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Preface

This document is intended to supplement the Psychology Graduate Student Handbook, Program Handbooks, and the Psychology Graduate Students Resources Page as primary sources of information for students as they proceed through the program. Though some of the information contained within can also be found in the aforementioned resources, this document differs in a few important ways

- 1) This document covers a number of topics in far greater depth than they are covered elsewhere (e.g. extensive instructions for filling out paperwork) in addition to containing information that is not easily available elsewhere
- 2) The document is organized and structured in a manner that not only provides information, but also with a series of best practices intended to help all students complete their degree in a reasonable timeframe, avoiding mistakes that can needlessly delay progress.
- 3) This document also contains a section primarily for faculty with guidance and best practices for issues commonly encountered when advising students or teaching graduate courses. The entire document is of use to both faculty and students, but this is the only document with a faculty/advisor specific section

Though it would certainly be useful to review this document in full, there is no expectation that you need to commit all of this information to memory, so it is also structured as a resource guide that will allow you to easily find information whenever it is relevant for you. Consult the paperwork section and instructions any time you have paperwork you need to submit. Consult information on things like putting together a supervisory committee and determining what your comprehensive examinations will be when you hit that stage in the program. You would benefit from giving this a full-read through once and then consulting individual sections as they become relevant.

Though the vast majority of information you will need is available in this and supplementary documents, this is not an exhaustive listing of absolutely everything and you are always encouraged to reach out to the Graduate Chair when you have questions you need answered or require additional information beyond this guide.

Acronyms you will commonly see throughout this document:

MOC (Memorandum of Courses)

POS (Program of Studies)

OGS (Office of Graduate Studies)

MERP (Master's Equivalent Research Project)

Important Links to Supplement this Guide

[Psychology Graduate Students Resources Page](#): Maintained by the Graduate Chair, this is an all-encompassing resource that you should always consult first when you have questions. This page also contains a lot of supplementary information you will not always find listed elsewhere (e.g. Diversity and Inclusion resources, additional mentorship networks, external funding opportunities, etc.)

[Psychology Graduate Student Handbook](#): The Graduate Student Handbook contains information beyond what is in this Best Practices Document and is also a valuable resource for many questions you may have. There is both a web version of the handbook and the option to download a PDF version from this website.

[Department of Psychology](#): Our primary departmental website which contains a vast amount of information and links you may find useful

[Office of Graduate Studies](#): The Office of Graduate Studies webpage. Even though Psychology is in the College of Arts and Sciences, Graduate students are expected to follow the policies and guidelines of the Graduate College. It is helpful to familiarize yourself with OGS guidelines and get to know the various OGS staff you might need to interact with during your time here

[Steps to Degree Completion](#): The Office of Graduate Studies has an excellent [Steps to Program Completion](#) page which links to all of the forms that you will need to complete your [M.A.](#) and [Ph.D.](#) This Best Practices Document has thorough guidance on how to fill out each form and when to submit, but it is strongly recommended that you still consult the graduate studies page for additional instructions, dates, etc.

[Graduate Catalog](#): Though the Psychology webpages have a listing of [Psychology Graduate Courses](#), the Graduate Catalog shows you courses for all Programs/Departments and lets you search for specific course types.

[Program Handbooks](#): Students in each program in the Department generally also have access to a program handbook made available to them by their advisor or Program Coordinator/Director

A Few Big Picture Things to Keep in Mind

Timelines

Given that graduate students are in different programs (which often have requirements above and beyond the baseline department requirements), pursue different trainings (e.g. some may do our quant minor or a specialization in Women and Gender Studies, or Ethnic Studies), pursue different career types, and sometimes pursue dual degrees (e.g. an MLS or JD/PhD), it is impossible to establish a general timeline for all students in the program that will work equally well for everyone. Your annual letters of evaluation will include general timeline information as a function of what year you have just finished (timeline information for each year is appended to the end of this document and is also always available [HERE](#)). The following section, however, does summarize what your first year is likely to look like independent of which program you are in (please note there could be deviations to this if pursuing dual degrees, JD/PhD students spend their entire first year at UNL in the Law College).

Research Requirements

Though you will engage in a number of different research projects and activities during your time here, it is important to be mindful of your two most important research requirements. The first is an empirical Master's-level project that could be either primary data collection or analyses of archival data (see additional info on the MERP below). The paper should follow length and format requirements that would be suitable for a journal article in your area. The student generally does an oral defense of their MERP. Even in programs/situations where the defense could be waived, we strongly recommend you do a formal defense as this is excellent practice and experience for the later Ph.D. defense, which is mandatory. Each student must also complete an empirical dissertation for the Ph.D. This process includes a formal written proposal approved by the supervisory committee. The student and the dissertation committee meet to discuss the proposal and agree on the nature and scope of the dissertation. The scope and nature of the proposal and final dissertation documents are up to the program and supervisory committee as long as they meet Graduate College standards. There is no formal paperwork for the MERP or dissertation proposal. However, Graduate Studies has both [Master's](#) and [Ph.D.](#) paperwork that needs to be completed several weeks before the final dissertation defense, forms to sign at the oral defense, and instructions for submitting the dissertation. You can find extensive guidance on paperwork in the Paperwork section of this guide. Please note that Ph.D. defenses in the department are considered public and open to anyone interested for the talk portion of the defense. This is not a requirement for the MERP.

Registering for Classes

When you agree to take a position as a Graduate Student in our Department you initially receive a memo over the summer with instructions on registering for classes. Here are a few things you need to keep in mind when you first register and then when you register for classes each subsequent semester.

GRD vs. PNP – When registering for classes you may see an option to enroll as GRD or PNP. GRD means graded, you will receive a letter grade in the course and this grade factors into your Grade Point Average. PNP means Pass/No Pass and if you use this mechanism, you only receive a P or NP and this does not factor into your Grade Point Average. Generally speaking, Graduate Courses are designed in a manner that if you do what is expected and keep on top of the material, you should receive a good grade, so the norm is to register for GRD when available. If you choose PNP, please note that the Department rule is that a minimum passing grade is a B-, so you would receive a P if you get a B- or higher and an NP if you do not (which may necessitate retaking the course if it is a required course for the degree). Please also note that you are directed to only register for a course as GRD if it is a core course in your area (e.g. a Social Psychology Student should select GRD for any critical/core Social courses such as the Social Proseminar). There are, however, some “courses” that you can only register for as PNP, more on this in a moment. It is important to check with the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) to see if they have limits on the number of courses that can be taken PNP, we have no such limits in Department but we do have a general expectation that courses are most often taken as GRD.

Number of credits – Though most graduate classes are already set as 3-credit classes, there are occasional exceptions (e.g. the Teaching course you enroll in in Year 1, Psychology 974, is a 1-credit course). There are some mechanisms in Department for Research Credit (e.g. 996, 999) or a Readings course (971/972) that are not official classes and instead something you arrange independently with your advisor. These are variable credit so you would select the amount of credit for these courses in consultation with your advisor. These mechanisms are usually 3 credits but there are exceptions. Clinical Students only enroll in 2 credits of 996 in their first semester given their other course requirements to ensure that they do not exceed 12 credits in a semester (the tuition waiver only covers up to 12-credits per semester, this is further documented later in this guide). Students may also enroll in less than 3 research credits if they have a particularly involved class schedule in a given semester. Once you are course complete you tend to enroll in more research credit, usually in multiples of 3 credits (e.g. 3 credits, 6 credits). But the actual decision on how many credit hours to enroll in for these mechanisms should be made in consult with your advisor who oversees these.

996/999 credit – Information on these appear later in this guide, but as a general guideline, all students will enroll in 996 credit in their first semester (even if you enter the program with a Master's degree already). You do not enroll in 999 credit until later on and there is guidance on that later in this guide. 996 and 999 are mechanisms that can only be taken PNP, there is no Graded option. So even though the general guidance is to take courses as GRD when that is an option, you will not find this option for these types of Research Credits that people enroll in for the research activities they engage in for the Master's or PhD.

Everyone's Path is Different

Though this guide is provided to give graduate students all of the information and advice they will need to be successful—as well as to ensure that you are able to complete the PhD in a reasonable timeframe—it is important that you keep in mind that everyone's path through graduate school is a bit different. Talking to your fellow students about the classes they are taking, the research they are doing, the additional training they are seeking out, the grants they are pursuing, the papers they are publishing, their successes and setbacks, etc. can be valuable but it is critical that you do not evaluate your worth or your work by comparing yourself to others. Even though you are all pursuing a PhD in Psychology, you have different backgrounds, different career interests, different research programs, different strengths and weaknesses, different goals, etc. Graduate school is stressful enough without constantly comparing where you're at relative to your cohort or other students in your lab or your program. If you are worried or unsure about your progress and how you are doing, talk to your advisor about it as they can provide you with the best sense of how you are doing and whether you are on track to meet your training goals.

What your first year will look like

Classes

First year students all take the same three classes in their first year as a cohort. Psychology 931 (Fall) and Psychology 932 (Spring) represent the statistics sequence required for all Psychology students, and Psychology 974 (normally Fall) is a one-credit course that satisfies our teacher-education requirement, which is particularly important given how many of our students TA or teach their own course during their time here. If you are in Clinical, there is an additional sequence of courses that is generally taken in your first and second year and you can consult with your advisor, the Director of Clinical Training, and/or the Clinical Psychology Training Program Manual for guidance on which courses to take. If you are in a program other than Clinical, there are fewer overall course requirements and more flexibility in terms of which courses to take. Consult with your advisor and your program handbook to determine which courses you'll need to take, and try to make a general plan for when you'll take required courses by using the [Graduate Teaching Plan](#) (note the plan is tentative and things can change, sometimes with little notice, the Graduate Teaching Plan is updated after the January and May Graduate Executive Committee Meetings). In general, it is a good idea to try to complete program requirements as early as possible. The proseminar in your area of specialization should be taken as soon as possible as these are not always offered every single year, and you should be mindful of what other courses you'd like to take and when these are offered.

Here are the department requirements for all students, though many programs have additional requirements beyond these:

Department-Wide Requirements for Graduate Students in Psychology

Requirement	Required Hours	Specific Required Course*	Recommended	Notes
Stats/Methods	6 hours	PSYC 931 and PSYC 932		
Basic Psychology Coursework	6 hours	3 hours from a proseminar (any course numbered PSYC 901-PSYC 910)	The second 3 hours can be from another proseminar or any graduate psychology course outside of the student's primary area.	
Human Diversity/Multicultural^	1 hour	Any class from that is primarily focused on human diversity	Include, but are not limited to, PSYC 914, PSYC 976, PSYC 979, EDPS 868, EDPS 987, SOCI 905, SOCI 906, SOCI 907	Most classes are 3 hours so most students will take 3 hours of human diversity.
Ethics	1 hour	See program requirements for specific course recommendations		
Teaching	1 hour	PSYC 974		May be taken concurrently to the teaching assignment. May be waived for teaching only with permission of Associate Chair and program coordinator.

Note. Specific programs have additional requirements. Courses simultaneously meet both department and program requirements.

*Students with prior training may ask to substitute a different course to meet a requirement. This determination is made by the faculty member who typically teaches the course. They usually ask for a syllabus, including information about the textbook/readings, to insure equivalency.

^ The course need not be in the Department of Psychology but should generally cover topics such as implicit bias, stereotyping, how societal power structures differentially impact groups of people, etc

If You Entered the Program With a Master's Degree

If you entered into our PhD program with a Master's degree or previous graduate coursework, you may be able to transfer some of the courses you took previously to satisfy department requirements. You would need to identify a UNL Psychology course that you think you have already taken the equivalent of previously, and then reach out to the instructor for that course, providing your previous syllabus and any other available

information from the course you took previously. The instructor for the potentially commensurate course here will make a determination of whether the courses are sufficiently equivalent and can be transferred in. Even in cases where courses can be transferred in, however, your advisor/committee may encourage you to take the course here instead of transferring in (e.g. if it's been a few years since you have taken a statistics course and your advisor feels it would be appropriate to take our statistics sequence rather than transferring in previous coursework). In addition to receiving a determination from the equivalent course instructor at UNL, your dissertation committee also needs to approve any plan to transfer in courses. The Program of Studies form has a Transfer of Credit section and your Supervisory Committee will also need to officially sign off on transfer credit plans, often during your first Supervisory Committee meeting (see section on PhD Supervisory Committee later in document). Please see the section of this document on your First Year Research Project (MERP: Master's Equivalency Research Project) for information on potentially transferring in your Master's thesis document as well.

Your Assistantship

All PhD students receive a tuition waiver and a stipend in the form of a Teaching Assistantship (TA)/Research Assistantship (RA) position, with TA/RA positions generally occupying up to 19.6 hours per week. Note that this is an average, some positions do not always have a full workload week-to-week, but may have a few periods during the semester that take up considerably more hours (e.g. a TA grading a major assignment for a course). It is a good idea to meet with whoever is overseeing your assistantship as early as possible to ensure that you understand the full scope of the position and whether there may be some heavier workload times that you want to plan for in advance. The supervisor for your TA position is whoever the course instructor is. If you have an RA position, this normally means you are working for your PhD supervisor, though there are occasional exceptions to this. You will similarly want to meet with whoever is overseeing your RA position to understand the scope of the work and what is expected on a week-to-week basis. Outside of TA and RA position, some students are funded on contracts or community placements, the terms of which are set by your supervisor for said placements.

It is a good idea to track your hours in your assistantship if you feel you are being asked to work more than the prescribed 19.6 hours per week, and you should raise a concern with your advisor and then Department leadership as necessary if this becomes an ongoing issue. Having a sense of your hour worked is important because you would need to show that your overall workload exceeded the 19.6 hour per week average. A TA may have to work more than 20 hours in a week to grade a major assignment, and this would be acceptable so long as their overall effort for the entire semester does not exceed the

average of 19.6 hours per week (e.g. maybe you graded for 30 hours in one week, but only worked 6 hours the week prior). Similarly, an RA might be asked to collect a considerable amount of data in a short timeframe to meet a deadline for a grant or publication, but perhaps in the few weeks prior there were fewer responsibilities/hours for them. Tracking your hours does not mean raising a concern if you go over 19.6 hours in a given week, it is so you can look at the full scope of the work over the semester to determine whether you are regularly exceeding hours.

If you have an RA position working with your PhD supervisor, it can be tricky to separate out work you are doing to fulfill the RA position vs. work you are doing to complete your own research requirements. It is always good to talk to your advisor early to get clarity on which projects/work constitute the RA position vs. your own research.

Research

Hands-on research training is a critical aspect of our PhD program and you should expect to get involved in a lot of research during your time here. It is always good to be a part of multiple research projects. This does not mean you need to take the lead on every single research project, but being a part of multiple projects will both enhance your training and increase the likelihood that you will be able to obtain multiple publications in your time here. Not every project works out so it is always good to not put all of your eggs in a single basket. In addition to your first year research project/Master's Equivalency Research Project (MERP - described below), look for other opportunities to get involved in research projects in your lab, or in other labs if your advisor is supportive of this. That said, the most critical initial research focus in your first year should be the first year research project/Master's Equivalency Research Project (MERP).

It is also critically important to remember that different types of research move at different speeds. Some research (e.g. qualitative research, neuroimaging research, animal research) may require considerable additional training and can sometimes only be collected in a rather slow/laborious fashion. It may require new or amended IRB/IACUC forms, new skill development, training additional RAs, etc. meaning that some students will get their research up and running more quickly than others. You should not be comparing your progress to other that of other students in general, but that is particularly the case if you are in different research areas. You should be judging your progress relative to the expectations for your research area and you should always talk to your advisor or Program Coordinator/Director if you are worried about the speed at which things are moving.

It is essential to gain knowledge, experience, and competency in the research methods and analysis approaches you will be using in your research. Some of this training will be built into the standard program course requirements (e.g., PSYC 931 and 932), but those courses will likely not cover all the methods and analysis approaches you will use. If you are planning to use a method or analysis approach without any prior formal education, you will need to seek formal training via elective courses and/or purposeful self-education. For example, many students receive no formal training on qualitative research methods and analysis, but qualitative research cannot be performed competently without training in this field. Do not assume that qualitative or mixed method research will be simple. If you are planning to use these methods for your research projects, plan your training accordingly.

That said, the most critical initial research focus in your first year should be the first year research project/Master's Equivalency Research Project (MERP).

