRA performance , (d) progress toward the MS degree, and (c) citizenship, as well as on your overall performance over these dimensions combined.
5. If, on your overall performance evaluation, you did not meet expectations (you were given a score of 1 or 2 in any of the 5 areas), you will be required to meet with the graduate coordinator and your advisor to formulate a plan to improve your performance. You will receive a “letter of concern” and a copy of this letter and your semester evaluation will be sent to the DGE.
6. If you fail to make satisfactory progress in one or more of the 5 areas of evaluation in any two semesters, you will receive an official “letter of probation” from the Graduate Coordinator and you will automatically be disqualified for a GTA and any tuition waivers.
7. If you fail to make satisfactory progress across any three semesters, this can result in a recommendation to the DGE that you be terminated from the program.

Professional and Ethical Behavior

Each student is required to act in a professional manner in accordance with the APA ethical code (see APA, "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct," 2010 (<http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>) and with MSU's code of student conduct (<http://www.montana.edu/wwwds/>) and the College of Graduate Studies' policies and procedures regarding student conduct and academic dishonesty. This includes (but is not limited to) policies on sexual harassment, weapons, violence, plagiarism, and alcohol. If a student is suspected to have violated these policies, university misconduct procedures will be followed, including submission of an Academic Misconduct Notification form to the student, the Department Head, the Graduate Dean and the Dean of Students.

Students are also expected to act in a professionally ethical manner regarding the ownership of data. Data belong to all persons who have contributed significantly to the design, analysis, or write-up of the project. Please note that any data you collect while at Montana State University belong, at least in part, to your faculty advisor. Your degree of data ownership will depend on your relative contribution to the project. At no time should you destroy data (even if you think it is worthless) or refuse to share data with those who have contributed significantly to the design, analysis, or write-up of the project. In addition, APA requires that we retain all data and informed consents for a minimum of 5 years. For these reasons, it is imperative that you never delete or destroy study materials or data.

If you have any questions or concerns about students or faculty, see the psychology graduate program coordinator.

Grievance Process

It is not unusual for graduate school to be a difficult and at times, a frustrating process. If you find that you have an issue with your program the first step is to consult your thesis advisor. Faculty are quite committed to the graduate program and you will find that faculty want to work with you to provide a successful experience.

If you feel that you cannot talk to your advisor about a program issue, you should schedule a meeting with the graduate coordinator. The primary responsibility of the graduate coordinator is to improve the program. Consequently, you can trust that the graduate coordinator is interested in your issues and will work to make improvements. Your discussions with the graduate coordinator are confidential. That is, unless you give permission, the graduate coordinator will not report back to the involved parties about your discussions.

If for any reason you cannot approach the graduate coordinator, or you have talked with the graduate coordinator and are dissatisfied with the results, you should schedule an appointment with the department head. Again, discussions with the department head are confidential unless you agree otherwise.

If you have followed all of the previous procedures and feel that your issue has not been sufficiently addressed, you can talk to the staff in the College of Graduate Studies. Please do not skip any of the steps in this process. Doing so usually leads to further difficulties because the lines of communication needed to address problems get tangled when steps are skipped.

Please see http://www.montana.edu/wwwdg/cat_app_griev.shtml for information on the appeal process.