

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY  
*Developmental Area Program*

The mission of the Developmental Area graduate training program is to educate researchers and academics in developmental psychology. Graduate students are expected to engage in a number of activities in order that mission might be achieved, and these activities are provided starting from the beginning of the first year of graduate work. The course of training is designed to enable students to complete the Candidacy Examination before the start of their fourth year of graduate work.

All graduate students are expected to follow guidelines set forth by the Graduate School of The Ohio State University (see Graduate School Handbook) and the Department of Psychology (see Summary of Rules Concerning Graduate Students in Psychology; also, Graduate Program Handbook). Below are additional guidelines developed for graduate students in the Developmental Area program. These guidelines, along with those of the Psychology Department and the Graduate School, define what the Developmental Area considers as making reasonable progress toward a degree.

## **I. Course Requirements**

In the first three years, students are expected to have completed:

- Psych 6835 – Child Development
- Psych 6849 – Research Methods in Developmental Psychology
- One advanced seminar
- Two statistics classes (Psych 6826 and Psych 6827)
- Two courses outside of the area (not counting statistics).
- Each year, all students are expected to take the Developmental brownbag.

At the end of the first and second years, following the above guidelines the student in conjunction with the adviser will formulate a tentative set of courses to be taken during the subsequent (third) year to prepare for the candidacy examination (see Section IV).

The following interpretation of letter grades is used by the Developmental Area: A = Outstanding; A- = Expected Ph.D. level; B+ = Expected M.A. level; B = Pass/Fail Boundary; B- and below = Unacceptable. Area faculty members have the option to require more of students in the program than students from other areas or other departments.

## **II. Annual Reviews**

*Procedure for Annual Reviews:* At the beginning of an academic year after the first, or in extraordinary cases at the request of a faculty member, the faculty of the area will formally evaluate each student, regardless of the level in the program, and will provide the student with written notification of the evaluation. The notification will indicate whether or not the student is making satisfactory performance and timely progress, and will inform the student of the faculty's perception of his/her strengths and weaknesses.

Several areas of performance will be evaluated, such as:

- A. Performance in courses
- B. Engagement in research settings
- C. Whether or not progress in the program is considered timely
- D. Quality of research and writing, including work on the masters's thesis and the doctoral dissertation (including proposals and write-ups).
- E. Quality of teaching or other professional work in the department, such as work as a Graduate Teaching Associate.
- F. Participation in area and departmental activities, such as colloquia.
- G. Other matters of professional concern, such as ethical behaviors.
- H. Membership in relevant professional societies and associations

This evaluation should be considered by students as feedback on their general performance in the Developmental area. It will also be used by Area faculty in determining whether the area will recommend continuation in the program, and for recommendations for appointment or reappointment to such positions as departmental Graduate Teaching Associateships.

*Formal "Lack of Progress" Warning:* In general, if progress in any of the evaluated areas is deemed seriously lacking by the faculty of the developmental area, the student will be issued a written warning by the area coordinator formally stating that there is "a lack of adequate progress," and indicating the areas where progress is seriously lacking. Within 30 days from when the warning is received, the student receiving the warning is expected to submit a response, and present a plan, complete with timetable, for remedying the lack of progress. This plan should be developed in consultation with the student's adviser. Members of the Developmental area will consider the plan. If it is not acceptable, the student will be notified of changes that must be made, and the plan must be resubmitted. Failure to submit an acceptable plan, or to adhere to an agreed-upon remediation plan will be regarded as grounds for recommending dismissal from the program in accord with the criteria established by the Graduate School.

### **III. Research**

Each student is encouraged to work closely with faculty members. Independence in research is encouraged, although at first the student gains an introduction to active research programs by assisting in currently ongoing research. As competence and experience are gained, the student assumes a larger role in the conception and initiation of projects, eventually becoming a full collaborator.

1. The program requires a Plan A Master's Degree (i.e., with a Master's Thesis). It is expected that the Master's Thesis will be completed before the start of the student's third year in the program, and will be considered in conducting the second year review. If this deadline is not met, the Area in consultation with the chair of the Graduate Studies Committee may ask the Graduate School to issue an official warning to the student that further registration may be denied. If the thesis has not been completed after one additional semester, the student may be

required to meet with the faculty of the area and provide an oral justification for continuation in the program. One possible outcome of this meeting is that the student will be advised to complete a terminal Master's program and not to continue in the Ph.D. program.

*The Master's Thesis.* A master's thesis is required of all students. It is expected that the MA degree be completed by the end of the second year. During the first year, students are expected to work closely with their advisers, singling out an area of research interest in which they will do their master's thesis. Students are expected to present their research plans (and associated pilot data) at the Developmental Proseminar before the end of the first year. Ideally, by the first semester of the second year they should have completed a research proposal, and appointed a committee to approve the proposal. The proposal must be submitted to the Institutional Review Board for approval before the research can commence. The research should be conducted during the second academic year, written and defended by the spring semester of that year. The student is required to orally defend the thesis to a faculty committee in a one-hour thesis examination.

At the time of the defense of the master's thesis, the faculty also will decide whether or not to recommend that the student be continued in the program leading to the Ph.D. degree.

2. During the first two years in the program, each student is required to make one informal oral presentation of research findings to the Developmental brown bag. Students are strongly encouraged to present any research that they complete, and are expected to attend Developmental Area colloquia and brown-bag seminars. It is essential that students and faculty actively participate in these since much of graduate education takes place in informal interchanges outside of class.