First year research project (MERP: Master's Equivalency Research Project)

Though students in the Psychology program are accepted directly into the Ph.D. program (e.g., we do not offer a terminal Master's degree), students do earn their M.A. degree along the way (if you entered the program with a Master's degree, you will determine with your advisor whether you will still do a MERP or whether this will be waived, more information on this after the next subheader). Your mentor helps to guide the development of your first-year research project, called the MERP (Master's Equivalency Research Project). This is similar to a Master's thesis but most of our students do not do a formal thesis with the associated formality and paperwork (this will be very relevant in a moment when we discuss the memorandum of courses). You will sign up for PSYC 996 as the course credit for your MERP (please note that 996 is also the code you use for non-thesis research prior to Ph.D. candidacy and is not solely for the MERP). The purpose of the MERP is simply to get you started in research and the MERP is generally expected to be something that can be completed within 18-24 months at most. Thus, various kinds of projects can be considered. For some students, the MERP is their own, self-initiated research study on topics of special interest. For others, the MERP consists of undertaking a portion of a faculty member's ongoing research study, assuming responsibility for developing measures or designing analyses for a particular part of the research. The MERP can also be a secondary analysis of a research dataset that has been previously collected. Talk to your advisor about which type of MERP makes the most sense for you. Undertaking your own data collection can be challenging, but it provides the rewards of completing a study from beginning to end. It is easier to get started in collaborative research on a faculty member's

ongoing project or conduct secondary data analysis and save the rest of the experience for a later project. Your advisor can guide you on the best path for you.

Once you have decided on a project in consultation with your advisor, talk with your advisor about how much of a formal proposal you should do. Some programs require a written proposal consisting of the Introduction, Method, and Plan for Analyses. Whether you do a formal written proposal or not, keep in mind that the MERP must be approved by your advisor and additional faculty member(s) as described below. Unlike the Ph.D. supervisory committee, which tends to be established in advance of a thesis project, it is not uncommon for faculty to be asked to review the MERP rather late in the lifespan of the project. If, however, you have identified the faculty who will also review your MERP ahead of time, it is good to keep them in the loop of what you are doing. Once your idea is approved, the next steps are to obtain any additional needed approvals (e.g., IRB or IACUC), conduct the research, and prepare a manuscript. For Developmental, Neuroscience and Behavior, and Social and Cognitive, the final MERP must be approved by your advisor and two other faculty members. Clinical students only require approval of the advisor and one additional faculty member for their MERP, given an additional program requirement (i.e., Clinical Comprehensive Exam) that satisfies the Master's requirements at the Graduate College level. Some programs also require an oral defense of the MERP. In most programs, the format for the final manuscript is a journal article, appropriate for the journals in your research area. Depending on the outcome of the research, students are expected to present their MERP at a conference and submit a manuscript for publication. Although strongly encouraged, publication is not a prerequisite for meeting the MERP requirement. Please make sure you consult with your advisor, program coordinator, and/or your program handbook/training manual for the specific requirements in your program.

If You Entered the Program With a Master's Degree

Students who arrive on campus with a thesis from a previous Master's degree may be able to get the MERP requirement waived. The advisor and one additional graduate faculty member in Psychology need to read the prior thesis and determine whether it meets our requirements. Inform the program director or coordinator if you meet the MERP requirement in this way. It is still important to immediately get involved in research, but you may have fewer formal hoops, such as a written proposal, to complete. Further information on this process is detailed in the section of this document that is intended for faculty/advisors.

Get Involved in Other Research

The MERP inaugurates a graduate student's research career. As students are working on their MERP, they are typically getting involved in other research as well, either in the same lab or perhaps with another research team. By the time a student begins the dissertation, they should have experience with all phases of the research process (e.g., designing a new study, gathering original data, analyzing data, writing a report, and submitting it for publication). The conclusion of the MERP provides you with the opportunity to decide whether you want to continue with the research directions inaugurated with this project or move in other directions, perhaps with the assistance of a different faculty advisor. In short, it is all up to you how to proceed. But keeping involved in research is key, because in doing so your skills as a scientist grow and become refined.

Meeting with your Advisor

The Department does not prescribe/require a regular meeting time with your advisor, but students tend to meet with their advisor as much or as little as necessary. In your first year, we recommend trying to schedule a weekly meeting with your advisor. In later years you may opt for less frequent meetings but regular meetings as you're getting established are a wonderful idea. You should also get in the habit of discussing your progress towards program milestones at least once a semester so that you're staying on top of things and have a plan for finishing them in a timely manner.

First-year paperwork:

Your Memorandum of Courses should be submitted in your first year in the program, ideally in the spring semester, please see the Paperwork section of this guide for all the information you need on that.

Other Keys to Success During Your Training at UNL (Important to Consider Every Year in the Program, but Particularly in your First Year)

Seek Opportunities to Broaden Your Learning

It is easy to get caught up in a lab and a narrow area of research. Graduate school is an excellent time to broaden your knowledge, making you a better scientist and scholar. Read widely. Attend departmental brown bags, guest talks, and the Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, even if it does not seem to be in your research area. Spend time perusing journals. Read foundational and new texts on the methods and analysis approaches you are using and/or may like to use in the future.

Develop a Habit of Writing That Works for You

Early on in your graduate career, develop a strong writing habit that suits you. Not being able to get MERPs, dissertations, or other research products written is the #1 factor that slows down progress in graduate school. Consult with your advisor and lab mates about how they get writing done. Consider regularly scheduled writing with others, setting deadlines with a peer or your advisor. Psychologist Paul Silvia in [How to Write A Lot](#) recommends allotting shorter times in your schedule several days a week to write and defending that time vigorously from other demands. Not every strategy works for everyone but find a strategy that works for you and stick to it. If your current strategy is not working for you, you should consider talking to fellow students, your advisor, or other professors for other suggested approaches.

Update Your CV Throughout The Year

You should get in the habit of updating your CV regularly whenever you have anything of note to document (e.g. a manuscript is submitted and/or published, a grant is submitted and/or awarded, you present at a conference, you participate in a workshop, you teach a class, you serve on a committee). So many of the things you accomplish in graduate school will feel like a big deal and this can trick you into thinking you will remember everything if you just update once or twice a year, but it is a guarantee that you will not remember everything with sparse updates. Moreover, if you update your CV regularly, each update will require little time/effort. If you wait to update until we request your annual evaluation material each year, then a task that is intended to be straightforward and easy to complete will start to feel burdensome and overwhelming. Remember that your CV is a

critical document for future career prospects, so this advice is relevant to your entire career and not just your graduate training.

Become Professionally Connected

Consider joining relevant professional organizations. Student memberships are often inexpensive and may come with a newsletter or useful journal access. Ask your advisor about what listservs you should join. Attend professional meetings, where you can meet the people who produce the research you read, and contribute your own scholarship in a research poster session. Some travel funding to attend professional meetings is described later in this document (see section on Research and Travel Funds).

Become Involved in the Governance Processes

A valuable source of experience can be obtained through the Graduate Student Association (GSA). GSA representatives are included in the Department's Executive Committee and participate in faculty meetings, which is important to ensuring that the graduate student voice is heard in decision-making. Consider running as a representative.

Balance

Although being a graduate student will take up most of your time and energy, keeping some balance will help you stay health, active, and probably more productive in the long run. Everyone does this in their own way, but most people recommend staying healthy with sufficient sleep, good nutrition and exercise. It is also helpful to have some friends or interests outside of the program. This might mean volunteering for a cause you are passionate about, working on a hobby, joining a religious or spiritual community, or just making a point to explore Lincoln and Nebraska on the weekends.

After your first year in the program

While your first year in our program is similar for most students, there is considerable variability in how subsequent years will look as a function of your program, training, minors, career goals, research area, etc. As such, we do not provide specific guidance for each subsequent year and instead the remainder of this guide is ordered in the following manner:

- 1) A Paperwork Section that covers all of the paperwork that you will have to submit to the Office of Graduate Studies through the Department in your time here. Please note that this section only covers OGS paperwork and there may be some other

internal forms/documents that you need to be mindful of as a function of which program you are in. Consult your area handbook and talk to your advisor about any non-OGS paperwork you may need to complete. A summary table is also presented at the end of that section for quick reference.

- 2) Sections on Important Training Milestone: Supervisory Committees, Comprehensive Exams, Dissertation Proposal, and Information for Cases where students may opt to complete their degree in a part-time fashion
- 3) A Section titled “Miscellaneous” that contains a wide variety of additional information important for student success (topics arranged alphabetically)
- 4) Sections on Other Critical Topics: Research and Travel Money, Additional Training Opportunities in Department (and Outside Department), Teaching Opportunities and Guidance
- 5) Appendices covering information on 800-level classes, and timelines/verbiage that is provided during each annual evaluation

Paperwork

Important General Information

- 1) All paperwork that is routed through the Department to the Office of Graduate Studies (Memorandum of Courses, Final Examination Report Form for the Master's, Appointment of Supervisory Committee, Program of Studies, Application for Admission to Candidacy, Application for Final Oral Examination, Report of Completion) must have signatures collected via a Department Docusign account. Please do not collect signatures yourself or route the form through your own Docusign account. Send the paperwork with all relevant fields filled out to Pam Waldvogel (pwaldvogel@unl.edu) who will set up to collect signatures and will then submit to OGS. There is occasional internal department paperwork or program paperwork where it is still okay to collect manual signatures or use your own account, but anything going to OGS must go through the Department.
- 2) Though the information below contains timelines and best practices for all paperwork, there are additional deadlines that the Office of Graduate Studies has for tasks that do not have any associated paperwork, and are entirely on the student to meet. You should be paying close attention to the Steps to Degree Completion page for the [MA](#) and for the [PhD](#), where deadlines for the semester you are graduating are updated at the beginning of each new semester. Do not assume that paperwork is the only thing you need to stay on top of. Check the deadlines for providing rough drafts of theses, applying for graduation, etc. on those Steps to Completion pages.
- 3) Note that various documents will ask you for your Department/Program and will also have a field for "Specialization". Most of you should be leaving the specialization field blank. Everyone in the Department of Psychology receives the exact same Ph.D. in Psychology, do not list your program. Do not list things like the quant minor either as that is an informal department minor and not an officially recognized minor. The only time you should list a specialization is if you did an approved and recognized specialization such as the Women and Gender Studies' specialization or the Ethnic Studies specialization (there are others but these two are the most common for Psychology). If you obtain a graduate minor in another department you should always be sure to prime that when requesting signatures on DocuSigns as the Graduate Chair for that Department also needs to sign in that case. This is not common for our students so can easily be missed if you don't inform Pam Waldvogel and the Graduate Chair of your minor.

- 4) Though almost all paperwork for your degree goes through the Department first, it is important that you note that the Application for Graduation for the MA and Application for Graduation for the PhD are done through myred and solely the responsibility of the student. You need to apply for graduation within the first couple of weeks of the semester you intend to graduate. If you end up not completing your dissertation that semester that is fine, you can reapply for the next semester (though you'll have to pay the 25 dollar processing fee again). But you can't decide midway through the semester that you want to graduate that semester if you didn't apply for graduation earlier. Everything below maps out timelines and best practices for all paperwork, but the Application for Graduation is solely on you.
- 5) There is a quick reference table at the end of this section but it is still recommended that you read the full section for each piece of paperwork below, particularly when you are preparing to provide us with paperwork to collect signatures on and route.

Master's Paperwork

Timeline and Best Practices

Memorandum of Courses

Timeline

Ideal time to submit: In the spring semester of your first year in the program. This form needs to be completed prior to your completion of over one-half of required coursework. Since the MOC is a minimum 30 credits, you hit the half-way point quite soon. If not submitted in the spring semester of the first year, it should be submitted as soon as possible thereafter.

Filling out the form

-You should always choose Option B for the Master's even if what you're doing seems like Option A. You will still submit a Master's Equivalency Research Project at the Department level and defend it, but choosing Option B saves you some time, money, and additional steps OGS requires for Option A. The degree is the same independent of whether you choose A or B.

-The number of credits you can list on the MOC is minimum 30, maximum 36. Though it is fine to list 36 credits, there's no need to do so and 30 will suffice (other courses can be listed on your later Program of Studies)

-Though students need to be mindful of Department and Program requirements to satisfy the PhD (all of which should be listed on your later Program of Studies form), there are no requirements/guidelines for which courses appear on the MOC, it can be anything you are taking or have taken. Everyone should have their required first year courses listed (e.g. 931/932, 972) but there is no course that “has” to be listed on this document. Though you receive a Master’s in our Program, we are technically a PhD program only (we don’t accept students solely to pursue a Master’s degree), meaning it is critical you hit all course requirements for your PhD, but there are no specific requirements of what courses appear on the MOC.

-The Memorandum of Courses needs to be submitted at least 1 semester before you plan to graduate/receive the Master’s degree which is another reason to ensure you get it in earlier rather than later.

-This form is not intended to be an exhaustive listing of every course you are taking or are going to take during your time here. Rather, these forms represent your course “contract” for completing the Master’s. All of the courses you take in your time here will end up documented on your transcript, but for the purpose of satisfying your contract, the Office of Graduate Studies is checking these forms solely to ensure you have taken (and received an adequate grade in) everything listed. It is a good idea to only list courses you know are going to be offered or are sure you are going to take, do not list courses on this form that you are unsure about.

-If you ever need to make a change to your Memorandum of Courses, this is done via email to the Office of Graduate Studies, you should never submit a second Memorandum of Courses form. That email needs to come from your advisor, so you will need to inform your advisor of the exact changes that need to be made to your MOC and who they need to email in the Office of Graduate Studies.

-Please note that the courses you list on your Memorandum of Courses can also be listed on your later Program of Studies form for the PhD. Even though you earn your Master’s along the way to the PhD, our program is technically PhD only and so all courses you ultimately take are considered part of your PhD training.

Final Examination Report Form

Ideal time to submit: This form is due to the Office of Graduate Studies **4 weeks** prior to your intended defense date. Make sure you allow additional time for the collection of

signatures before we send the form to OGS, so getting to us at minimum 4 and a half weeks prior to the defense date is ideal.

Filling Out the Form

-Fill out all relevant information in Part 1 and in Part 2 and please check the box indicating that a written comprehensive exam is waived and an oral examination must be taken. In Part 4, please list your day/time/location for the defense and list the members of your supervisory committee. Note there is no separate supervisory committee form for the Master's, you just list your minimum 3 members (your advisor plus two other graduate faculty, generally in Psychology) on this form.

-After the initial submission of the form, signatures are collected solely from your advisor and the Graduate Chair to give you the go-ahead to defend on the proposed date, no other members of your committee sign anything at this stage

-After you defend, this same form needs to be sent back out for signatures and a pass/no-pass decision from each committee member. Please immediately inform Pam Waldvogel (pwaldvogel@unl.edu) after you have defended and ask her to send the form back out for signatures. Do not assume this will be done automatically. It is the responsibility of the student to inform us whenever a form needs to be sent out for signatures and/or routing.

PhD Paperwork

Timeline and Best Practices

Supervisory Committee

-Note that before you form a Supervisory Committee, you need formal approval from the Department Graduate Executive Committee to do so. Prior to each Grad EC meeting, Program Coordinators reach out to faculty to ask who is ready for a committee. We can also do this via email off cycle as necessary. Once you are approved to form a committee you get an email from the department informing you of that and letting you know next steps. Please note there is no requirement to immediately form your committee once approved (the verbiage you receive in the email has a soft deadline of a few weeks to keep this on your radar, but there is no immediate rush, just make sure you have approval before submitting this form).

Timeline

-This is usually submitted near the end of the MERP project assuming adequate progress. Some advisors like to submit this a bit sooner and some like to wait until after the MERP project to touch base on future research before deciding on a committee. There is no required deadline for this form but immediately before you finish your MERP project or soon after tends to be the best timing.

Filling out the form

-Your committee requires a minimum 4 people. Your advisor, two additional faculty members that are often in Psychology (though this is not a firm requirement), and an outside representative from a Department other than Psychology. The outside representative can be from any University of Nebraska campus so long as they hold Graduate Faculty status (you cannot, however, use someone from the Department of Psychology on another campus as the outside representative, it needs to come from another department entirely).

-All members of your supervisory committee must hold some form of Graduate Faculty status (your Supervisory Chair must have full Graduate Faculty status, Grad Faculty Associates can serve on committee but cannot chair them). In general, any Professor in a tenure-track position is automatically graduate faculty, but this is not true of all Professor positions. Professors of Practice do not always have Graduate Faculty status (as of May 2026, all of the Professors of Practice in the Department of Psychology hold Graduate Faculty Associate status and are eligible to serve on committees), nor do Research Professors (though some do). If you are unsure about the status of someone you're hoping to ask you can always ask the Graduate Chair to look this up and confirm for you.

