

Decision Psychology Graduate Program Handbook (modified in 2016)

This document outlines requirements for completion of the Ph.D. program in Decision Psychology. Students in the Decision Psychology program are also subject to policies and procedures stated in the Graduate School Handbook and the Psychology Department Rules for Graduate Students. All graduate students in the program are responsible for being familiar with the applicable contents of these documents.

I. Choosing an Advisor

Each student in the Decision Psychology program will have an advisor with an appointment in the Decision Psychology program. Initial matches will happen upon admission based on student interests and faculty availability.

Students are permitted to petition the program faculty to change advisors. The most appropriate time to change advisors is following completion of the master's thesis, but changes will be considered at other times on a case-by-case basis. A student wishing to change advisors should discuss the matter with both the current and prospective future advisor. Both the current and prospective future advisor must approve the change, and the Psychology Graduate Program Office must be advised of the change after it is approved.

II. Course Requirements

The overall program of study for each student is developed in consultation with the advisor. There are certain course requirements around which the program of study should be built:

- A. Psychology 7708, Psychology of Judgment and Decision Making
- B. One social psychology course from the following list: Psychology 6870, Basic Principles of Social Psychology; Psychology 7871, Social Motivation; Psychology 7872, Social Cognition; Psychology 7873, Attitudes and Persuasion.
- C. One cognitive psychology course from the following list: Psychology 5608, Introduction to Mathematical Psychology; Psychology 6609, Introduction to Mathematical Modeling; or an introductory graduate-level seminar in attention, cognitive neuroscience, mathematical modeling, memory, or perception.
- D. Psychology 6810 and 6811, Statistical Methods in Psychology I and II (the introductory graduate statistics sequence, normally taken in the first year).
- E. Psychology 8880, Current Research in Decision Psychology. Graduate students in Decision Psychology must register for and attend Psychology 8880 each Fall and Spring semester. This course is a research practicum in which faculty and students in the program give presentations on their work in its various stages. Each graduate student in the program is required to give a presentation in this class each semester concerning their ongoing research. A specific goal of this course is to ensure that every graduate student in the program is engaged in an active and productive research program at all times, beginning in their first semester.
- F. Each student must also satisfy the course requirements for a formal concentration or minor program outside of Decision Psychology. A student may concentrate or minor in another program of psychology, such as Social, Cognitive, or Quantitative Psychology, or in another department, such as Economics, Marketing, or Public

Health. Specific requirements for the concentration or minor are defined by the specific programs but must include at least two courses in a single concentrated area. If an area does not specify the requirements for a concentration, then taking two courses in that single concentrated area will meet the Decision Psychology requirement for a concentration. Concentration or minor program requirements should be completed by the end of the third year of study. These courses may not overlap with requirements listed in A–E above. Students in dual master’s degree programs (see below) are not required to complete an additional concentration or minor.

- G. Other electives. Students are encouraged to seek out other decision-related courses. These elective courses should be chosen by the student in consultation with his or her advisor. We recommend choosing courses or seminars on any of the following topics: Judgment and Decision Making, Social Psychology, Cognitive Psychology and Mathematical Psychology, Quantitative Psychology, Economics, Marketing, Public Health, and Environment and Natural Resources. There may be other possibilities as well.

III. Masters Degree

All students in the Decision Psychology program are expected to obtain a master’s degree. Degree requirements are:

- A. Completion of the course requirements in 2A-E above. Note that students are required by the graduate school to complete a minimum of 30 credit hours before obtaining a master’s degree.

- B. Completion and successful defense of a master's thesis. The purpose of the thesis is to provide the student with experience in conducting research and producing a research document. The topic for the thesis is developed through reading, research, and discussions with faculty, especially the advisor. The student prepares a research proposal, which is evaluated by the student's master’s committee. Upon approval of the proposal, the student carries out the research, writes the thesis, and completes the master’s thesis oral examination. Students should reference the Graduate School Handbook for University requirements and deadlines. <http://www.gradsch.ohio-state.edu/graduate-school-handbook1.html>

The master's thesis committee consists of three faculty members. Two of these must be from the Psychology Department and at least two must be graduate faculty. Further, the advisor must be category M or higher in the graduate program. The advisor serves as chair of the committee and must have an appointment in Decision Psychology. Additional details on the committee requirements can be found in the Graduate School Handbook and the Psychology Department Rules for Graduate Students.