Each year many of our students attend one or more professional conventions, and they often present papers. At conventions, students can hear reports of current research a few years before they appear in print and also have informal contact with colleagues from other institutions.

#### **IV. Candidacy Examination**

All graduate students must complete the candidacy exam before proposing their dissertation. Prior to taking the exam, the student must have completed both the core developmental coursework and also their MA degree. The exam itself will consist of the completion of TWO out of the THREE options listed below. The specific choices will be determined by the student in consultation with her/his advisor. The requirements for each option are the following:

- **Review Paper.** This paper will provide an up-to-date review of a theoretically important area of developmental Psychology. The paper should not simply survey the existing literature, but should critically review and synthesize it, and provide a coherent theoretical analysis of it. The introduction to this paper should make clear what the theoretical relevance of the area is, and how it fits into the broader field.

Students are encouraged to read reviews in *Psychological Review* and *Psychological Bulletin* to find suitable models for their paper. The expected length of this paper is 30 – 40 manuscript pages (i.e., double-spaced, in APA format).

• **Grant Application.** The grant application should follow the general guidelines of an NSF or NIH-R01 grant proposal. For more information go to [www.nsf.gov](http://www.nsf.gov) or [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov). For an NSF-type application, please include Project Summary (total of 1-2 pages, including sections on Intellectual Merit and Broader Impact), Project Description (up to 15 pages), and References Cited. For an NIH-type application, please include Project Summary (1 page), Specific Aims (1 page), Research Plan (up to 12 pages, including sections on Significance, Innovation, and Approach), and References Cited. Special attention should be paid to the portions of the application which explain the larger relevance of the project. Students are expected to make clear what the theoretical relevance of their proposed project is and how it fits into the broader field. For further requirements, students are encouraged to review the guidelines posted by the NSF and NIH, and also to ask their advisor for models to follow. The expected length of the application is 14–16 pages, single spaced (excluding references)

• **Developmental Course Outline.** Students will produce a detailed proposal for a semester-long undergraduate course in developmental psychology with about 40 students. A proposal consists of an appropriate undergraduate text, a statement of objectives, a syllabus, and lecture plans for 5 topics. Each lecture plan includes a lecture outline with copies of PowerPoint slides. Lectures should expand upon and explain material from the text and include relevant information not covered in the book. Lectures should not simply reiterate material from the text. The course proposal also should include the following for each topic: (1) citations of the articles used to prepare the lecture; (2) a list of further readings for students; (3) several relevant websites for students; (4) three in-class discussion questions; (5) an out-of-class student activity based on each lecture; (6) a student handout of the important points from the lecture; and (7) three multiple-choice test questions from each lecture.

*Candidacy Exam Committee.* The exam will be evaluated by a committee composed of the student's advisor and 3 other faculty members. When assembling the committee, the student is expected to provide a written proposal. This proposal should be no more than one-page long and should include outlines of the two components to be approved by the committee. The outline for a grant proposal should be roughly the equivalent of the "Specific Aims" section required by the NIH. For theoretical papers, it should provide an overview of the scope of the issues to be addressed and literatures to be targeted. For a course outline, it should include the topics to be covered. The outline should be given to potential committee members at the time they are invited to serve on the committee.

*Timing.* The written portion of the exam must be turned into the committee no later than the first day of the fall quarter/semester of the student's 4<sup>th</sup> year. An oral examination covering both written components will be held within one month of their completion. The exam will

last for 2 hours. Committee members can ask for revisions to the written documents as a condition on passing the exam.

*For more details on the University's expectations and requirements regarding candidacy exams, please go to <<http://www.gradsch.ohio-state.edu/section-vii.html>>.*

## **V. Minors**

Students whose major interest is in the Developmental Area may minor in other academic areas within or outside of the Psychology Department. Outside course options mentioned under Item I may be counted toward a minor program without restrictions. Finally, however, the nature of a minor program is determined by requirements for a minor as specified by the program in which the student chooses to minor. Developmental Area students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these so that at Candidacy Examination time, they will have (a) satisfactorily completed minor requirements and (b) accepted terms on which the minor portion of the Candidacy Examination is administered by the minor program.

Students whose major interest is in a field outside the Developmental Area (whether in the Psychology Department or not) may minor in the Developmental Area. A minor in Developmental Area requires that the student (a) identify a Developmental Area faculty member as a minor advisor; (b) take a minimum of 12 credit hours of Developmental Area courses; (c) take courses from at least two different Developmental Area faculty members; (d) pass a Candidacy Examination in which the minor area is represented on at least the oral portion. The student's minor adviser (or surrogate in case of prior arrangement) will represent the Developmental Area in the oral examination portion, and his/her assessment will weigh jointly in the student's oral performance.

## **VI. Dissertation**

Passing the candidacy examination signifies that the student is eligible to complete the doctoral dissertation. Within one year of passing the candidacy examination, the student should have proposed a dissertation topic, selected a dissertation committee, had the proposal approved, and begun the research. Once the research is begun, it is incumbent upon the student to inform the adviser, at least yearly, as to the progress that is being made. The Graduate School has detailed information about the procedures and criteria for the thesis and candidacy examinations, and timely progress toward the degrees. It is understood that the timetable articulated above is "standard." It may vary in individual cases, but variations must be justified. The Doctoral Dissertation represents the final stage in the program.