-In rare instances, students have requested faculty on their committee from outside of the University of Nebraska system. This is possible though that individual becomes an additional special member of the committee and does not serve in any of the other required member/outside representative roles. Given this is rare we do not document this process here, but you can ask the Graduate Chair for details or make an inquiry at the Office of Graduate Studies for how to pursue this.

-If your supervisory committee ever changes, there is a separate Change of Supervisory Committee form to fill out. Do not submit a second Appointment of Supervisory Committee form, use the Change form if warranted.

Program of Studies

Timeline

-Once you've established a supervisory committee, it is helpful to meet as a committee soon thereafter to discuss and approve the Program of Studies. This form must be completed prior to the completion of half of the required coursework listed on the form. The minimum number of credit hours for the PhD is 90 and based on the Memorandum of Courses, you will already have completed 30-36 credits, so the Program of Studies should be submitted quite soon after you have completed your MERP. There is no "hard" deadline for this and you need only be mindful of submitting before you've completed half of the courses listed on the form.

Filling out the form

-As with the Memorandum of courses, remember that this document is your course contract for completing the PhD and is not intended to be an exhaustive listing of every course you have taken or will take.

-It is the responsibility of the student, advisor, and supervisory committee to ensure that all department/program/accreditation course requirements for the PhD are listed on the Program of Studies form. The Graduate Chair will double check that all Department requirements are reflected on the form but the Graduate Chair and OGS do not necessarily know all classes that need to be listed to satisfy program/accreditation requirements.

-The Program of Studies form requires a minimum of 90 credits and though there is no cap on the number of credits that can appear on this form, you definitely should not be listing more than 120 credits (though our students receive stipends, some students opt to take on additional Financial Aid in the form of loans and 120 credits is the point at which Financial Aid gets worried about progress, so no more than 120 credits has long been best practice with OGS). There is no advantage to filling out more than 90 credits. All courses you ultimately take are listed on your transcript, but do not all need to be reflected on the POS form. We do not prevent students from submitting the documents with more credits than 90, but keep in mind that the more things you list on these forms, the greater the likelihood you'll have to later file an amendment to these forms (e.g. if you listed a class you intended to take and either changed your mind about, or the course was not offered at a time you could take it). If you have courses on the Program of Studies that you have not taken when you apply for graduation, OGS will flag it and request you file an amendment to those forms. But if this happens fairly close to graduation (you apply to graduate early in the term but it takes OGS quite some time to review all paperwork of everyone applying to graduate), it actually risks impacting your ability to graduate in a given semester. So you may want to consider only putting courses on the POS form that you are fairly certain will be offered and that you are sure you will take. If you're unsure about taking a course or don't know frequency of offering, consider leaving it off the forms (you can still take the course, you

just won't risk delaying anything if you ultimately don't take the course but had it listed on the POS). Do not use this form as a way to document all of your classes, there is no advantage to doing so. When you're getting ready to apply for graduation, always a good idea to look back at those forms to confirm you have taken everything you said you would (if you haven't, get an amendment in sooner rather than later).

-Though you should aim to get this form in before you have completed half the courses listed on it, sometimes understandable delays prevent this. While OGS may push back on paperwork it receives if all coursework/credit hours for the degree have already been taken at the time the form is filed, they are generally open to context/explanation as to why the document is being received with less than half of the coursework/credit hours remaining (e.g. you've completed 54 hours and only have 36 remaining on the form). If you are submitting the POS later than anticipated, please do not think that you are obligated to list 45 or more credits still to be taken on that document. Rather, just list the coursework/credit hours that will get you to the minimum 90 credits (even if less than 45 remaining) and provide extra context to OGS if they request it.

-All of the courses you list on the Memorandum of Courses can also be listed on the Program of Studies. Some graduate students get confused about this because they hear something different from friends in other programs. The confusion stems from the fact that OGS has explicit rules that do not allow you to use the same course for multiple degrees, but that is when those degrees are entirely separate. Technically speaking, Psychology does not have a Master's program (there is no option for students to apply for a terminal Master's only, students we admit are admitted directly to the PhD program and earn the Master's along the way as part of that process) and so all the courses are technically part of the same degree. So everything listed on the MOC can indeed also be listed on the POS and hopefully the above context helps explain why you may hear something different from students in other programs or students pursuing multiple unrelated advanced degrees.

-Traditionally, 800-level Psychology courses could not be listed on a Program of Studies even though 800-level courses from any other Department can be listed on the Program of Studies. Graduate Executive Committee has initiated a process which permits approved 800-level Psychology courses to appear on a Program of Studies. Please see the Appendix on 800-level courses and Program of Studies at the end of this document for more context on this and for a list of the Psychology course/instructor combinations that are permitted on the Program of Studies.

Comprehensive Examination and Candidacy

-There is no form that needs to be submitted at the Department or OGS level in advance of your comprehensive exams. Rather, you should be meeting with your supervisory committee to determine what form your comprehensive exams will take (see the section in this document on comprehensive exam options). The only paperwork pertaining to your comprehensive exams comes immediately after you have completed them and they have been approved by your committee. At that point you will want to file your Application for Admission to Candidacy paperwork.

Application for Admission to Candidacy Paperwork

Timeline

Immediately after your comprehensive exams have been completed and approved by your committee

Filling out the form

-Fill out all of your information including the date at which the comps were approved by the committee. You will also be asked to indicate when you anticipate receiving the PhD, this is not a hard deadline and can change for any number of reasons, but OGS likes to have a sense of when graduations are expected as they track this across all colleges/departments.

Application for Final Oral Examination

Timeline

-This needs to be submitted a minimum **2 weeks** prior to your defense date and we recommend getting it in considerably earlier whenever possible. Unlike the Final Oral Examination form for the Master's, this form requires everyone but your outside representative to sign off. That means you will want to have provided a fairly complete draft of your thesis to your committee, and they will have to have had time to review it before their signature is requested. As such, we recommend getting a draft of the thesis to your committee **4 weeks** before your defense date. Many faculty are not willing to sign this form unless they have had time to review the thesis to ensure it is in good shape for the defense. So official signatures can be collected 2 weeks out, but the committee should have had a copy of the thesis for at least 2 weeks prior to signature collection.

-It is rarely the case that a student defends and then the committee just approves everything as is. It is very common for the committee to request additions/changes to the thesis document itself. This means you do not want to defend on the last possible day of the semester because even if the defense goes well, the final piece of paperwork that

follows this is the Report of Completion, and committee members only sign that when they are satisfied with the document. Schedule your defense in a manner that leaves you at least a week for final corrections and changes.

Filling out the form

-Fill out all required information on the form. Please then email this form directly to Pam Waldvogel (pwaldvogel@unl.edu) to set up for DocuSign, as well as the Graduate Chair. Make sure you fill out the names of all committee members in the requested section so that we can collect signatures from everyone listed (only the Outside Representative does not sign at this stage). The Graduate Chair also uses the information on this form to send out an announcement of your defense to the Department. If you are defending via zoom, or doing a hybrid defense that is in person with a zoom feed, please also provide the link to that zoom feed in the email.

Report of Completion

Timeline

As soon as possible post-defense, be mindful of the last possible day this form can be in while still qualifying you to graduate at the closest upcoming commencement.

Filling out the Form

This is the most straightforward form, so no additional guidance is required. Fill out all required information on the form. Please then email this form directly to Pam Waldvogel (pwaldvogel@unl.edu) to set up for DocuSign, as well as the Graduate Chair. Make sure you include the names of all committee members in the email when you send us the form so that we can collect signatures from everyone listed (do not assume we know who your committee members are and do not expect us to go through past paperwork to figure that out, you should always be providing this info to us so we have it immediately available). One common approach to ensure this form gets in as soon as possible post-defense is to have your advisor ask all committee member to sign off on the form immediately, with the advisor withholding their signature until the final document is satisfactory. This way we are only collecting a single final signature rather than having to rely on 5-6 people to sign in a brief time window.

Paperwork Summary Table

Master's Paperwork

Document	When to Submit	Best Practice
Memorandum of Courses	Spring Semester of your First Year	-Choose Option B, list between 30 and 36 credits (half should not yet be completed)
Application for Graduation	Not an official form, student completes this in myred at the beginning of the semester they intend to graduate/receive their Master's	-Beginning of the semester in which you intend to obtain the Master's (usually within the first two weeks) -No signatures to collect and no official form through the Department, entirely the student's responsibility in myred
Final Examination Report for the Master's Degree (Time A)	Minimum 4 weeks prior to your intended defense date (allow additional time for signature collection)	-Fill out all relevant information on Part 1 and Part 2 -Check box indicating written comprehensive exam is waived and oral exam must be taken -List Day/Time/Location for Defense and List Members of Committee -Note Committee Members do not sign at this stage, only the advisor and Graduate Chair. Master's Document should be to your committee no later than 2 weeks prior to defense
Final Examination Report for the Master's Degree (Time B)	Immediately after your defense is complete, prompt the Graduate Assistant to send the original form back out for Committee Members to Sign	-Advisor and Committee Members need to check the box indicating pass/no pass and sign in the relevant field -Advisor also signs in an additional place to approve the written document

PhD Paperwork

Document	When to Submit	Best Practice
Appointment of Supervisory Committee	Near the end of the MERP project or soon after completing the MERP	-Committee requires minimum 4 members, your advisor, 2 additional faculty members (often in Psychology), and an Outside Representative from a Department other than Psychology -All members must have Graduate Faculty or Graduate Faculty Associate status, you can check with the Graduate Chair if you are unsure whether someone holds this status -Special Outside Members from other Universities are sometimes allowed, see information on that in best practices document -Separate Change of Supervisory Committee form if anything changes, never submit the Appointment of Supervisory Committee form a second time
Program of Studies	Once your Supervisory Committee is established, schedule a meeting with the committee right away to discuss/approve the Program of Studies, then officially submit the form to the Department for signatures and routing	-Courses from your Memorandum of Courses for the Master's can and should appear on your Program of Studies as courses already taken -The Program of Studies is not an exhaustive list of everything you've taken or will take, it is your course contract for completing the dissertation. Do not list classes you're unsure about. -Form requires a minimum 90 credits, no advantage to listing more than that though fine if you do
Application for Admission to Candidacy	After your comprehensive examination has been completed and approved by your committee	-Be sure to list the date at which your comps were approved -You will be asked to list when you anticipate receiving your PhD but this is not a hard deadline, OGS just tracks in general so they can anticipate whether they might have larger than expected commencements some semesters

Application for Final Oral Exam	Minimum 2 weeks prior to your intended defense date (allow additional time for signature collection)	-Be sure to get a full draft of your thesis to your committee at least 2 weeks before they have to sign this form (so at least a month prior to the defense), committee members do not just sign this form blindly, they need to be assured the full document is finished or near finished -Be sure to list the names of all committee members, including the Outside Representative, on this form
Report of Completion	As soon as possible post-defense Be mindful of the last possible day this form can be in while still qualifying you to graduate at the closest upcoming commencement. OGS updates their semester dates each term for your reference	-Generally ideal to have all committee members sign right away. If there are changes to be made to your document, your advisor should withhold their signature until everything is completed/approved

Supervisory Committee Meetings

Typically, in the middle or end of the second year, students request permission to set up their doctoral supervisory committee. The exact timing depends on the program and the progress and needs of a particular student. When the advisor and student determine they are ready for a supervisory committee, the advisor makes this request to the program coordinator and they will have Graduate Executive Committee discuss and approve these at their next meeting. Program coordinators will generally reach out 2-3 times a year (in advance of Graduate Executive Committee meetings) to ask faculty if any of their students are in need of committees but please note that the request to be approved for a supervisory committee can be made at any time. Students who are approved will receive a letter with instructions on setting up the committee. Students work with their advisor to select a committee and complete the necessary paperwork that is signed by the Graduate Chair. Upon approval of the members of the committee from Graduate Studies, the committee meets, within three weeks if at all possible. For most students, the supervisory committee becomes the dissertation committee, often with some adjustment in membership to meet the needs for the dissertation.

Who can be on a Supervisory Committee?

The Supervisory Committee consists of at least four faculty. The chair and two of the faculty must be graduate faculty in the Department of Psychology. The fourth member must be both graduate faculty and a member of a different department. Some students will have a co-chair who is not in psychology. Some faculty, such as law-psych faculty, may be considered either inside or outside the department. If you are considering a committee member from another NU campus, an adjunct faculty, or anyone who is not a full-time UNL faculty member, check ahead of time to be sure they are eligible to serve (all members require graduate faculty status). Sometimes adjunct faculty can qualify if they go through an approval process to be graduate associates. If someone not eligible to be a formal member of a dissertation committee is central to the research, they may serve on the committee in an advisory capacity without playing a role in the evaluation or appearing on the paperwork. Programs may have additional requirements about who should be on the committee. For example, the clinical programs requires two clinical faculty.

Agenda for the Supervisory Committee Meeting

The first Supervisory Committee meeting tends to follow a standard agenda.

1. Chair opens the meeting and student briefly describes their progress to date and career goals.
2. Review of the proposed [Doctoral Program of Studies form](#).
3. Discussion of likely format and scope of comprehensive exams.
4. Discussion of dissertation timeline, if known.
5. Omnibus motion to give the chair power to make changes to the program of studies or add/remove committee members, except the chair, without reconvening the committee.

Comprehensive Exams

One of the most important milestones on the way to obtaining the PhD is the completion of the Comprehensive Exams. Successful completion of the Comprehensive Exam is what qualifies you for candidacy for the PhD. In general, there have been 3 standard options for Comprehensive Exams though please note that other formats are possible and this will be described after the standard options

- 1) **Grant Proposal.** One of the most common formats for the Comprehensive Exams is a Grant Proposal. Both NIH (e.g. F31) and NSF (GRFP) offer grants to support graduate student research and these documents are quite similar to the types of grants you may also apply for if you end up pursuing a career in research and/or academics. Though you may be able to take a seminar in grant-writing at the University, and/or assist your supervisor in putting together a larger research grant, there are few formal training opportunities for pursuing grants during your PhD training. This makes a grant proposal a wonderful Comps option as you would work with your advisor to put this together and obtain experience not just putting together a substantial proposal, but also preparing the myriad supplementary documents these mechanisms require. Generally speaking, the grant proposal should be submitted so that you can be considered for funding (if you're doing all that work it makes sense to try to actually obtain the grant) and most of these mechanisms have a few different submission deadlines each year that you can plan around. Please note that there is NO requirement to actually obtain a grant, rather your supervisory committee must approve the grant proposal and all associated documents in order for you to pass your Comps (your advisor may still ask you to "defend" your Comps in some form of oral presentation but that is not a strict requirement for a grant proposal). Please note that some students are not eligible for the grant mechanisms outlined above (e.g. non-U.S. citizens) and would therefore not be eligible to formally submit the grant application, but you can still pursue this mechanism for your Comps independent of whether the proposal is formally submitted. Some students have also found similar grant mechanisms through other agencies and foundations, and it may be fine to pursue one of these instead, but your advisor and supervisory committee will need to determine whether those mechanisms are appropriate in scope for your comprehensive exams. If these are not deemed appropriate in scope/workload (e.g. some foundation grants only require 1-2 page proposals, that alone would not suffice for your Comprehensive Exams), you may be asked to prepare some additional documents to supplement the proposal itself.