- C. Students who enter the program with a master’s degree in psychology (or closely related field) from another university may waive the master’s thesis requirements although they must still satisfy the course requirements in section II. To be eligible, the student must submit a copy of their master’s thesis to the Decision Psychology faculty for approval. If the thesis is approved, the student may begin working toward candidacy (see below). If the thesis is not approved, the student must complete a master’s thesis as outlined above.
- D. Students may also complete dual master’s degrees in Psychology and other programs (e.g., Marketing, Public Health). See section 6.7 of the Graduate School Handbook for information regarding dual master’s degrees. Students in dual master’s degree programs are not required to complete an additional concentration/minor.

IV. Candidacy Examinations

The candidacy exam is intended to evaluate students’ mastery of significant knowledge and literature in the field, and to help students consolidate their knowledge and prepare for dissertation-level research. The candidacy examination has both a written and an oral component. The written component includes a major program exam in Decision Psychology and may include a component covering the minor program. The candidacy examination is normally completed during the 3rd or 4th year in the program.

The format of the major portion of the candidacy examination in Decision Psychology is as follows:

- A. In consultation with the advisor and the candidacy examination committee, the student identifies two or three relevant topic areas of interest (in addition to Decision Psychology more generally). These topic areas should represent depth within the student's particular subfield as well as breadth in related subfields.

The candidacy examination committee consists of four graduate faculty members. Three of these must be from Psychology. The advisor must be category P in the graduate program. The advisor serves as chair of the committee and must have an appointment in Decision Psychology. The fourth graduate faculty member does not have to be from Psychology (but can be) and must be approved by the Decision Psychology advisor. A Graduate Faculty Representative may be assigned at the request of the student and the advisor. Additional details on the committee requirements can be found in the Graduate School Handbook and the Psychology Department Rules for Graduate Students.

- B. The student develops a reading list covering major topics in Decision Psychology and the specific subfields identified for that student. The list should include important books, classic journal articles, and journal articles representing important lines of research in the program, including current research. The reading list must be approved by members of the candidacy examination committee, excluding the representative from the concentration or minor program.
- C. The student is given time (at least two months, but not more than six months, to be negotiated with the advisor) to study the material represented on the reading list. Then the candidacy examination is conducted. The examination has two parts:
 1. A two-week written take-home exam that includes questions on the identified subfields and on Decision Psychology more generally.
 2. A two-hour oral exam

The student should anticipate that good answers on both the written and oral exams will sometimes require knowledge of the literature that goes beyond the reading list. Students are encouraged to talk to other advanced students and faculty members about the exam experience prior to getting their take-home exam questions. Upon successful completion of the candidacy examination, the student is admitted to doctoral candidacy.

V. Ph.D. Dissertation

The Ph.D. dissertation represents the culmination of graduate training. The dissertation must show evidence of independent and original contributions to the chosen field of study. The doctoral student develops a research topic in consultation with the advisor. The student prepares a proposal of the research and submits that proposal to the dissertation committee, which meets with the student to evaluate the proposal. Upon approval of the proposal, the student proceeds with the research and writes the dissertation. Upon completion of the dissertation, a two-hour oral examination is conducted covering the dissertation research. Successful completion of the oral examination and approval of the dissertation document completes the requirements for the Ph.D. degree.

The dissertation committee consists of at least three graduate faculty members. At least three members must be from Psychology. The advisor must be category P in the graduate program. The advisor serves as chair of the committee and must have an appointment in Decision Psychology. A Graduate Faculty Representative will be assigned to attend the final oral examination. Additional details on the committee requirements can be found in the Graduate School Handbook and the Psychology Department Rules for Graduate Students.

VI. Progress and Performance in the Program

It is important for graduate students to understand the expectations regarding progress in the program and other aspects of performance. Progress is defined in part by completion of degree requirements in a timely manner. Performance is judged using a variety of factors involving quality and effort in coursework and research activities. This section describes expectations regarding progress and performance, followed by an explanation of mechanisms for rectifying circumstances where progress and performance are not satisfactory.