- 2) **Review Paper** – Some students opt to pursue a review paper as their Comprehensive Exams. The expectation would be that you are putting together a substantial review of a research area that could be submitted for publication in one of the flagship journals in your field (and hopefully is ultimately published which is an additional benefit of this option). This usually goes beyond just a summary of the literature with the expectation being that the review also considers theoretical perspectives (e.g. comparing and contrasting between theories while reviewing the appropriate evidence for each), recent advances, questions left unanswered, directions for future research, etc. One advantage of this mechanism is the literature review itself is likely to be highly relevant to your dissertation and parts of it could surely be plugged directly into your dissertation introduction. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the Comprehensive Exam Review Paper CANNOT simply be the introduction of your dissertation. You separately have to complete a dissertation proposal and the dissertation document itself, the Comps is a substantial document in addition to that. If the type of review paper you would write would be more of a straightforward summary, your supervisory committee may request additional documents/tasks to ensure the Comps are appropriate in terms of scope and workload.
- 3) **Oral/Written Exam** – This option is rarely ever used anymore but was a fairly standard option for many of your Professors/Advisors when they obtained their PhD! The oral/written exam option usually requires the student to develop a reading list of a considerable number of articles in their area, which is then supplemented and approved by the supervisory committee. Then the student is tasked with developing a complete knowledge of those readings, followed by having these tested in either an oral (supervisory committee asks a series of questions the student has to answer over the course of a single long oral defense) or written (committee provided students with various questions they need to answer in written form in a prescribed timeline) fashion. This mechanism has the benefit of ensuring the student becomes an expert in their field as their knowledge will be tested extensively, with the downside being this version of Comps does not result in a final product that can benefit the student beyond their knowledge base. The Grant Proposal option gets you grant-writing experience and may even lead to a grant being awarded. The Review Paper option can hopefully lead to a published review paper which would benefit your publication record and your visibility as an expert in the field. The Oral/Written exam is self-contained and primarily for your own knowledge base, which is why this option has been pursued less frequently in recent years. It is always helpful when your training milestones can benefit you in more ways than one which is why the other Comps options have become more of the norm.

- 4) **Other options** – Though the options listed above are the most common and a good start point for thinking through your Comprehensive Exams, there are other options and the critical thing to do is consult with your supervisory committee and your advisor if you want to do something a bit out of the norm. So long as your Supervisory Committee feels that what you are doing is sufficient in scope, depth, and workload, then any other number of things could be approved for Comps. One student who was initially focused on a research career and then changed to wanting to do something teaching focused rather late in their training, did a Comps wherein they prepared an augmented teaching portfolio with a number of supplementary written documents in addition to doing a research-based teaching project in a class they were the instructor for which led to a publication in a teaching-focused journal. Another student who decided to pursue industry for their career, did a Comps that required them to learn a new technique through course work and additional independent activities (machine learning) and then created a massive online tutorial review guiding researchers through this process. You are certainly allowed to consider Comps options that are beyond what are traditionally offered so long as your advisor and your Supervisory Committee approve the idea in advance and then approve the final Comps document.

Dissertation Proposal

Within Department, all programs require a formal written thesis proposal in advance of the final dissertation document. This is not a requirement at the OGS level and there is no paperwork attached to completion of the proposal. Though there is no official deadline for when the proposal needs to be submitted to an approved by your committee, there are a number of reasons you should complete this as early as possible.

- 1) First and foremost, a dissertation is an absolutely massive document that takes considerable time and effort to write. Your dissertation proposal will essentially form the introduction and methods of your final dissertation (though you'll have to change the written tense from future to past once it is in the dissertation itself) making it possible to write in stages rather rushing everything at the end. This is particularly advantageous if you intend to be on the job/post doc/internship market during your last year in the program. Applications, preparing job talks, and going out on interviews takes away a lot of your time in your final year and having already written a big chunk of the actual dissertation document helps keep the remaining workload more manageable under these conditions.
- 2) Your committee will be better able to identify potential issues/confounds with your design, suggest additional measures/approaches/analyses, and communicate their

expectations around the final project when they receive the dissertation proposal early in the process. While your committee may approve your general idea initially in the absence of the written proposal (allowing you to get a start on IRB and/or data collection), they will be better positioned to offer up feedback when having the chance to review the entire document.

- 3) The very process of writing the proposal often makes you think about your research in a specific and organized fashion rather than a broad and general one. This will also make it easier for you to identify whether you need to be changing your approach, your measures, your analyses, etc. before it is too late to do so.

Because the proposal is not an OGS requirement with associated paperwork, it can be easy for students to trick themselves into thinking the proposal is not an important step, but for all the aforementioned reasons and more, it is a really valuable part of the process that better ensures the later final dissertation document will be of high quality. You want to look back on your dissertation as something you are proud of and you are much more likely to do so if you take on the proposal early in the process rather than rushing to complete it close to the end of your project.

Finishing the Degree As A Part-Time Student

Generally speaking, all full-time graduate students in department receive an assistantship and tuition waiver (Clinical students: When you are getting ready to go on internship you will receive specific guidance from the program in the form of a gold card that is issued to students once they have completed other major benchmarks of the program). In a small number of cases, students are course complete and have completed all other PhD benchmarks completed (commonly referred to as All-But-Dissertation or ABD) and opt to finish the degree not as a full-time student. This can be for any number of reasons and is generally something decided in consultation with the advisor...examples of these situations include beginning a new job, family/personal reasons, being outside of the guaranteed funding window, etc. This is only possible if you have already been admitted to candidacy (e.g. finished comprehensive exams for the doctoral degree and submitted the relevant paperwork) and have completed all other research benchmarks. In these cases, you are not considered a full-time student and are not eligible for an assistantship or tuition waiver. Nonetheless, it is imperative that you continue to sign up for at least one credit hour each academic semester (fall and spring, not a requirement in the summer) while you are away and until you receive your PhD. You will need to pay for this single credit so this is not a long-term solution (e.g. you wouldn't want to do this over a multi-year period) but continuous enrollment is required on the way to the PhD. once you are in candidacy. If you enroll for more than one credit while not a full-time student, you may incur considerable

additional expense. Please note that there are additional considerations around these decisions that can impact things like student loans and health insurance availability, so it is important that you talk to your advisor, the Graduate Chair, and the Office of Graduate Studies to ensure that you fully understand all variables relevant to finishing up if no longer full time. **For example, to qualify for ABD status, you must have completed all courses on your Program of Studies and are now solely registering for dissertation hours to maintain continuous registration. You cannot have any incompletes in any of your courses, outside of 999 (incompletes on 999 credit is allowable as some advisors do not award a P/NP decision on 999 credit until the student has finished the dissertation). If you have a course on your Program of Studies form that you have not taken (or are replacing with something else), you need to submit an amendment to your Program of Studies form to be eligible for this.**

Grad in absentia status

If you opt to finish your degree as a non-full-time student and have moved out-of-state (or if you are a Clinical Student on internship out-of-state), you should also be aware of Grad In Absentia status. Tuition and student fees differ for students in-state vs. out-of-state and Grad in Absentia status allows you to waive the non-resident portion of your tuition costs such that you would only pay the resident portion of tuition. To be eligible for this (as with ABD status above), you must have completed all courses on your Program of Studies form (only 999 credit can remain as an incomplete). Please remember that the Program of Studies form does not have to list every course you have taken/will take but it is your contract for completing the PhD. If you have a course on your Program of Studies form that you have not taken, you will need to file an amendment to have that course removed from your Program of Studies in order to be eligible for Grad in Absentia status. So long as you qualify, you would email the Office of Graduate Studies to request this status.

Miscellaneous

Academic Leave of Absence

Occasionally life circumstances disrupt a student's progress towards their degree. There is a [formal leave of absence policy](#) and paperwork to request a formal leave. If you find yourself considering a leave, the first step is to talk with your advisor. Sometimes through a combination of reduced workload, adjusted research deadlines, and incompletes in coursework, you can take care of what is needed without a formal leave. However, sometimes a formal leave for a semester or academic year is needed. Work with your

advisor and program coordinator or head to take a break in a way that is least disruptive to your long-term success and allows for someone to cover any teaching, assistantship, or research responsibilities you may have. Note that a formal leave of absence could impact things like health care coverage so it is important to look into all factors when considering a leave. Please also note that the Office of Graduate Studies only approves leaves if a student is in good standing in the program, so a leave may not be possible if a student has a letter of concern or is on academic probation. That said, if a student is not in good standing due to issues that may necessitate a leave, the department may be able to offer an immediate leave of absence prior to or at the beginning of a probationary period if the student does not believe they will be able to meet the terms of probation due to the extenuating circumstances. Once any terms of probation have not been met, a leave is no longer an option. It is important to consult the formal leave of absence policy as leaves cannot be taken retroactively and generally must be requested prior to the first Friday of classes of a current semester.

Advice for Students from Students

[Advice For Students From Students](#) links to a page originate on the Social and Cognitive program website as this was an initiative that began there. Often times senior graduate students will pass along tips to newer graduate students in a relatively informal fashion and this was an attempt to formalize this advice. Though it came out of the SC program, the advice is relevant to students in all programs and can be a useful resource for you if you are looking to obtain additional perspectives on a variety of topics. Note that not all of these tips will work or be applicable to each individual, but hearing advice from multiple different sources will help you to figure out which things are likely to work for you and which things are unlikely to work for you. Some of the tips may also contradict each other as different students have different perspectives and approaches. The point of this is not to provide you with the "correct" answer but to help you figure out things that work best for you. If you are a student who is looking for advice on a specific topic, feel free to email mdodd2@unl.edu and suggest it so I can add to this page. If you're a current or former graduate student, please pass along any helpful tips that you think would be worthwhile to have added.

Annual Evaluation

In the spring of each year you will be asked to submit a CV, an unofficial transcript (downloaded from myred) and a supplementary document that asks you to briefly summarize various activities of the past year. This is for annual evaluation purposes and you should receive an annual letter of evaluation each summer. Be sure to get your

materials in by the specified date. The Graduate Student Handbook contains additional information regarding the annual evaluation process.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

We are in a quickly evolving world and the number of technologies available to you is rapidly growing, with AI use in particular becoming more prominent in multiple fields. For the purposes of your PhD training, however, it is important to keep the following in mind: You are being trained to think critically; establish novel and theoretically constrained empirical ideas; develop programs and paradigms (often requiring computer programming knowledge); interact and collaborate with students, faculty, and the community; learn and understand literature and theory, and analyze data in a logical and thoughtful manner. These are all skills that one needs to work on continuously to develop and maintain and while using AI to assist with these things might seem like a useful short-term solution, the negative long-term ramifications for your knowledge base and skillset are vast. This is not to say AI cannot be useful for some tasks: helping to change the tense of your dissertation proposal from future to past tense for the purpose of the dissertation document; as a starting point to generate a creative title for a publication; to assist if you are having difficult figuring out where an error is in your computer program, etc., but AI use should always be approached with caution and with consideration of how it can negatively impact your development as an independent scientist. The Department is currently discussing whether we will be establishing a formal AI policy but in the interim you should always consult with your faculty advisor as it relates to any form of AI use.

Commencement

- 1) You will have the opportunity to walk at commencement to receive both your MA degree and the PhD. To do so, you need to apply to graduate in the semester you intend to walk for the degree. This is done in myred and is solely on the student to ensure they complete the necessary form (doesn't go through the Department and no prompts on this at the Department level). Generally you need to apply within the first couple of weeks of the semester.
- 2) Graduate advisors are expected to attend the PhD commencement where you are hooded (they will be with you on stage), but it is very rare/uncommon for advisors to attend the MA ceremony.
- 3) If an advisor cannot attend the PhD commencement, it is important to let the Graduate Chair know this in advance so that another department representative can be there for the hooding. This could be the Graduate Chair or another Department faculty member.

Conflict and Grievance Resolution

Conflict and grievances are a potential aspect of interpersonal relationships in an academic department. The Department is committed to building a culture that directly addresses conflict and grievances amongst graduate students and faculty in a manner that builds a more collaborative, healthy working environment. Please see the graduate handbook for internal conflict management procedures. The internal conflict management procedures are reviewed and updated on an annual basis. If internal attempts at conflict or grievance resolution are unsuccessful, people may file reports, grievances, or grade appeals using formal University processes. The Office of Graduate Studies has had an Ombudsperson that Graduate Students could consult with outside of the Department, but that individual recently retired and we do not yet know whether a new Ombudsperson will be designated. If not, you should consider reaching out to Student Advocacy who can play a similar role.

Department Talks and Brown Bags

There are a number of brown bag sessions in the department that are generally open to all and you can find a listing of these on the [Resources](#) page. Please note that the PARLOR brown bag is the main all-Department session and all students and faculty are encouraged to attend (free lunch at these sessions). Beyond these, there are a variety of other types of talks that you will see announced at the department level. Job talks, guest speakers, seminars, etc. are all valuable things to attend. Graduate Students are particularly encouraged to attend job talks by prospective faculty in our Department. Not only will you have opportunity to provide feedback on prospective candidates, but seeing job talks is very helpful when it comes to putting together a job talk of your own near the end of your training.

Funding and contracts

So long as acceptable progress is made in the program and you maintain good standing, students receive funding in the form of a TA/RA placement, community placement, or some similar form of contract. Please note that the offer of these positions is essentially a job offer and it is critical that you sign your contracts and return them in a timely manner, both to maintain your funding and to receive your tuition waiver. Funding offers will have a deadline attached to them, either in the offer itself or in the email you receive when you are asked to Docusign your contract. It is important that you stay aware of offer deadlines and sign your contract in advance of the deadline. If you have additional questions or concerns, you should feel free to raise those right away. Failure to sign a contract by the offer deadline increases the risk that that offer/funding could be revoked.

Graduate Teaching Plan/Calendar

Graduate Executive Committee maintains a tentative Graduate Teaching Plan, which is revisited and updated after either our January or May meetings (the link to this is on the Graduate Student Resources page and not in this document because the link changes every time we update it). Though this is intended as a document to help students plan for when courses will be offered, it is important to note that the calendar is a work in progress and can change at any time based on numerous factors. If you see a "?" next to an offering that may be an indication that we are unsure if a specific course will be offered or if the individual listed will be teaching that course. Please also note that just because a course is not listed here does not necessarily mean it will not be offered. It is always important to check what the current course offerings are each term when enrolling for courses. Each time the calendar is updated, a new read-only copy will be uploaded here. Feel free to reach out to the Graduate Chair or Associate Chair in charge of course scheduling with any questions about offerings.

Health Insurance

As a graduate student, you are automatically enrolled each semester with UnitedHealthcare to cover medical, mental health, dental, and prescription insurance ***(Important: If you receive an external grant such as an NSF GRFP or an NIH F31, you are not automatically enrolled and there is a separate process you need to undertake to ensure you receive coverage, please consult with the Office of Graduate Studies in these instances)***. If you have other qualifying insurance and wish to waive the insurance assigned to you by UNL, you must take action to cancel the insurance and you are required to do so in both the Fall and Spring Semesters. Information on health care and how to waive University insurance (you would need to provide proof of your other qualifying insurance, you cannot just opt out and not have anything) can be found [HERE](#).

It is important to note that in some situations, challenges can arise and students may find that they need more support/guidance in navigating their health care needs. The best contact in this situation is the UHCSR advocates email (unebraskaadvocates@uhcsr.com). Please also feel free to contact the graduate chair with additional questions/issues. Though the graduate chair is not in a position to answer specific questions surrounding health care and related processes, they will often have additional contact information for people who may be able to help/advocate for you.

Miscellaneous Logistics

Please see the Graduate Handbook for information on Keys and Building Access, room Scheduling, Email Accounts, Address and Phone Changes, Copy Requests, and Course Evaluations when you instruct a course

Summers

Two very important notes on the Summer semester

- 1) There is no firm requirement to enroll in classes or research credit in the summer in most programs, though there are exceptions to this (e.g. Clinical students are often enrolled over the summer) and please see additional guidance on enrolling in the summer in the “Tuition Waiver” section below as you will likely want to enroll in a minimum 5 credits if receiving any form of summer funding from us.
- 2) Faculty are not required to work over the summer, though many do. It is critically important, however, that you **DO NOT ASSUME** you will be able to a) hold supervisory committee meetings over the summer, b) receive feedback or have documents reviewed over the summer, or c) schedule a defense of your MERP or dissertation in the summer, unless you have previously discussed and cleared this with your committee. If you do not meet the deadline to defend in the Spring, you cannot just assume that this automatically means you can defend in the Summer. Your committee must agree to a summer defense/review of your MERP/Dissertation document for this to occur and they are not obligated to do so (an increasing number of faculty aim to protect their time off contract in the summer for a variety of reasons). It is always ideal to aim to hold meetings in the Fall or the Spring so that you do not have to worry about this. If it is looking like you will need to defend or meet in the summer, you need to first get permission from your advisor and committee members. If they do not agree, you would need to defend/meet in the fall.

Travel

As a graduate student you may have the opportunity to travel to present your research at national and international conferences, to attend meetings or trainings, or to engage in research activities. Please note that the University has a number of policies around travel that everyone in Department needs to follow (for example, Graduate Students always require travel insurance and you can find more information on that below in the section on Research and Travel Funds). It is a good idea to review the travel policies of the University

each time you are intending to travel as these often change and require you to fill out a lot of information (for example, you need to do a Trip Approval form in Concur prior to any travel and are not supposed to book anything until that form is approved). A full breakdown of all travel policies is beyond the scope of this document you can find everything you need with the following links:

nebraska.edu/offices/travel

nebraska.edu/offices/travel/travel-process

Tuition waiver

- 1) If you are receiving funding from the Department (in the form of a TA/RA/Community placement), you also receive a full tuition waiver. The waiver is good for up to 12 credits each semester (fall, spring, summer)
- 2) **As a full-time graduate student, you are expected to enroll in a minimum 9 credit hours each semester.** If you enroll in more than 12 credits, you will receive a tuition bill for any credits not covered by the tuition waiver, and you would be responsible for paying this.
- 3) There is no requirement to enroll in the summer. If you are receiving any funding from the Department over the summer, it is recommended that you enroll in a minimum 5 credit hours to avoid paying FICA taxes on your assistantship. Please also note that if you intend to apply for research funds (next section) over the summer, you are required to be enrolled in a minimum 1-credit to be eligible for this.
- 4) Students do not generally enroll in more than 6 credit hours in the summer, even though the tuition waiver covers up to 12 credits. We do not recommend enrolling in more than 6 credit hours in the summer though it is useful to know you could in an extraordinary circumstance.

Research and Travel Funds

Independent of whether you ever apply to receive research/travel funds (the below is about our Department mechanism for this), please consult the “Travel” subheader in the previous section for links to general information that is critical anytime you are travelling (independent of whether you receive Department funds to do so. Please also see the Graduate Handbook and Graduate Student Resources webpage for a listing of various sources of support at the College, University, and Outside of the University. Within Department, there is a single support fund that is available to all, Warden funding.

Warden Funding. Approximately three times during the year, the Warden committee solicits requests from graduate students to apply for funds that can be used for travel and/or research costs. If your advisor has a grant that can help pay for conference travel and research costs, you should always default to that source first, but if you do not have additional funds available, you can apply for Warden funds up to twice a year (maximum one Warden Fellowship for Conference travel and up to one Warden Fellowship for Research support). Specific programs may have other funds available and this would be outlined in the respective program handbook. Warden Funds and some program specific funds share **common application deadlines** three times per academic year, for which both requests to support travel to conferences and requests for small grants to support a research project may be submitted. These three application deadlines are:

1. September 15th for travel or research activities between October 1st and January 31st.
2. January 30th for the period between February 1st and June 30th.
3. June 1st for the period between July 1st and September 30th. Please note that to apply for Warden funds in the summer, you need to be registered for at least a single credit in the summer. Summer registration is not required in our program but you will not be eligible for Warden funds in the summer if not enrolled in anything.

Note that these three funding periods slightly overlap the boundaries of both calendar and academic years.

Warden Policies - Travel

Applications for travel support from Warden funds are made using the [Request for Travel Fellowship](#) application form. Note that this form requires a signature from a Faculty Sponsor, and that applications will not be considered unless this item is completed.

Warden funds will support travel to **one conference per year, defined as the period between October 1st and September 30th**. Support will be given only to students who are **first authors** of accepted presentations or posters. The **maximum amount** of travel funding that can be reimbursed by Warden funds varies from year to year, mainly due to fluctuations in market conditions that affect the UNL Foundation source of those funds. In recent years, typical awards have been about \$225 but never higher than \$500.

Current university policy counts these travel fellowships (and the research monies described below) as financial aid. In certain situations in which a student has taken a maximum amount of loan money, the Warden money may count against them. If you may be in that situation, talk with the graduate program assistant before applying.

Receiving Your Travel Money

Travel money is given as a travel fellowship and will be provided to you in your monthly pay check if the request is approved (or perhaps the next month for trips that occur very late in a month). Prior to the trip, you must file a [Travel Authorization Form](#) and pay for travel insurance (see immediately below).

Travel Insurance

If you are traveling for a conference, graduate students are required to have travel insurance through the University. The insurance is inexpensive (something like 25 cents a day) but can only be purchased through a Cost Object number connected to a University Account. If your advisor is helping to cover any of your travel costs and has a cost object number that can be used for travel insurance, that is the best option. If not, there is a department cost object number we can provide you that can only be used for purchasing travel insurance, you can request that cost object number from Pam Waldvogel.

Warden Policies - Research

Applications for research support by either Warden or program funds require submission of a [Research Application form](#) (that requires a faculty sponsor signature) and attachment of a 1-2 page description of the project, including an explanation and justification of each budget item. Budget items that will NOT be considered for funding include payment for data entry or computer programming services or compensation for undergraduate research participants if they could be drawn from the SONA subject pool. Note that equipment purchased by any university funding source becomes the property of the Psychology Department (in the case of program funding, the program) once the research project is completed.

Warden funds support for general research is limited to \$500 per student during the academic year. While the application deadlines are the same as for travel support, money that is awarded may be spent any time during the modified academic year that the award is made (i.e., carried across the fall and spring periods) as long as it is spent by September 30th. Due to unpredictable fluctuations in the availability of Warden funds among the three annual funding periods, and the fluctuations in numbers of travel requests across different periods, **a request for research support cannot be submitted for Warden funding at the same deadline period in which a student has requested travel support.** However, a student who received travel support in the fall period (Sept. 30th – January 30th), may submit a research support request in either spring or summer periods. Given that need for research money may not coincide with the established Warden deadlines, requests

between the deadlines will be considered with an explanation for why the deadline could not be met.

Note that **Warden** funds for research must be spent within **one calendar year** of the start of the funding period in which the award was granted. Before making any purchases with Warden money, **check with the graduate program assistant to ensure you are abiding by all university purchasing rules.**

Research Compliance

Before receiving funding for projects that involve human participants or animal subjects, students must have appropriate certification of compliance. Copies of IRB or IACUC approval notices for research projects may be attached to the Warden application form if approval is complete at the time the application is submitted (the ideal case) or they need to be shown to the graduate program assistant when approval is obtained, in order to have the funds released.

Additional Training Opportunities in Department

Concentration in Quantitative Methods. Known informally as the “quant minor”, this is an opportunity to document specific training in statistics and methodology. When students meet with their supervisory committee to develop your program of studies, you can specify whether you wish to do quant minor. This [concentration](#) requires 18 hours of statistics and methodology classes and a comprehensive exam. See the [quant concentration website](#) for more information and reach out to Becca Brock with any questions. Note this is not an official university minor and should not be listed as such on the doctoral program of studies.

Diversity Concentration. The diversity concentration is for students who wish to document specific training in diversity – typically race/ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. The concentration requires 15 hours of coursework and presentation. The format and content of the presentation should be consistent with the student’s overall educational program (e.g., a research talk for psychologists, a lecture/teaching demonstration for an advanced undergraduate class, a clinical workshop). As with the quant minor, this is not an official university concentration and should not be listed as such on your program of studies. See Tierney Lorenz for more information.

Advanced Teaching Practicum. The department also offers an Advanced Teaching Practicum course (PSYC990). This course consists of an individually arranged contract between an advanced student and a faculty supervisor for the student to teach a course of their choosing. Because the course does not incur any costs for the department, you are free to choose the topic, number of credits (1-3), and the time of day, assuming classroom availability. You just need to plan far enough in advance, so the course is available when undergraduates register for classes. Check in 6-9 months ahead of time with the associate chair in charge of course scheduling if you are planning to take Advanced Teaching Practicum. Many students teach a small 400-level course in their area of interest. Others want the experience of teaching a particular course on their CV to round out their teaching portfolio in preparation for job application and may teach an additional section of a regular course. The faculty member supervisor helps plan and oversee the course, then provides a grade to the graduate chair at the end of the semester. Please note that you are not paid to teach any course offered as part of the Advanced Teaching Practicum, the practicum itself is considered a training/professional development opportunity. If teaching as part of your TAship or summer funding, you are always paid for it, so the Advanced Teaching Practicum should only be considered in the following circumstances: 1) If you want experience teaching a course or topic that we do not currently offer in department, 2) if you want total say and flexibility regarding when the course meets, 3) if you really want to teach a course

but do not feel you will hit the enrollment limit to proceed (it is a College of Arts and Sciences rule that a course needs a minimum 5 students in it to proceed, that does not apply to the teaching practicum). The advantages of the teaching practicum are a) being able to have a record/transcript of the experience (nothing appears on your transcript when you teach/TA otherwise though you can still list those experiences on your CV), b) the ability to teach whatever course you want, and c) the ability to offer it independent of enrollment (e.g., undergraduate classes need to hit a specific enrollment number to be offered and the course cannot proceed without that enrollment; that is not the case for the Advanced Teaching Practicum so long as at least one student is enrolled).

Additional Training Opportunities outside of the Department

Minors and specializations - Most other Departments offer Graduate Minors and it is possible to obtain a graduate minor if you think this would benefit you. A minor for the doctoral degree must include at least 15 credit hours with 6 hours in courses open exclusively to graduate students (900 level or 800 level without an undergraduate level counterpart). It may be taken in any department that has been approved to offer a major leading to a Master's degree. In addition, the minor for the doctorate in certain departments may be completed in a subdivision of the administrative department. Approved fields of study, which may be selected within each administrative department, must be approved by the Graduate Council for use as a minor. An example that some Psychology students have pursued is the Women and Gender's Studies minor, and some individuals also consider the Institute of Ethnic Studies graduate specialization. The Department does not recommend a graduate minor, but you are free to pursue any that you think would benefit your training and future career opportunities. It would be useful to discuss the value of a minor with both your advisor and the Graduate Chair from the department you are considering.

Certifications, seminars, one-off experiences - Both the Graduate College and a number of other units on campus (e.g. the Center for Transformative Teaching) offer a series of certifications, one-off experiences, and additional trainings (e.g. writing groups/retreats, grant writing workshops). The list is far too exhaustive to include everything here and new opportunities arise all the time, so always be on the lookout for communications around opportunities that may further benefit you. Though we do not require any of these additional experiences, the University offers a large number of them, and you should consider pursuing anything that you think can benefit you. Again, this would be a valuable thing to discuss with your advisor.

Preparing Future Faculty program - The University offers [a Preparing Future Faculty](#) program for students considering careers in academia. The program has both in person-sessions with others in the cohort in addition to opportunities to connect with a faculty member at a Nebraska institution other than UNL. On average, 2-4 of our students have pursued this program each summer and everyone who has taken it has strongly recommended it and felt it benefited them considerably. This is a summer program intended for more senior graduate students, so it is something that is usually only considered following your third year in the program at the earliest. The Graduate Chair will email out information on the program in the spring of each year, and students who are interested need to let the Graduate Chair know as they ultimately have to put in all student nominations for the program. You will want to send on what year in the program you are in, when your anticipated graduate date is, and your NUID. If you are not accepted into the program in a given year we will prioritize you for the program in a future year.

Teaching

All graduate students will engage in teaching at some point during their time here, either in a TA capacity, an instructor-of-record, and/or in non-classroom capacities such as research mentorship. There are a variety of best practices for teaching that are important to keep in mind.

Teaching and Teaching Assistantships

Many of you are planning careers that will include classroom teaching, either as a primary activity at a 4-year college, a component of a faculty position at a research university, or giving workshops or training in applied settings. There are numerous opportunities to prepare for teaching including coursework, teaching assistantships, and course instructor positions. PSYC 974 – Teaching Methods in Psychology is a department requirement that you will all take as part of your MOC/POS, typically your first fall on campus. The seminar is designed as an introduction and overview of issues concerning teaching philosophy, methods, and practical challenges.

Teaching Assistantships

TA duties vary widely depending on the course to which you are assigned. Some TAs include teaching labs or recitations. Others are mostly behind the scenes work such as grading and administrative work. All teaching assistantships offer opportunities to learn about the nuts and bolts of teaching and working directly with undergraduate students. If your duties are mostly behind the scenes, many faculty members may ask you to provide a guest lecture or two in the class to get some classroom experience (and if this is not part of your duties but something you would be interested in obtaining experience with, you can ask the individual you are TAing for if they would be amenable to let you give a guest lecture). Understanding clearly what is expected of you as a TA from the faculty member who is teaching the course is essential. A conversation before the course begins or early in the semester is always wise for clarifying roles and responsibilities. As a TA, you will often be expected to use Canvas, the course management system. There are excellent online tutorials and in-person trainings if needed. In addition, if you are one of several TAs associated with a single course (such as Introduction to Psychology [PSYC 181] or Research Methods and Analysis [PSYC 350]), you will find other teaching assistants to be helpful sources of information and support, especially if they have taught the course previously. Finally, keep in mind that the departmental office staff (including the work-study assistants) can be helpful sources of information about everything from how to copy handouts to what to do with course rosters and class evaluations. For example, scanning services was recently shuttered at the university (though the alternative many of us use,

Akindi, is very straightforward, easy to use, and most importantly faster than our previous system, which has changed the manner in which certain exams can be administered in class, but office staff will be most up-to-date on current alternatives and other resources.

In some situations, you may be assigned a full TAsip for a single course, in other situations you may receive a half TAsip for two different courses. If you receive two half TAsips, you will want to make sure you meet early with the instructors for both courses to obtain an understanding of what you will be doing in each course and when your heaviest workload may be. Though not guaranteed, course instructors may be able to take into account your schedule in the other course when assigning you duties (e.g. if you are going to do a guest lecture, they might be able to schedule it at a period where you do not have a heavy workload in your other course). Communication is critical with course instructors so that everyone is on the same page.

If You Would Like TA Experience But Are Funded Primarily as an RA

Some students may find themselves primarily funded as an RA on their advisor's grant, or in a similar position in a community setting for which there is contracted work. These are wonderful experiences but do not necessarily give you teaching experience. If you are considering pursuing teaching as part of your later career, you should always feel comfortable talking to your advisor about this to see if it would be possible for you to obtain teaching or TA experiences. Summer teaching or TAing is often possible in these situations but your advisor may also be willing to let you TA for a semester before returning to RA activities. This is not a guarantee as sometimes a specific grant or contract may require you to engage primarily in RA duties, but many advisors are willing to figure out ways to get students teaching and/or TA experience, even if only for a semester or two.

Instructing Your Own Course

Summers are an excellent time to get additional teaching experience as the sole instructor (i.e., "instructor of record") or co-instructor of a course (typically with another graduate student). This provides summer funding for those on 10-month assistantships. Watch for an e-mail in late winter/early spring asking for those who wish to be considered for summer teaching position. Instructing your own course is a great way to build your teaching experiences beyond teaching assistantships, and there are also a number of excellent resources available to you in this regard (e.g. [The Center For Transformative Teaching](#)). Advanced students may also have opportunities to teach their own course for pay during the academic year, depending on departmental needs and funding.

An Important Note on Pay When Teaching and TAing in the Summer

Instructional money is paid out by the college/university and there is a specific policy that they pay you based on the days worked in each month, meaning they will not pay you in advance for a course that has not started yet. If you teach or TA in the first 5-week session, you will receive most of your money in June (when the bulk of teaching/TAing will occur) and the smaller remaining amount in July (when the rest of the teaching/TAing occurs). If you teach in the second 5-week session, you will not receive any money in June and will instead receive most of your money in July (when the bulk of teaching/TAing will occur) and the smaller remaining amount in August (where the rest of the teaching/TAing occurs). Even though the same amount of money is earned independent of whether the course occurs in the first or second 5-week session, not receiving any payment in June can be challenging. When you receive an offer with a teaching or TA assignment, it will indicate whether you are scheduled for the first or second 5-week session. If you have a concern or issue with teaching in the second 5-week session, please raise this with the Associate Chair in charge of course scheduling (this will be who reaches out to you to directly to inform you of your scheduled assistantship). Though not always possible, we will do our best to accommodate everyone to the best of our ability. Please note that the department has no way of circumventing the university pay structure/timeline.

Advanced Teaching Practicum

Please see information on this option in the Additional Training Opportunities in Department section of this document.

Information and Best Practices For Graduate Advisors/Instructors

Teaching Graduate Courses and Assigning Grades

Graduate Courses – The Department of Psychology rule is that only As and Bs represent passing grades in Graduate Classes. If you assign a student less than a B- (so C+ or lower), this is considered a failure for Department purposes, and the course would have to be retaken. You are free to assign any grade you choose in a graduate course but please keep this guideline in mind. This is not an Office of Graduate Studies rule, only a Department rule.