- A. Expected progress in the Decision Psychology graduate program is defined as follows:
 - 1. Completion of the master's thesis prior to the end of the second year in the program;
 - 2. Completion of the candidacy examination prior to the end of spring semester of the third year in the program;
 - 3. Completion of the concentration or minor (or second master's degree in the case of a dual master's) prior to the end of the third year in the program;
 - 4. Completion of the Ph.D. dissertation by the end of the fifth year in the program.
- B. In addition to maintaining reasonable progress in the program, students are expected to exhibit an acceptable level of quality in their coursework and research activities. Performance will be judged based on course grades; mastery of relevant literature; the ability to conceive, design, and conduct research; and the production of professional oral and written reports of research.
- C. Additional expectations. A Ph.D. is a research degree, and students are expected to focus on current research in the field, develop their own research interests and abilities, and gain skills for presenting research results in oral and written form. Conference presentations and journal submissions should be high priority activities at every stage of training, but especially for students beyond the candidacy examination. The extent to which students meet these expectations will be taken into consideration during annual evaluations.
- D. Performance review meetings. At the end of the spring semester each year, the program faculty will meet to evaluate each student. Following that meeting, each student will meet with his or her advisor to receive feedback on progress and performance in the program, and to discuss plans for the subsequent year. Each student will be provided with a written summary of this evaluation.

This annual review will include a numerical rating of overall performance by the student, using the following scale: 5 = well above expectations; 4 = above expectations; 3 = meets expectations; 2 = below expectations; 1 = well below expectations. A rating of 3 indicates minimally acceptable performance.

- E. Inadequate progress in the program is defined as not meeting the timeline in section VI(A).above. Inadequate performance in the program is defined as receiving an overall rating less than 3 as defined in section VI(D) above. A student falling into either of these categories may be considered to be "in difficulty" in the program. When a student is deemed as being in difficulty, the program faculty will notify the student by letter of his or her status and will specify conditions that must be satisfied, along with a time frame, for the student to be re-classified in good standing. If those conditions are not satisfied, the faculty will meet to determine further action. Possible actions include not recommending the student for further financial support, termination of current support, or activation of the mechanism specified in the Graduate School Handbook. Under the last alternative, the student may be denied registration in the Graduate School if specified conditions are not satisfied within one semester.
- F. A student has the right to appeal any performance evaluation and resulting action by the faculty by following the grievance procedures in the Department of Psychology Graduate Program Handbook.

VII. Students With Prior Graduate Training

For students entering the program with prior graduate training, some of the requirements stated above (e.g., course requirements, concentration or minor program requirements, thesis requirements) may be modified or waived. These modifications or waivers will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

VIII. Outside Employment

For students holding half-time GTA or GRA positions, opportunities for additional employment should be considered very cautiously and must be approved by the student's advisor. If such employment would involve substantial commitments of time and energy, students are strongly discouraged from becoming involved. Such activity almost invariably results in severely impeded progress in the program, as well as a reduction in the quality of the student's performance. Students will not necessarily be discouraged from accepting limited additional employment. Such arrangements might include short term consulting projects or continuing employment for a very small number of hours. Students are expected to discuss opportunities for additional employment with their advisor.

IX. Summary of Required and Expected Activities

Year 1

Coursework:

- Take 12 or more credit hours each semester, including Current Research in Decision Psychology.
- Take Psychology 7708, 6810, 6811, and Current Research in Decision Psychology.
- Take other appropriate courses in Decision Psychology, as outlined in section II.
- Possibly take one or more courses in the concentration or minor program.

Research:

- Join professional societies.
- Read articles from relevant journals.
- Begin research for the master's thesis project.
- Present each semester in Current Research in Decision Psychology (true for later years also).
- Get involved in other research with your advisor or other faculty member.

Year 2

Coursework:

- Take Current Research in Decision Psychology.
- Take additional courses in Decision Psychology, as outlined in section II.
- Take additional courses in the concentration or minor program.

Research:

- Complete the Master's Degree by end of Year 2 including thesis and coursework.
- Do a conference presentation (poster or talk).
- Increase involvement in research projects.
- Identify topic programs for candidacy examination and begin developing the reading list.

Year 3

Coursework:

- Take Current Research in Decision Psychology.

- Complete the concentration or minor program course requirements.
- Take relevant advanced courses and seminars in Decision Psychology or related fields.
- Typically take only 1 or 2 courses per semester.

Research:

- Submit a manuscript for publication based on the master's thesis or other research project.
- Make one or more conference presentations.
- Complete the candidacy examination by end of spring semester of Year 3.

Year 4

Coursework:

- Take Current Research in Decision Psychology.
- Limit additional coursework to the minimum; advanced seminars only.

Research:

- Increase activity in research projects, conference presentations, and submission of papers to journals.
- Develop the dissertation proposal and begin dissertation research.

Year 5

Coursework:

- Take Current Research in Decision Psychology.
- Other coursework should be completed prior to the fifth year.

Research:

- Increase activity in research projects, conference presentations, and submission of papers to journals.
- Complete dissertation research.