400/800 courses – If you are teaching a 400/800, the minimum passing grade for a graduate student (enrolled in the 800-part of the course) is a B. If you assign a student less than a B (so B- or lower), this is considered a failure and the course would have to be retaken. You are free to assign any grade you choose in a graduate course but please keep this guideline in mind. This is a general university rule that applies to all graduate students.

It is also important to note that when you are teaching a 400/800, there is a requirement that the graduate students in the 800-section complete extra work above and beyond what the undergraduates in the 400-section are doing. Usually graduate students are asked to complete an additional assignment that undergraduates do not have to complete, or the requirements for the graduate students are expanded (e.g. if there is a final paper in your course, graduate students may be asked to submit a paper that is double the length of the undergraduate expectations). You have considerable flexibility in terms of how you approach this so long as the graduate students are doing something above and beyond what the undergraduate students are doing.

If you teach a 400-level course, that does not mean you can just offer an 800 section automatically. Rather a request to add an 800-level section to an existing 400-level course would need to be formally submitted through the College Curriculum Committee (and there are numerous stages this needs to advance through meaning the process sometimes takes months).

Do you teach a 400/800 course that is essentially run like a graduate class? - Previously, 800-level courses in the Department of Psychology could not count on an individual Program of Studies for the dissertation (you could enroll in these courses, they just could not towards degree requirements). Graduate Executive Committee recognizes, however, that some of the 400/800 courses offered in department are structured similarly to graduate courses and offer experiences quite like our 900-level courses. We have reviewed

and approved a subset of course/instructor combinations that may now be counted on Program of Studies going forward. Any instructor who teaches a 400/800 that is run more like a graduate course should reach out to the Graduate Chair to inquire whether we can approve that course so that it can count on Program of Studies forms. The reason 800s had not traditionally been allowed in Department is that we do not have any standalone 800 courses, creating concern that 400/800 courses were not sufficiently advanced. Students can list 800 courses from any other Department, however, independent of whether they are standalone courses, so the ability to get a course approved for the Program of Studies could be useful if your course is sufficiently rigorous. Graduate Executive Committee has a rubric we have developed for making these decisions.

Teaching a course that we have not previously offered or changing something about a course we do offer – Department leadership is willing to hear about potential ideas for courses that we do not currently offer, particularly if they would be of considerable value to a large number of undergraduate students and/or graduate students. Current teaching needs often dictate whether it is possible to consider offering a new course, but if you have an idea for one you should discuss it with the Chair and Associate Chairs in the Department. Sometimes courses can initially be offered as special sections that do not require full Curriculum Committee approval, but for a course to become a part of the curriculum there is a fairly long and involved application process not covered in this document. The Graduate Chair is familiar with this process and can help guide it for both undergraduate and graduate courses. Similarly, if anything about a course needs to change (course title, course number), this goes through the same Curriculum Committee process and the Graduate Chair can assist (traditionally the Undergraduate Chair has also been able to help with this though the current Graduate Chair spent years on the College and University Curriculum Committees and is always willing to help with this as a result.

996/999 credit – Your graduate students enroll in these research credit mechanisms while pursuing their MERP and their PhD dissertation respectively. The grades for these courses tend to be P/NP (Pass or No Pass) and it is advisable to assign a P or NP at the end of each semester. Some advisors have taken the strategy of continually assigning I (Incomplete) for 999 credit and only replacing it with a P after the entire dissertation is complete. Though allowable, this is not advisable as a failure to correctly update the grade from an incomplete to a P in a timely fashion could impact the student's ability to graduate on the expected timeline. So long as the student is making progress and you are content with how they are progressing, a P is advisable. Assigning an I would make sense if you were unhappy with the student's progress in a given semester, but assigning an I in perpetuity until the dissertation is complete can create problems. Please note that if you do wish to assign an I grade, you will be asked whether it is an Incomplete with Progress or without

Progress (XP). Use of the XP mechanism is very rare and can have unintended consequences related to student loans, so XP should only be used in extreme situations and it is important to understand the potential ramifications for the student if you assign this. You can feel free to talk to the Graduate Chair about the XP mechanism if you want to use it, but again remember this is rare and an I is usually the correct choice in these cases.

Assigning Incompletes - If a student does not complete a course, you may opt to assign them a grade of incomplete with the expectation that they will complete remaining course work at some point in the near future. If you assign an incomplete, it is important to also develop a plan, a timeline, and a deadline for the student to satisfy the incomplete. Though Graduate Students are affiliated with the Office of Graduate Studies more so than the College of Arts and Sciences, our Department tends to follow the general CAS guidelines for assigning incompletes, which require the majority of work in the course to have been completed, with the expectation that the work associated with the Incomplete will be completed within a year at most.

Teaching a Graduate Course if you are not Graduate Faculty or a Graduate Faculty Associate

Generally Graduate Courses are taught by Graduate Faculty and/or Graduate Faculty Associates but occasionally exceptions are made to allow for Graduate Lecturers. If you are teaching a graduate class for us and are not Graduate Faculty or Graduate Faculty Associate, it is important to reach out to the Graduate Chair as early as possible so we can seek approval for you to lecture.

If a Student Enters our Program With a Master's Degree

If your graduate student enters our program with a Master's degree already, two things that need to be decided are a) are there any graduate courses they have already taken that would make sense to transfer in to count for the PhD degree, b) was their Master's thesis sufficient in topic area, length, and scope that it can be transferred in such that we waive our department MERP requirement.

Transferring in a course: If a student has already taken a course that is the same or similar to one of the courses we offer, it is possible to get that course transferred in. The process for doing so is to identify the commensurate UNL Psychology course and reach out to the instructor for that course, providing them a copy of that course syllabus and any other info/context you can. The instructor for the course at UNL ultimately makes the decision of whether a course can be transferred in. If they feel it is sufficiently similar and give the okay, that course can then be listed on the Program of Studies form in the "Transfer of

Credit” section. So if you have a student who entered the program with a previous Master’s, you will be able to talk them through this process (also outlined in the student sections of this document). And if you teach a Graduate Course, you should be aware that students may approach you to have you evaluate whether a previous course they took that is similar to yours, can be transferred in. As the course instructor, you have the decision to either approve or not. Please note that as an advisor you may still want your student to take a course they have taken previously and should discuss that with your student before they engage in transferring anything in (e.g. if they took the course years ago and a lot has changed in the area since). Please note that there is a separate internal process for determining whether students can bypass our initial stats sequence if they have considerable previous training, and questions regarding that should be directed to Becca Brock.

Transferring in a Master’s thesis: If a student has a previous Master’s, they may want to transfer that in so that they do not have to redo the MERP steps of the program. As an advisor, however, you should feel free to communicate to your student if you still think doing a MERP is a good idea. If a student is to bypass the MERP requirements here, they need to have completed an empirical Master’s thesis at another institution (does not have to be direct experimentation, can be secondary data analysis, just something similar to what the MERP accomplishes here) and it would need to be reviewed by two faculty in our department who would jointly determine if the previous thesis meets our general expectation. If you advise a student who entered with a Master’s, you would be one of the faculty reviewing the previous thesis and you should help to identify another faculty member who has the most relevant expertise and is best positioned to help make a determination of whether the thesis can be transferred in. It is advisable to make this decision early on in the student’s time here so they know right away whether they will still have to pursue a MERP project. There is no formal paperwork for transferring in a Master’s thesis, but we do document it in department. As such, after a decision is made, an email should be sent to both the Graduate Chair and Graduate Assistant that contains the approved thesis so that we can file a copy of it at the department level and update our spreadsheets to note that a MERP is no longer required. If you are asked by another faculty member to be the second faculty member reviewing the thesis, please be willing to help out as you are likely being asked due to your specific content expertise. If for some reason you are unable to be the second person to review the thesis, providing recommendations for alternative faculty would also be helpful.

Paperwork/Deadlines

Please review the paperwork section of this document any time your student is approaching a milestone that has associated paperwork. All information on correctly filling out paperwork and when it is due is covered in that section. It is important that both you and your trainees are mindful of OGS deadlines when scheduling things like the dissertation defense. There are OGS "Steps to Completion" pages for the Master's and Doctoral Degree and these are updated each semester to indicate relevant dates through the term, the most important being the latest date to defend/finish the Master's/PhD to be eligible to graduate in a given semester. You will want to be mindful of those dates when scheduling defenses and you'll want to be mindful of when paperwork is due to ensure these dates are met. Your student also needs to apply to walk at commencement fairly early in the semester they intend to receive their degree (in myred in the first week or two of the semester, this is on the student to do but important the supervisor is aware of it).

Supervisory Committee and Supervisory Committee Meetings

If you are helping your student put their Supervisory Committee together, it is important to know that all members must be Graduate Faculty or Graduate Faculty Associates. The typical committee consists of you, two other Psychology faculty, and an Outside member from a Department other than Psychology (this person can be from anywhere in the University of Nebraska System so long as they have GF or GFA status, allowing them to sit on committees. Traditionally every Psychology committee has a minimum 3 Psychology faculty but as training has gotten more interdisciplinary, we are sometimes seeing exceptions to this. A minimum 2 Psychology faculty is expected but if other folks in other departments make a lot of sense to be on the committee (beyond just a single external member), that is allowable. Special committee members can also be requested from outside the University in some cases and you can contact the Graduate Chair for more information on this.

Please be sure to designate which members of the committee will be the first and second readers of the thesis as this is important for later paperwork. If you are the Committee Chair, you cannot be one of the readers. This means in most situations, the other two Psychology faculty on the committee would be the first and second reader.

Supervisory committees can meet as much or as little as needed but at minimum there should be an initial meeting to review/approve the Program of Studies and Comprehensive Exams idea, approve the general topic/approach of the dissertation project (this could be done in the first meeting but students are not always sure what they are going to be doing at this point), review/approve the Comprehensive Exams (particularly if any form of oral

defense is required, if a grant proposal is pursued for Comps it may be possible to have the committee just approve the final document in the absence of an in person meeting), and for the final defense. Additional meetings can be scheduled at any point and you should schedule as many Supervisory Committee meetings as needed for the trainee.

You should always make sure at the end of the first Supervisory Committee meeting that someone on the committee proposes an Omnibus motion and someone else on the committee seconds it. The Omnibus motion gives the committee chair the power to make amendments to the Program of Studies, add/remove supervisory committee members, or adjust aspects of the dissertation project without the committee needing to reconvene/approve. There is no formal form or record of this, but this is standard practice that reduces the need for additional meetings.

An Important Note on Meeting/Reviewing Materials in the Summer: It is critical that you remember that faculty are not paid in the summer and as such, faculty are not always willing to meet in the summer or review a proposal or thesis document in the summer. This can be easy to forget if you are the type of faculty member that works all through the year, so it is imperative that you check with your student's other committee members to determine whether a summer defense (and review the MERP/Dissertation document) is feasible. Do not simply assume the committee will make the summer work just because you are willing to. If your student is aiming to complete and defend their MERP or PhD dissertation in the Spring and do not meet the required deadlines, the recommended guidance is for you as the advisor to check with other committee members independently to determine whether they are agreeable to also doing summer committee work. Do not let your student know that a summer defense is possible unless this has been agreed to in advance by all committee members. If there is a critical reason for a summer defense (e.g. the student has a job lined up beginning in the fall but did not meet the May graduation deadlines), be sure to provide that context as faculty will often try to be flexible in those situations.

Comprehensive Exams

The Comprehensive Exams section of this document lays out everything for students but there are a few things that are important for advisors and supervisory committees to keep in mind.

- 1) Though we have a few standard Comps options, there is considerable flexibility in terms of what students pursue for their comprehensive exams, so long as the Comps format is approved by the supervisory committee. Students and advisors/supervisory committees are allowed to be creative in terms of the Comps

option, particularly if a specific idea would directly benefit the student's subsequent career goals. See the Comprehensive Examination section of this document for students for some examples of other approaches that have been adopted for Comps.

- 2) There is a general expectation that the Comprehensive exams are considerable in terms of scope, workload, etc. If a student wants to pursue something for their Comps and the advisor/supervisory committee does not think that is sufficient, it is possible (and encouraged) to agree to additional tasks as part of the Comps. For example, most students who pursue the grant proposal option for Comps are using the NIH/NSF formats and granting mechanisms, but sometimes folks find a Foundation grant they could apply to that would make more sense. Given foundation grants tend to be much smaller in scope/work, the advisor/supervisory committee could still allow them to pursue a foundation grant so long as they are supplementing that with additional tasks/work as part of the Comps.
- 3) If pursuing a grant proposal, there is no requirement that it be submitted/funded to satisfy the comps, rather the advisor/supervisory committee just needs to approve it. If students are eligible for those grants, however, they are encouraged to submit.
- 4) If students pursue a Review paper as their Comps, please note that the expectation is not solely that they are just writing the introduction of their eventual dissertation. If the paper they are writing is deemed insufficient in scope/work by the advisor/supervisory committee, it would be appropriate to require additional tasks/work to supplement the paper. As with the grant option for Comps, there is no requirement that the Review paper is actually published, it just needs to be approved by the advisor/supervisory committee, but we strongly encourage submitting the paper for publication.

Dissertation Proposal

A dissertation proposal is not required by OGS (there is no associated paperwork) but there is a general expectation in Department that all students will complete a Dissertation proposal. The size/scope of it are up to the advisor/supervisory committee but a primary reason for requesting a long/in depth proposal is that it forces the student to write a considerable amount of the eventual dissertation document in advance (most proposals contain a fully fleshed out introduction that would normally form the introduction of the later dissertation document). Consult with other Program faculty along with your Program Coordinator/Director to find out what the norm is for students in your area. Please note that it is NOT a requirement that the proposal is finished and approved before work on the thesis begins. The Supervisory Committee is generally willing to approve the general thesis idea early so that students can get started on things right away, but a full written proposal

should still be expected at some point soon after. It is ideal to avoid a situation where the dissertation proposal is submitted near to when the final dissertation is due.

Dissertation Defense

The paperwork section of this document lists the timelines for getting the defense paperwork in (4 weeks prior to the defense for the MERP, 2 weeks prior to the defense for the PhD, preferable in both cases to get in earlier if possible) but there are a few other things supervisors should be mindful of relating to the defense.

- 1) Our PhD defenses are public meaning anyone can attend the dissertation defense. When the student sends in their Application for Final Oral Examination, the Grad Chair will also ask them to provide a zoom link if virtual (for in person defenses, the data/time/location is on the form).
- 2) A public defense technically means that all audience members could attend both the talk portion of the defense and the questions from the committee (and other attendees) portion of the defense, only being dismissed for the private committee discussion. There may be reasons, however, that you only want the audience to attend the talk portion and not the questions. The default should be that the audience can attend the entire defense, but the advisor and committee have flexibility to determine whether they would prefer the audience only attends the talk portion. You'll note that the email announcement sent out to announce each defense only guarantees the audience can attend the talk portion to allow for this flexibility, but it is fine for the audience to remain for the questions if the advisor and committee are comfortable with that. Consider discussing this with committee members pre-defense to ensure everyone is on the same page and not having to have an awkward conversation in front of the audience!
- 3) In rare circumstances, it may be appropriate to either omit the title of the dissertation from the email announcement for the defense, or to not send out the announcement altogether (the defense location and/or zoom link could also be omitted, with interested attendees being encouraged to reach out to the student to receive this information to mitigate the likelihood of strangers or potential bad actors showing up). This is most likely to occur in a situation where the research relates to a sensitive population or the research topic itself could be considered controversial (these tend to be the only reasons for altering/not sending out the announcement, the reason cannot be that the candidate is anxious or uncomfortable to present the work to a larger audience). In these cases, it is important to let the Graduate Chair know this BEFORE you submit the Application

for Final Oral Exam form as the defense announcement is usually sent out the moment the paperwork is received.

- 4) It is common for the committee to request changes to the final dissertation document at the end of the defense. Be sure to have a discussion of whether the committee needs to see the updated document again vs. if they are just trusting the advisor to approve the final dissertation. If the committee would like changes but do not need to see the document again, the committee is strongly encouraged to sign the Report of Completion form immediately once it is routed to them for signatures, with the advisor withholding their signature until everything is satisfactory. This prevents a situation where we might need to track down committee members for signatures over the summer or at some other inconvenient time.

Commencement

If you are the main advisor for a PhD student, you are expected to attend commencement for the hooding of your student (you accompany them on stage). If for any reason you are unable to attend commencement, it is important that we find an alternate who can do so. This could be the Graduate Chair, another Program Faculty, another Faculty Member already attending commencement, etc. If for any reason you are unable to attend, be sure to let the Graduate Chair and your Program Coordinator know right away so that we can arrange for a suitable alternate.

There is no expectation that the advisor attend the commencement for the Master's, as they do not play a role in the ceremony. It is very rare for the advisor to attend the Master's commencement, but it is a requirement/expectation to attend the PhD commencement.

Conferences and Travel Insurance

It is important to keep in mind that the travel policy for faculty and students differ and it is important that you follow all University policies for travel anytime you and/or your graduate students are travelling for professional reasons (e.g. one critical initial step is filling out a trip approval form in Concur and receiving approval before booking travel). A full breakdown of all travel policies is beyond the scope of this document you can find everything you need with the following links:

nebraska.edu/offices/travel

nebraska.edu/offices/travel/travel-process

One important thing to keep in mind is that faculty and graduate students have different policies which apply for them, one of which relates to travel insurance. As a full-time

employee of the university, any time a faculty member travels they are automatically covered by University travel insurance but this is not the case for graduate students as they are not considered full-time employees in the same way. Anytime a graduate student travels for a conference (or any other similar professional meeting), they are required to purchase travel insurance. It is inexpensive (25 cents a day) but recent University changes mean the insurance can only be purchased with a cost object number, which graduate students do not have. If you have a cost object number that can cover the travel insurance for your student, it would be ideal for you to work with your student so that they can use that cost object to pay travel insurance. If you do not have a cost object that can be used for these purposes, we have a cost object at the department level that can be used to cover this and students can receive this number from Pam Waldvogel.

Appendix - 800-level courses and Program of Studies forms

Previously, 800-level courses in the Department of Psychology could not count on an individual Program of Studies for the dissertation (you could enroll in these courses, they just could not towards degree requirements). Graduate Executive Committee recognizes, however, that some of the 400/800 courses offered in department are structured similarly to graduate courses and offer experiences quite like our 900-level courses. We have reviewed and approved a subset of course/instructor combinations that may now be counted on Program of Studies going forward (please note this is only for subsequent offerings of these courses and not previously offered versions)

APPROVED FOR PROGRAM OF STUDIES

Psy421/821 – Psychology of Gender (Holland)

Psy466/866 – Attention and Performance (Dodd)

The reason we have to approve course/instructor combinations is that sometimes different faculty teach the same courses in quite different ways. But once a course/instructor combination is approved here, these courses can be added to your program of studies form if desirable. The listing of approved courses will continue to appear on the Graduate Student Resources webpage. More courses may be approved and we will allow students to inquire directly to the Graduate Chair if they think a Psychology 800 course they are taking or planning to take could/should be considered, but please note that we cannot consider retroactive requests to approve already taken courses. To inquire whether a Psychology 800 course can count towards a program of studies, please contact the Graduate Chair. Please note this is only for Psychology courses, all other 800-level courses from outside disciplines can count on a Program of Studies.

Important additional note for Clinical students: A course being approved for a program of studies does not necessarily mean that that course would meet accreditation requirements. Clinical students should consult the Clinical Psychology Training Program (CPTP) manual for courses that are approved to meet accreditation requirements for profession-wide competencies and discipline specific knowledge. 800-level courses may be useful for additional coursework to broaden one's program of studies but it will not replace (or substitute) core program requirements.

Additional Important note: The purpose of this is not to create a situation where students feel they can negotiate with their professors to change their course in some way to satisfy Grad EC requirements for inclusion on the Program of Studies. Instructors have complete control over the structure and content of the class and there are many considerations that go into how they present the material and how they evaluate students. This mechanism is simply intended to allow students to document and count 400/800 courses that have been acknowledged as similar in structure/content to 900-level offerings. Even if a course is not approved for your Program of Studies, there could be valuable reason to take it for breadth and training reasons so we are also not seeking to dissuade people from taking any 800-level courses.

Appendix – Timeline Information for Annual Review

Context: The information below has been created to provide students with a timeline-to-complete the PhD within 5 years. The information for whichever year you have completed in the program will be included with annual evaluation letters going forward (either in the letter itself or as a supplementary document sent with the letter) but we want all graduate students to have access to this information at all times so you can also find it linked for the graduate student resources page (psychology.unl.edu/graduate-student-resources/). A few important notes

- 1) Given that graduate students are in different programs (different programs often have requirements above and beyond the baseline department requirements), pursue different trainings (e.g. some may do our quant minor or a specialization in Women and Gender Studies, or Ethnic Studies), pursue different career types, and sometimes pursue dual degrees (e.g. an MLS or JD/PhD), it is impossible to establish a general timeline for all students in the program that will work equally well for everyone. The verbiage for each year is intended to give you a general sense of where you should be at in the program and what things you need to be mindful of for the future, but each of the factors acknowledged above can impact this timeline. You may not be course complete as early as others if pursuing minors, specializations, or additional degrees. If a strong publication record is important for your future career goals, that may take a bit longer to establish. You should do your best to stick to the general timeline mapped out below, but you should always consult with your advisor about your specific progress and goals as they will have the best sense of what you still need to complete.
- 2) If you are concerned about your progress, you should feel free to schedule a meeting with your advisor, your program coordinator/director, or the Graduate Chair at any time to discuss. Your program coordinator and the Graduate Chair can be particularly useful if your opinion on your progress and timeline-to-completion differs from your advisor. Though a number of factors can impact your timeline, it is always good to be aspirational in terms of trying to complete the PhD within 5 years.
- 3) Program coordinators/directors have access to this verbiage and may opt to tweak it for your specific program. It has been initially prepared to be helpful for all students equally, but we recognize that everyone's path differs slightly. You may want to look at the specific verbiage you receive in an annual letter and compare it to the general verbiage to see if it has been tweaked for your specific

situation. If it has not, it is important to factor your other training goals into your timeline.

- 4) Though we do not require this, there are a number of online examples available of Individual Development Plans and you may find it very useful to create one of these in collaboration with your advisor and revisit it each year, particularly if your goals or timeline have changed in any way. Creating and maintaining an individual development plan could be very helpful for completing the PhD in a timely fashion.**

END OF FIRST YEAR:

Given that you have just completed your first year in the program, we are also taking this opportunity to provide you with information regarding which milestones you should have either already completed or should be aiming to complete in the near future. The purpose of these annual reminders is so that you can take stock of where you are at currently, recognize if you are behind where you should be, and come up with a plan to address it. Given that obtaining a PhD is a years long process, it can be easy to think that you have all the time in the world ahead of you, but it moves way faster than you think and you want to be constantly mindful that you're not falling behind.

- 1) To complete and receive your Master's degree en route to the PhD, you will need to a) submit and complete your Memorandum of Courses form, b) Complete your Master's Equivalent Research Project (MERP), which can take many different forms and which you should be deciding on with your advisor, c) Apply for Graduation in myred at the beginning of the semester you expect to receive your Master's, and d) submit your Final Examination report form 1 month before you are defending. The readers/committee for your MERP are listed on the Final Examination Report form, there is no separate supervisory form for the Master's the way there is for the PhD.
- 2) Your Memorandum of Courses form should be submitted very soon if it has not been already. The MOC requires a minimum 30 credit hours (maximum 36) and is supposed to be submitted before half of the coursework listed on the Memorandum has been completed. The best time to submit this is during the spring semester of your first year, but there are occasionally reasons for delays. You do not need to list every course you're taking/have taken on the form but the form is your course contract for receiving the Master's and the Office of Graduate Studies will be checking that you took and passed everything listed (note that for Psychology courses, anything below a B- is considered a fail and would require a retake of the course). If you have not submitted this yet I would recommend getting in as soon as

possible. The Office of Graduate Studies expects these forms early in the process and if these are submitted late or with too many credits already completed, they may require additional information or, at worst, may be unable to accept the form. This is an important one to get in in a timely fashion.

- 3) Generally all students take our statistics sequence in the first year (931 and 932) in addition to the teaching course in the fall of the first year. If you did not take any of these requirements for any reason you will want to take them as soon as you can. If you are a clinical student, then a good deal of your coursework is already set in year 1 and part of year 2. If you are in a program other than Clinical, we recommend you consulting with your program handbook in addition to the graduate handbook. The graduate handbook outlines the core courses you are required to take to receive a PhD in Psychology and the area handbooks tend to cover the other requirements as a function of which program you're in. Given that not all courses are offered every year (and indeed some are only offered every third year), it is important to stay on top of your requirements to ensure you've satisfied them all as soon as possible. There is a tentative graduate teaching calendar on the graduate student resources webpage (<https://psychology.unl.edu/graduate-student-resources/>) that you can also consult to get a sense of when courses may be offered (this is tentative and can change, but may be helpful for planning purposes...you should always watch for email updates on course offerings and you should check which courses are available to you each semester when you register in case something pops up unexpectedly or with little advance notice).
- 4) Outside of coursework, the main focus in your first 1-2 years in the program should be your MERP (Master's Equivalency Research Project) as this is the project that earns you your Master's degree en route to completing the PhD (if you entered the program with a Master's, this requirement may or may not have been waived, in Clinical there is a portfolio that satisfied the requirement but a MERP-like research project is still expected). The time to complete the MERP can vary by program and research area, but a strong aspirational goal would be to try to complete the MERP within 18 months of starting the program, but hopefully no more than 24 months. If it takes you longer than 2 years to complete the Masters, it has the potential to slow your progress considerably as it relates to obtaining the PhD. Make sure you are mindful of OGS deadlines that do not go through the department, it is your responsibility to make sure you're on top of everything.
- 5) When you are ready to defend your MERP, please note the following: The Final Examination Report form is due to the Office of Graduate Studies a full month before your defense date. Your committee members do not need to sign off on the initial form submission, just your advisor and the graduate chair. Whenever a

signature is required from a committee member, it is ideal to give them at least two weeks with your document before you require it to be signed off on. But in this case you do not need to have the actual document to your committee two weeks before the final report form is due. The committee only signs after the defense. You should still be aiming to get your document to your committee a minimum 2 weeks before the defense (when you later defend your PhD, the defense form is only due 2 weeks before the defense, not 4, but your entire committee will need to sign off on that one so in that case you will want to get the document to the committee 2 weeks before the form is due).

- 6) Please note that to receive your Masters degree and walk at commencement, you need to apply for graduation and this is done in myred (it's not a form through a department, this is up to the individual student to do). The application is due very early in the semester you intend to receive the Master's (usually within the first couple of weeks of the semester). If for some reason you don't meet the deadline, you would have to reapply for a subsequent semester and pay a \$25 fee.

Other things to keep on your radar for the coming year

- 1) As you near the end of your MA (or soon after you complete it) you will want to think about establishing your supervisory committee for the PhD as soon as possible. Please note that you require permission from Grad EC to set up your committee and so you should have your advisor email the Graduate Chair with the committee request. We can approve these at our January or May meeting en masse, but can also do these off cycle via email if needed. Once you have approval to set up your committee, you will need to submit the Approval of Supervisory Committee form at some point in the near future (the email you receive has a brief deadline to try to stay on track of everyone but it's fine if it takes a bit longer to decide on committee members, just get the form in as soon as possible).
- 2) There is a limit on the number of 996 courses that a student can take on the way to completing the Master's which is a good additional reason to get the Master's wrapped up as early as possible (24 credits total is the maximum amount allowed for the 996 mechanism). If you hit the point where you cannot take any further credit using this mechanism, Grad EC may be able to approve you to take 999 credit a little earlier than you otherwise would. Hopefully you won't run into that issue.
- 3) Please remember that whenever you need signatures on paperwork, you should not be collecting signatures yourself or using your own DocuSign accounts. Send the

paperwork to us to set up as a DocuSign at the department level and we will collect all signatures. This is necessary for us to track progress and maintain a consistent accounting of where everyone is at in the program.

- 4) Please remember that if you are receiving funding from the department in addition to a tuition waiver, you are required to be enrolled in a minimum 9 credits each in the fall and spring semesters, maximum 12 credits (your waiver only covers up to 12 credits and if you enroll in more than this you will be charged tuition for anything above 12 credits). You are not required to register for credits in the summer though many students do enroll in 5 to avoid paying FICA taxes, discuss with your advisor or Graduate Chair whether that is relevant to you or not (generally if you are receiving summer funding from the department or a community placement, you'll want to enroll in those minimum 5 summer credits). If you do enroll in credits in the summer, there is also a maximum 12 credits available to you, though the Department has never recommended enrolling in more than 6 summer credits unless there is an extraordinary circumstance that would warrant it.
- 5) Please always make sure to check the Office of Graduate Studies steps to degree completion. Though many requirements run through our program (e.g. paperwork), there are a few things that run solely through OGS (e.g. application for graduation) that are independent of the department and that you must keep on top of yourself as a student. OGS has very detailed pages with updated deadlines each semester, you should review these routinely.

END OF SECOND YEAR

Congratulations on completing your second year in the program. We are taking this opportunity to provide you with information regarding which milestones you should have either already completed or should be aiming to complete in the near future. The purpose of these annual reminders is so that you can take stock of where you are at currently, recognize if you are behind where you should be, and come up with a plan to address it. Given that obtaining a PhD is a years long process, it can be easy to think that you have all the time in the world ahead of you, but it moves way faster than you think and you want to be constantly mindful that you're not falling behind.

- 1) If you have not yet submitted your Memorandum of Courses for the Master's degree, it is critical you do so right away.
- 2) Depending on which program you are in, you may be close to finishing your required coursework for the degree by this point, or might be wrapping up within the next year (the exception would be Clinical where a number of courses are still required for accreditation). Make sure you monitor what courses you have remaining and use the tentative graduate teaching calendar on the graduate student resources page to plan out your remaining courses.
- 3) If you have not completed your MERP by this point, we strongly recommend you completing it as soon as possible. Failure to complete the MERP in a timely fashion can lead to additional delays completing the PhD.
- 4) If you have completed the MERP or are near completion and have not already requested approval to set up a supervisory committee for the PhD, now would be the time to do so. Once you have approval, you should try to get your Appointment of Supervisory Committee form completed and sent to us as soon as you can.
- 5) Please note that to receive your Masters degree and walk at commencement, you need to apply for graduation, and this is done in myred (it's not a form through a department, this is up to the individual student to do). The application is due very early in the semester you intend to receive the Masters (usually within the first couple of weeks of the semester). If for some reason you don't meet the deadline, you would have to reapply for a subsequent semester and pay a \$25 fee.

Other things to keep on your radar for the coming year

- 1) As you near the end of your MA (or soon after you complete it) you will want to think about establishing your supervisory committee for the PhD as soon as possible. Please note that you require permission from Grad EC to set up your committee and so you should have your advisor email the Graduate Chair with the committee request. We can approve these at our January or May meeting en masse, but can

also do these off cycle via email if needed. Once you have approval to set up your committee, you will need to submit the Appointment of Supervisory Committee form at some point in the near future (the email you receive has a brief deadline to try to stay on track of everyone but it's fine if it takes a bit longer to decide on committee members, just get the form in as soon as possible).

- 2) Once your supervisory committee is formed, it is good to schedule a meeting as soon as possible with the committee so that you can discuss a) your Program of Studies form, and b) what you will be doing for your comprehensive exams so you can map out a tentative timeline for completing these. Comps are often completed in Year 3 or Year 4 and are a critical step for obtaining doctoral candidacy. Talk to your advisor early to determine what you think you will be doing for your comps. This is not set in stone and can certainly change but getting a handle on both the scope and nature of your comps will be important for planning out your timeline over the next year or two. Completion of the comprehensive exams is what then makes you eligible for candidacy for the PhD and for a variety of reasons, it is helpful to get yourself to candidacy as soon as possible.
- 3) There is a limit on the number of 996 courses that a student can take on the way to completing the Master's (24 credits of 996) which is a good additional reason to get the Master's wrapped up as early as possible. If you hit the point where you cannot take any further credit using this mechanism, Grad EC may be able to approve you to take 999 credit a little earlier than you otherwise would. Hopefully you won't run into that issue.
- 4) If you have finished your MERP and formed a committee but have not yet submitted your Program of Studies form, you are heavily encouraged to submit that as soon as possible. As with the Master's Memorandum of Courses, the Program of Studies for the PhD is supposed to be submitted before the completion of half of the credits on the form. Because the courses listed on your Memorandum of Courses can also be listed as "completed" courses on your Program of Studies, the expectation is that the Program of Studies form is submitted fairly soon once your MERP project is completed.
- 5) Please remember that whenever you need signatures on paperwork, you should not be collecting signatures yourself or using your own Docusign accounts. Send the paperwork to us to set up as a Docusign at the department level and we will collect all signatures. This is necessary for us to track progress and maintain a consistent accounting of where everyone is at in the program.
- 6) Please remember that if you are receiving funding from the department in addition to a tuition waiver, you are required to be enrolled in a minimum 9 credits each in the fall and spring semesters, maximum 12 credits (your waiver only covers up to 12

credits and if you enroll in more than this you will be charged tuition for anything above 12 credits). You are not required to register for credits in the summer though many students do enroll in 5 to avoid paying FICA taxes, discuss with your advisor or Graduate Chair whether that is relevant to you or not. If you do enroll in credits in the summer, there is also a maximum 12 credits available to you, though the Department has never recommended enrolling in more than 6 summer credits unless there is an extraordinary circumstance that would warrant it.

- 7) Please always make sure to check the Office of Graduate Studies steps to degree completion. Though many requirements run through the program (e.g. paperwork), there are a few things that run solely through OGS (e.g. application for graduation) that are independent of the department and that you must keep on top of yourself as a student. OGS has very detailed pages with updated deadlines each semester, you should review these routinely.

END OF THIRD YEAR

Congratulations on completing your third year in the program. We are taking this opportunity to provide you with information regarding which milestones you should have either already completed or should be aiming to complete in the near future. The purpose of these annual reminders is so that you can take stock of where you are at currently, recognize if you are behind where you should be, and come up with a plan to address it. Given that obtaining a PhD is a years long process, it can be easy to think that you have all the time in the world ahead of you, but it moves way faster than you think and you want to be constantly mindful that you're not falling behind.

- 1) Your MERP project should be completed by this point and if it is not, it is urgent that you complete it as soon as possible to ensure you are progressing through the program in a timely manner.
- 2) Depending which program you're in, you may be close to finishing your required coursework for the degree by this point, or might be wrapping up within the next year (the exception would be Clinical where some courses are still required for accreditation). Make sure you monitor what courses you have remaining and use the tentative graduate teaching calendar on the graduate student resources page to plan out your remaining courses. This is particularly important if you are doing something like the quant minor where certain courses may not be frequently offered, you will want to stay on top of when things are planned.
- 3) If you have completed your MERP or are near completion and have not been approved to form a supervisory committee for the PhD, now is the time to do so. Once you have approval, you should try to get your Appointment of Supervisory Committee form completed and sent to us as soon as you can.
- 4) Once your supervisory committee is formed, it is good to schedule a meeting as soon as possible with the committee so that you can discuss a) your Program of Studies form, and b) what you will be doing for your comprehensive exams so you can map out a tentative timeline for completing these. Completion of the comprehensive exams is what then makes you eligible for candidacy for the PhD and for a variety of reasons, it is helpful to get yourself to candidacy as soon as possible. If you have not yet formed a committee and discussed both comps and your general project idea, we encourage you to do so as soon as possible.
- 5) If you have finished your MERP and formed a committee but have not yet submitted your Program of Studies form, you are heavily encouraged to submit that as soon as possible. As with the Master's Memorandum of Courses, the Program of Studies for

the PhD is supposed to be submitted before the completion of half of the credits on the form. Because the courses listed on your Memorandum of Courses can also be listed as “completed” courses on your Program of Studies, the expectation is that the Program of Studies form is submitted fairly soon once your MERP project is completed.

- 6) The PhD requires completion of a) your comprehensive exams, b) your dissertation proposal (talk to your advisor and your Program coordinator/Director for guidance on what specifically is expected for a proposal in your program, and c) the dissertation research project itself and subsequent dissertation document. If you have not already done so, now is a good time to map out what you will be doing for each of these requirements, and what your aspirational timeline is for completion. If your comprehensive exams are a grant proposal, there are established NIH and NSF deadlines you would be aiming to meet that you can use to aid in your planning. If you are doing something for your comps that does not have external agency deadlines, then you should work with your advisor and committee to come up with a series of deadlines that will help you progress. There are few “hard” deadlines in graduate school and so being proactive and planning out deadlines on your own will help you to stay on track. A dissertation project can easily take 1-2 years to carry out so whatever planning you can do to keep yourself accountable for progression will benefit your continued trajectory through the program.
- 7) If you are concerned about your progress or time left, consider meeting with your advisor, your program coordinator/director, and/or the graduate chair to discuss whether you need additional deadlines, direction, and oversight to finish up on time. Do not be avoidant about this if you need help and an extra push, better to address now than to leave until later.

Other things to keep on your radar for the coming year

- 1) Many students will have their comps done and a good sense of where your dissertation is headed by the end of the fourth year, so if you have just finished your third year and do not have a sufficient sense of what your comps will be and when you will aim to complete them by, you should definitely be aiming to get that figured out soon and work towards those goals during your fourth year. Keep in mind that if you are thinking of going on the academic job market post-PhD (or the post-doc market), your final year in the program will also see you putting together job applications, putting together a job talk, and potentially interviewing at multiple places. This takes a lot of time away from the actual dissertation itself so aiming to get as far into things as you can in your fourth year is a great goal. It is always best to aim to have the dissertation completed within 5 years. Though there can be reasons

your study may extend beyond that, it is critical to finish in a timely fashion to insure there is still funding available to you.

- 2) If you have finished your MERP and formed a committee but have not yet submitted your Program of Studies form, you are heavily encouraged to submit that as soon as possible. As with the Master's Memorandum of Courses, the Program of Studies for the PhD is supposed to be submitted before the completion of half of the credits on the form. Because the courses listed on your Memorandum of Courses can also be listed as "completed" courses on your Program of Studies, the expectation is that the Program of Studies form is submitted fairly soon once your MERP project is completed.
- 3) Please remember that whenever you need signatures on paperwork, you should not be collecting signatures yourself or using your own Docusign accounts. Send the paperwork to us to set up as a Docusign at the department level and we will collect all signatures. This is necessary for us to track progress and maintain a consistent accounting of where everyone is at in the program.
- 4) Please remember that if you are receiving funding from the department in addition to a tuition waiver, you are required to be enrolled in a minimum 9 credits each in the fall and spring semesters, maximum 12 credits (your waiver only covers up to 12 credits and if you enroll in more than this you will be charged tuition for anything above 12 credits). You are not required to register for credits in the summer though many students do enroll in 5 to avoid paying FICA taxes, discuss with your advisor or Graduate Chair whether that is relevant to you or not. If you do enroll in credits in the summer, there is also a maximum 12 credits available to you, though the Department has never recommended enrolling in more than 6 summer credits unless there is an extraordinary circumstance that would warrant it.
- 5) The hope by this point in the program is that you have determined what both your comps and dissertation will be and have made headway already with the comps, dissertation proposal (consult with your advisor and program coordinator/director for guidance on what is required for the proposal), and dissertation project itself. If you have not already done so, it is urgent to do so now and you are heavily encouraged to map out your aspirational timeline for completion. If your comprehensive exams are a grant proposal, there are established NIH and NSF deadlines you would be aiming to meet that you can use to aid in your planning. If you are doing something for your comps that does not have external agency deadlines, then you should work with your advisor and committee to come up with a series of deadlines that will help you progress. There are few "hard" deadlines in graduate school and so being proactive and planning out deadlines on your own will help you to stay on track. A dissertation project can easily take 1-2 years to carry out

so whatever planning you can do to keep yourself accountable for progression will benefit your continued trajectory through the program.

- 6) Please always make sure to check the Office of Graduate Studies steps to degree completion. Though many requirements run through the program (e.g. paperwork), there are a few things that run solely through OGS (e.g. application for graduation) that are independent of the department and that you must keep on top of yourself as a student. OGS has very detailed pages with updated deadlines each semester, you should review these routinely.

END OF FOURTH YEAR

Congratulations on completing your fourth year in the program. We are taking this opportunity to provide you with information regarding which milestones you should have either already completed or should be aiming to complete in the near future. The purpose of these annual reminders is so that you can take stock of where you are at currently, recognize if you are behind where you should be, and come up with a plan to address it.

- 1) At this point in the program you should have a good sense of what your comprehensive exams will entail, with the expectation that you may have completed or be nearing completion of this important milestone. Completing the comprehensive exam is what initially qualifies you for candidacy for the PhD. If you have completed your comps or are nearing the process of completing them, congratulations! If you have not yet finished the comps, this should be a critical priority to complete as soon as possible.
- 2) The other major milestones on your way to completing the PhD are your dissertation proposal and then the actual dissertation project and subsequent written document. None of these should be left until the last minute as they are labor intensive and take considerable time. You may already be collecting dissertation data while still finishing off the dissertation proposal and that is fine, but you are still encouraged to get the proposal done as soon as possible as well. Do not leave your writing until the last minute. When you are in your last year in the program, there may be a lot of external pressures on your time that were not there in subsequent years. You may be applying for jobs/post docs/internships, putting together job talks or teaching talks, and perhaps being away for interviews. If you are course complete at this point, it is easy to trick yourself into thinking that your entire final year will solely be a focus on a dissertation, that is rarely how it works. You are strongly encouraged to get ahead of all of this by doing whatever you can as early as you can as it relates to remaining dissertation milestones.
- 3) You absolutely should have submitted your Program of Studies form by this point, if you have not for any reason, it is critical to get this in immediately.
- 4) Unless you are in Clinical, you are very likely to be course complete by this point. This would be a good time to look back at your Program of Studies and ensure that you have completed (or will soon be completing) all the courses listed on that document. If anything has changed (e.g. you put down a course that was not offered, or you changed your mind about the value of a course originally on the POS), now would be a good time to follow up with the Office of Graduate Studies to amend the form. If this is left until the last minute, it can risk delaying graduation.

Even if you are not course complete, now may still be a good time to double check this form to ensure everything listed on there still makes sense.

- 5) If you are concerned about your progress or time left, consider meeting with your advisor, your program coordinator/director, and/or the graduate chair to discuss whether you need additional deadlines, direction, and oversight to finish up on time. Do not be avoidant about this if you need help and an extra push, better to address now than to leave until later.

Other things to keep on your radar for the coming year

- 1) For many students, the upcoming year 5 will be your final year in the program. Now is a good time to take stock of whether you've completed expected milestones and are on track to graduate next year. If not, it is important to come up with a plan to complete all remaining milestones to ensure you finish your graduate student in an efficient and reasonable time period. Your supervisory committee and Program of Studies form should already have been completed by now and you should have a good sense of how far away you are from completing other remaining milestones, as detailed above. Please note that you are required to submit a rough draft of the dissertation to graduate studies by a certain point in the semester, that is again handled on the student end and not through the department. Staying on top of all paperwork and deadlines is critical.
- 2) Please note that to receive your PhD and walk at commencement, you need to apply for graduation and this is done in myred (it's not a form through a department, this is up to the individual student to do). The application is due very early in the semester you intend to receive the PhD (usually within the first couple of weeks of the semester). If for some reason you don't meet the deadline, you would have to reapply for a subsequent semester and pay a \$25 fee.
- 3) Please remember that whenever you need signatures on paperwork, you should not be collecting signatures yourself or using your own Docusign accounts. Send the paperwork to us to set up as a Docusign at the department level and we will collect all signatures. This is necessary for us to track progress and maintain a consistent accounting of where everyone is at in the program.
- 4) Please remember that if you are receiving funding from the department in addition to a tuition waiver, you are required to be enrolled in a minimum 9 credits each in the fall and spring semesters, maximum 12 credits (your waiver only covers up to 12 credits and if you enroll in more than this you will be charged tuition for anything above 12 credits). You are not required to register for credits in the summer though many students do enroll in 5 to avoid paying FICA taxes, discuss with your advisor or Graduate Chair whether that is relevant to you or not. If you do enroll in credits in

the summer, there is also a maximum 12 credits available to you, though the Department has never recommended enrolling in more than 6 summer credits unless there is an extraordinary circumstance that would warrant it.

- 5) The hope by this point in the program, as detailed above, is that you have determined what both your comps and dissertation will be and have made headway already with the comps, dissertation proposal (consult with your advisor and program coordinator/director for guidance on what is required for the proposal), and dissertation project itself. If you have not already done so, it is urgent to do so now and you are heavily encouraged to map out your aspirational timeline for completion. If your comprehensive exams are a grant proposal, there are established NIH and NSF deadlines you would be aiming to meet that you can use to aid in your planning. If you are doing something for your comps that does not have external agency deadlines, then you should work with your advisor and committee to come up with a series of deadlines that will help you progress. There are few “hard” deadlines in graduate school and so being proactive and planning out deadlines on your own will help you to stay on track. A dissertation project can easily take 1-2 years to carry out so whatever planning you can do to keep yourself accountable for progression will benefit your continued trajectory through the program.
- 6) Please always make sure to check the Office of Graduate Studies steps to degree completion. Though many requirements run through the program (e.g. paperwork), there are a few things that run solely through OGS (e.g. application for graduation) that are independent of the department and that you must keep on top of yourself as a student. OGS has very detailed pages with updated deadlines each semester, you should review these routinely.

END OF FIFTH YEAR (and potentially beyond)

Congratulations on finishing your fifth year in the program. We are taking this opportunity to provide you with information regarding which milestones you should have either already completed or should be aiming to complete in the near future. The purpose of these annual reminders is so that you can take stock of where you are at currently, recognize if you are behind where you should be, and come up with a plan to address it.

- 1) Many students complete their dissertation within five years and while it is not uncommon for the degree to stretch into a 6th year for any number of reasons, you should be at the point currently where you have either completed many of your remaining milestones or have a firm plan to complete them within the year. If you have not completed comps, the dissertation proposal, and all related program paperwork, it is urgent that you do so immediately. Preferably the only thing you should have left to worry about over the year is the dissertation itself. Comps, the dissertation proposal, and the dissertation itself are labor intensive and take considerable time making it important to work through milestones as quickly as possible. Do not leave your writing until the last minute. When you are in your last year in the program, there may be a lot of external pressures on your time that were not there in subsequent years. You may be applying for jobs/post docs/internships, putting together job talks or teaching talks, and perhaps being away for interviews. If you are course complete at this point, it is easy to trick yourself into thinking that your entire final year will solely be a focus on a dissertation, that is rarely how it works. You are strongly encouraged to get ahead of all of this by doing whatever you can as early as you can as it relates to remaining dissertation milestones.
- 2) If you are concerned about your progress or time left, consider meeting with your advisor, your program coordinator/director, and/or the graduate chair to discuss whether you need additional deadlines, direction, and oversight to finish up on time. Do not be avoidant about this if you need help and an extra push, better to address now than to leave until later.

Other things to keep on your radar for the coming year

- 1) Please note that to receive your PhD and walk at commencement, you need to apply for graduation and this is done in myred (it's not a form through a department, this is up to the individual student to do). The application is due very early in the semester you intend to receive the PhD (usually within the first couple of weeks of the semester). If for some reason you don't meet the deadline, you would have to reapply for a subsequent semester and pay a \$25 fee.

- 2) The hope by this point in the program, as detailed above, is that you have determined what both your comps and dissertation will be and have made headway with/completed the comps, dissertation proposal (consult with your advisor and program coordinator/director for guidance on what is required for the proposal), and dissertation project itself. If you have not already done so, it is urgent to do so now and you are heavily encouraged to map out your aspirational timeline for completion.
- 3) Please remember that whenever you need signatures on paperwork, you should not be collecting signatures yourself or using your own DocuSign accounts. Send the paperwork to us to set up as a DocuSign at the department level and we will collect all signatures. This is necessary for us to track progress and maintain a consistent accounting of where everyone is at in the program.
- 4) Please remember that if you are receiving funding from the department in addition to a tuition waiver, you are required to be enrolled in a minimum 9 credits each in the fall and spring semesters, maximum 12 credits (your waiver only covers up to 12 credits and if you enroll in more than this you will be charged tuition for anything above 12 credits). You are not required to register for credits in the summer though many students do enroll in 5 to avoid paying FICA taxes, discuss with your advisor or Graduate Chair whether that is relevant to you or not. If you do enroll in credits in the summer, there is also a maximum 12 credits available to you, though the Department has never recommended enrolling in more than 6 summer credits unless there is an extraordinary circumstance that would warrant it.
- 5) Please always make sure to check the Office of Graduate Studies steps to degree completion. Though many requirements run through the program (e.g. paperwork), there are a few things that run solely through OGS (e.g. application for graduation) that are independent of the department and that you must keep on top of yourself as a student. OGS has very detailed pages with updated deadlines each semester, you should review these routinely.